

Local

County: Three Planning Commissioners reappointed

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The Baker County Board of Commissioners held its first, regular session of the month on Wednesday, September 6, 2017, 9 a.m., in the Commission Chambers of the Baker County Courthouse, which included concerns from local miner Ed Hardt about Planning Commission member appointments and term limits.

Present from the Board were Chair Bill Harvey, Commissioners Mark Bennett and Bruce Nichols, and Executive Assistant Heidi Martin. Attendance also included Baker County Sheriff Travis Ash, Baker County Road Master Jeff Smith, Ken Anderson, Tork and Wanda Ballard, and Arvid Andersen.

Harvey called the meeting to order, and provided the Invocation, and led in recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

The agenda was adopted, with one noted addition from Martin, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Nichols.

There was no noted comment provided for Citizen Participation, however, Harvey said to Hardt that he is still looking into an issue that Hardt brought to the Board's attention during a previous session.

The minutes from the August 16, 2017 regular session were approved, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Nichols.

Order No. 2017-145, Designating A Sole Source Provider For 420E Caterpillar Cab For Baker County Road Department, was approved, along with the purchase for the cab, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Nichols.

Prior to approval, Smith discussed the purchase with the Board.

Sukut Equipment & Parts was designated sole source provider, and the Road Department planned to purchase the cab, for \$8,030, from that provider, to replace the damaged cab on a 420E Caterpillar backhoe.

A contract, between the County and Tigard-based Pauly Rogers and Co., PC, for County audit services, and an engagement letter regarding the same, were approved, with a motion from Nichols, and a second from Bennett. Nichols explained some details of the letter and contract prior to approval, which he recommended.

A reclassification of the non-union position of Patrol Sergeant, from Range 16, to Range 15, was approved, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Nichols.

Prior to approval, Ash explained the purpose of the reclassification, which



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Citizens Tork and Wanda Ballard.

is more appropriate for the Sheriff's Department overall structure.

Order No. 2017-144, Reappointing Members To The Baker County Cultural Coalition, was approved, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Nichols.

Ginger Savage and Chris Cantrell were re-appointed, their terms set to expire on July 1, 2020.

Order No. 2017-146, Directing The Baker County Sheriff To Make Sale Of County Property; Fixing The Minimum Price And Providing A Portion Of The Conditions And Terms Of Sale, was approved, with a motion from Harvey, and a second from Bennett.

Martin recommended a low minimum bid, which was then set at \$8,500.

An auction for the property, located at 2130 9th Street, is scheduled for Tuesday, October 31, 2017, 10 a.m., on the steps of the Baker County Courthouse.

Order No. 2017-147, Directing The Baker County Sheriff To Make Sale Of County Property; Fixing The Minimum Price And Providing A Portion Of The Conditions And Terms Of Sale, was approved, with a motion from Harvey, and a second from Bennett.

The minimum bid was set at \$9,500, and per Harvey's recommendation, the requirement that the structure be removed within 60 days after purchase, and per Bennett's recommendation, that all garbage be removed within 10 days after purchase.

An auction for the property, located at 1440 13th Street, is also scheduled for Tuesday, October 31, 2017, 10 a.m., at the Courthouse.

Order No. 2017-148, Appointing A Member To The Transient Lodging Tax Committee (TLTC), was approved, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Nichols. Lorán Joseph was appointed as the City Representative for the TLTC, his term set to

expire on August 1, 2020.

Order No. 2017-149, Appointing Members To The Baker County Planning Commission, was approved, with a motion from Nichols, and a second from Harvey, with Bennett abstaining.

Incumbent members Suzan Ellis Jones, Jim Grove, and Rob Crawford were re-appointed to fill three vacancies, their terms set to expire on September 1, 2021.

Prior to approval, Bennett said, "It's probably one of our toughest commissions to fill, because there's a lot of staff work to do... I'm glad to see that we have extra folks applying (Melody Huff and Terrie Simons, both from Halfway, though Bennett said there was possibly one more, and Nichols and Harvey said they weren't sure what happened with that applicant)... I would encourage everybody to apply..."

He said that he would prefer to have the Planning Commission recommend the people to fill the three vacancies (according to the staff report with the order, the Planning Commission hadn't reviewed the applications).

Harvey added, "It takes many, many years to understand what's going on, and then to understand the laws and process (he served for 12 years)... I just say, credit to those who want to continue, and I thank those who wanted to apply for it... Those who want to continue—their knowledge level is greatly appreciated, to help make tough decisions."

Hardt voiced concerns about delays in the Planning Commission hearing process, which he said were caused by obstructionism within the Commission, and he said, "When you (the Board) are going to vote on this, you should think a little bit about who you're appointing."

Harvey said that the Board's involvement is

limited to matters that come before it, and that if there are clear cases of obstructionism, the Board has the authority to remove members at a later date. Bennett said that the Board and Planning Department watch for issues like that closely, and that Hardt or any other citizen can come to the Board to express concerns.

Hardt said his other issue is that there are no term limits for Planning Commission members (members are appointed on four-year terms, with re-appointments possible), and Harvey said that the Board will contact the Planning Commission about Hardt's concern.

Wanda had asked about term limits and quorum details, but she emphasized that she was not advocating for term limits.

During Commissioner Update, an offer to purchase foreclosed County property, located at 1244 3rd Street, was approved, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Nichols.

The offer included a purchase price of \$25,500, with a down payment of \$5,000, and payments on a five-year term. Prior to approval, Martin discussed the details with the Board.

Nichols also encouraged citizens to fill out and return a Community Services Needs Assessment recently mailed recently by Community Connection of Northeast Oregon, Inc.

Nichols explained the importance of the assessment, and he said, "Certain people don't have things that we take for granted." He provided copies of the assessment to press in attendance, which included Josh Dillen of *The Baker City Herald*.

A work session is scheduled for Wednesday, September 13, 2017, 9 a.m., which will include a continuing discussion of a proposal to mine the Sumpter Dredge tailings.

Benefit

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According to Harrington's mother, Robin Harrington, "She has Lennox-Gastaut Syndrome. It's fairly rare. Most of the people who get it are kids—babies and kids—and they're very physically and mentally handicapped, but Tasha got it when she was older so she's not like most kids are that get this epilepsy. She's considered high functioning, but she can't live on her own or have any job really, she would have to be somewhere where people were trained to deal with her and it would be a huge liability. So, it's really difficult trying to come up with something that would work out for that."

According to a press release by Lynette Perry, Events Coordinator/Treasurer for Baker City Events: "She has seizures every day, some much worse than others. Her Mom is a beautician (who suffers with chronic migraines) and does lots of party plan type businesses to try to make a living and her dad is a seasonal blue collar worker. They are not the kind of people who would ask for help or take hand-outs. But their daughter's life is at risk. They have had yard sales and are trying their best to raise the funds, but yard sales are not going to generate the money they need.

"They need to raise \$10,000 to qualify for a grant program to cover the cost of the dog which runs an average of \$40,000. The dog would warn Tasha ahead of time that a seizure is coming so she could get to a safe place. Falls on cement or the middle of the street or even in bedroom hitting her head on dresser are daily threats for her and happen all too often. The bright lights of the cross walk can trigger a seizure."

"So many people donated to this fund raiser today that I can't even say thank you enough," said Robin Harrington.

Perry said that Harrington's mother has been her hairdresser for years and put the benefit concert together in two weeks.

"I saw her grandmother had a post on Facebook," Perry said. "And was going on about how extreme it was and I thought, 'You know, I have insurance coverage for the last Sunday of the summer in September, we don't have anything booked. We can throw a benefit concert for her!'"

According to a press release: "Musicians who donated their time and talent to the benefit concert were: Salt Lick #39: Marilyn Haynes, Lonnie Shurtleff, Manny Guitierrez, Tim; Gloria Kandle, Duane Boyer; Debbie Friedman and Michael Porter; Coyote Joe Sartin; Marvin Sundean; Nancy Ames; Doc and Robert."

Raffle baskets and gift certificates were donated by Baker City Events, Baker County Republicans, Betty's Books, Black Distributing, Chill'z, Guyer and Associates, Audrey Hindman, Old West Federal Credit Union, Lynette Perry donated Melaleuca products, Bob and Kay Petrik donated Khmer Krafts purses, Rising Phoenix Metal Works, Serenity Salon, Teresa Smith donated Scentsy products, Sorbenots Coffee, Sycamore Tree, Tawny's Toy Box, Ron Vinson, and Tori Whiting.

People who still wish to make donations can make checks out to Baker City Events/Dog and mail them to P.O. Box 1126, Baker City Oregon.

Power rates to increase

On July 26, the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) adopted a 5.4 percent average wholesale power rate increase and an average transmission rate decrease of 0.7 percent for the cost of power it provides to its not-for-profit electric utilities in the Northwest, including Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative (OTEC). BPA will apply this rate increase to OTEC's wholesale power purchases beginning October 1, 2017.

Over the last several months OTEC has been discussing its cost of service, the potential impacts of a BPA wholesale rate increase and associated distribution cost increases. OTEC's current average rate including their power supply and distribution costs ranks them 26th lowest in the nation.

"Regardless of this favorable ranking, we continue to focus on utility operations and efficiency in delivering power. Because we understand the impact it has on our local economies," said OTEC General Manager Les Penning.

BPA delivers clean renewable hydropower to more than 140 Northwest utilities and continues to face significant challenges in several areas.

"The combination of a recent court decision ordering increased spill at the hydroelectric dams along the Columbia River and the collapse of the secondary energy market has many Northwest utilities who get their power from BPA, including OTEC, concerned," added Penning. "Combined with continued investments in their aging infrastructure (approximately \$6 billion over the next 6 years) and lost revenues from the reduced demand for the sale of the excess power BPA produces, consumers may now be expected to make up for those lost revenues."

Historically, the sales of BPA's excess energy onto the secondary open energy market helped to reduce wholesale rates to their consumers, including OTEC.

Prior to the increase taking affect in October, OTEC's Board of Directors will review the final "Cost of Service" study assessing revenue requirements for operations of OTEC's distribution system and the final landing point of the wholesale power cost and approve the final rate.

"When looking at rates, generally our Board of Directors will concentrate on two primary categories," said Penning. "Delivery charge and energy charge."

For more information on BPA's rate increase visit www.bpa.gov/news.

Petition drives scheduled

The Baker County Republican Party will have a petition drive on Saturday, September 9th and 16th at the corner of Campbell and Grove, 1:00-6:00 p.m..

We are circulating the repeal SB719 petitions which will put this issue on the ballot in November

2018. Any hopefully will ultimately repeal by a vote of the people, the Senate gun confiscation bill that was passed last session.

We will also have petitions for:

Initiatives:

Petition ID #1 Prohibit spending public funds

directly/indirectly for abortion.

Petition ID #5 Voters must provide ID proving citizenship

Petition ID #22 Overturns Oregon Sanctuary statute

Referendums:

Petition ID # 301

Will repeal Gov. Brown's

new healthcare sales and service taxes.

Petition ID #302 Will repeal SB719, gun confiscation law

Any questions or if anyone would like to help circulate petitions, please call Suzan Ellis Jones at 541-519-5035.