

Local

Public Arts Commission discusses graffiti

BY GINA K. SWARTZ
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Last Tuesday evening the Public Arts Commission held their regular monthly meeting.

The main topic of the evening was graffiti.

Baker City Police Officer Shannon Regan, off duty, was present to address the matter.

Regan began her address to the committee by advising them of the different roles she has had in her 17 years with the department. “I have been the Community Service Officer, Police Officer and the School Resource Officer.”

It was her time as the School Resource Officer that put her in front of the Public Arts Committee Tuesday evening.

She shared her story.

She said, “When I was the School Resource Officer I met a gentleman, he was about 17 years-old. He was an Oregon Youth Authority kid. He was from outside of our community. He started tagging property and he went all over town. It was his way of letting his friends from where he came from know where he was.”

Mary Miller, Public Arts Chair asked Regan, “Would he post pictures of these? Is that what he would do? How would he let them know?”

Regan explained, “Tagging is just a signature mark that people use to identify themselves with.”

Regan explained that as she was working with this individual as a law enforcement officer she felt frustrated with the young man because he had caused property damage at around \$1300.

She also stated that in the course of investigating the case she also got to know him.

Because she was the School Resource Officer at the time a lot of their interaction was at the school.

She said, “I started to pay attention to his notebooks that had beautiful artistic pictures, it wasn’t just his tagging.”

In speaking with this individual, she learned that he had grown up in a gang and had no father figure around. “He didn’t have an outlet, a way to express



Gina K. Swartz / The Baker County Press

Shannon Regan, who works as a Baker City Patrol Officer (far left corner) talks about her experiences with graffiti.

himself about things,” she said.

Regan added, “Clear back then I wondered if his life could have been changed or different had he been given an opportunity to have something like a graffiti wall or someplace to freely express himself that was lawful.”

She told the committee that as a police officer she was able to see both sides of this problem.

Grffiti has been touching the community more and more.

Regan said she often sees unlawful graffiti throughout the City both while on duty and off. As an officer of the law she understands that it is a crime, Criminal Mischief, and it’s her job to enforce it.

She said that the Department does take graffiti crimes seriously but went on to say, “I didn’t want to miss the opportunity for us to see a bigger picture.”

That was her reason for bringing an idea to the Public Arts Commission.

Regan is proposing the creation of a space where individuals can lawfully express themselves: a graffiti wall of sorts.

Regan also cited the City Police Department motto, which she feels strongly about, that the City Officers continually look for ways to improve the quality of life here.

This was a way, she felt,

that could help enhance our community in a positive way.

Regan admitted she had not put much thought into the logistics of such an endeavor aside from it being someplace well-lit and highly visible to the public, but hadn’t thought about things like where the paint would come from or what some rules might be.

She just thought of the opportunity that such a space could create.

She said, “Whether it be a youth outlet, someone learning art for the first time or somebody who just has a story to tell that maybe can’t use their voice to tell it. I don’t want to miss the opportunity to see somebody’s artistic abilities or to learn something about somebody.”

Regan clearly stated that she did not come to the meeting with the intention of arguing if “graffiti was right or wrong.”

She stated she just wanted to be transparent and open about her ideas.

The Commission were all in agreement that they saw potential in the idea.

They had talked about such a space perhaps along the Leo Adler Memorial Parkway. Specifically, the back of Thatcher’s Ace Hardware, where illegal graffiti seems to surface often.

So far nothing had materialized from the

Commission’s ideas but they all were in support of Regan and committed to exploring the idea more thoroughly.

As the ideas flowed around the room there was talk of having a monthly theme to the area.

Before “wiping it clean” each month, take a photo, then use each monthly photo to make a calendar that could be sold with profits being reinvested into the space or going to the Public Arts Commission for use on other projects.

Corrine Vegter offered the idea of constructing a hollow boulder out of metal that could be coated with chalkboard material and used to draw on with chalk.

In other business, the Commission talked about various projects currently in the works.

The first Art on Loan piece, created by Don Herman and placed in Central Park had been sold and Chairwoman Mary Miller explained that a press release would be issued soon with details of the sale.

They discussed an exciting new piece that would soon be added to the Art on Loan project and possible locations for that piece. It is an exciting time for Public Art in our community with several new projects underway.

BLM approves B2H route

In a move that will improve the nation’s energy infrastructure, create nearly 500 jobs and boost local economies, the U.S. Department of the Interior announced today that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has signed a Record of Decision (ROD) for the Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project (B2H Project). The B2H Project will provide additional electrical capacity between the Pacific Northwest and the Intermountain West regions.

The B2H Project, which will have a three-year development phase, will alleviate existing transmission constraints by providing sufficient electrical capacity to meet present and forecasted customer needs.

The total capital expenditure for the B2H Project is approximately \$1 billion to \$1.2 billion.

“The Boardman to Hemingway Project is a Trump Administration priority focusing on infrastructure needs that support America’s energy independence,” said U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke. “Today’s decision is the result of extensive public involvement and will support the environmentally responsible development of resources to meet the needs of communities in Idaho, Oregon, and the surrounding region.”

The ROD allows the BLM to grant a right-of-way to Idaho Power Company for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the B2H Project on BLM-administered land. Located in eastern Oregon and southwestern Idaho, the approved route will measure approximately 300 miles long when constructed.

The overhead electrical line will be extra-high-voltage (500 kilovolts) and will include an alternating-current transmission system. Because the new line will have increased transmission capacity, it will allow greater use of intermittent sources of renewable energy, such as wind and solar, to connect to the grid.

“This project will help stabilize the power grid in the Northwest while creating jobs and carrying low-cost energy to market,” said Katherine MacGregor, acting Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management. “It is a great example of the Administration’s America First Energy Plan, which addresses all forms of domestic energy production.”

“It’s great to finally have an administration that recognizes the importance of working with states like Idaho to get important things done,” said Idaho Governor C.L. “Butch” Otter. “I’m pleased that our federal partners are moving toward making this important infrastructure upgrade a reality. Meeting the electric transmission needs of our growing economy and population will require continued collaboration, and I’m confident that the BLM and Department of the Interior under President Trump will keep providing that kind of constructive leadership.”

“BLM’s approval of this interstate transmission line is a long overdue decision that will bolster our regional infrastructure and ensure that energy is delivered efficiently and reliably to customers,” said Idaho Senator Mike Crapo. “This type of project is the result of a collaboration between multiple stakeholders to move to meet the energy demands of the region.”

“The B2H Project will create jobs, provide for Idaho’s energy needs and promote the region’s energy infrastructure moving forward,” said Senator James Risch. “I applaud the BLM for issuing their Record of Decision which is a critical step forward for the B2H Project.”

“The Boardman to Hemingway project is critically important to Idaho,” said Congressman Mike Simpson. “Providing the infrastructure to deliver affordable and reliable energy will benefit Idahoans and others in the West. I applaud BLM for prioritizing this important work.”

The B2H Project will add approximately 1,000 megawatts of much needed bi-directional power capacity between the Pacific Northwest and Intermountain West regions.

The additional capacity will help improve the regions’ ability to transmit low-cost energy from a variety of generation sources to serve residences, farms, businesses, and other customers throughout the region.

The 293.4-mile approved route will run across 100.3 miles of Federal land (managed by the BLM, the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the U.S. Department of Defense), 190.2 miles of private land, and 2.9 miles of state lands.

The B2H Project is a national-level priority and an important component of the President’s all-of-the-above-energy strategy that includes encouraging projects that help to strengthen America’s energy infrastructure.

The transmission line connects the northern terminus, the Longhorn Substation, a substation planned by Bonneville Power Administration about four miles east of the city of Boardman in Morrow County, Oregon, to the existing Hemingway Substation, near the city of Melba in Owyhee County, Idaho. Construction of the B2H Project is targeted to start in 2021 and will take approximately two to three years once all final permits are acquired.

The B2H Project includes construction of the new transmission line, access roads and gates, and communication regeneration sites. The project also includes the removal or rerouting of about eight miles of older transmission lines.

The selected route approved by the ROD is the Agency Preferred Alternative identified in the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Proposed Land-use Plan Amendments, which published in the Federal Register on November 28, 2016. The ROD represents the culmination of a comprehensive planning process, including a Community Advisory Process conducted by the Idaho Power Company that further refined the routing options. Comments received after public scoping in 2010 further refined routing and added variations.

The final documents and maps showing the Agency Preferred Alternative are available at: <http://bit.ly/2hRuQfS>.

School Board hears about Friday Academy and more

BY SAMANTHA O’CONNOR
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Last Thursday, the Baker School District 5J held board meeting at the City Council Chambers. The board voted unanimously to cancel the December board meeting due to schedule constraints.

They recognized Outdoor School Coordinator Dorothy Mason, presenting her a certificate of recognition. Mason has been the coordinator for 25 years.

Kaeli Flanagan was presented the Baker High School “Promise Student of the Month for October;” Wade Hawkins was presented the Haines “Promise of the Baker Student of the

Month, and Santiago Varela was presented the Baker Middle School “Promise Student of the Month.”

Angela Lattin, the Dean of Students at Brooklyn Primary and the facilitator for Friday Academy, gave a presentation on the Friday Academy.

Lattin explained that, for session two of the academy, they will be moving everyone to Brooklyn Primary and do their grade levels there.

The second session began Friday, November 17th and the theme includes looking at food and science around the world.

“We love the teamwork atmosphere and we love the opportunity for our sixth graders to pair up with our kindergartners,

because sometimes when you get to teach those activities or those concepts to someone else, it makes it a lot deeper for you, so that’s our plan right now,” explained Lattin.

Four students gave a presentation to the school board about Friday academy and their favorite parts of it.

The first presenter, 5th grader Joslyn Collins, discussed the different writing prompts, poems such as haikus, and art. Her favorite part of Friday Academy is the math.

The second presenter, 5th grader Mackenzie Ledwith-Bassman, discussed their field trip to Sumpter and the different activities they did such as water-color arts, scavenger hunts,

building a mouse house, coloring leaves, and what floats and what doesn’t.

“My favorite part of the field trip was the different age groups of the kindergartners and partners because I love to watch them learn and find new things,” explained Ledwith-Bassman.

3rd grader Teagan Ashton presented on 3rd Grade Classroom STEM Challenges. Aston discussed the Cup Challenge, where the students had a rubber band with others tied to it and cups, and they needed to make a pyramid with the cup but they couldn’t touch the rubber bands or the cups.

SEE SCHOOL BOARD
PAGE 7