

Betty Palmer One of Three Candidates to be Interviewed on Feb. 20

The 5-J School Board has narrowed the superintendent search down to three candidates. They will be interviewing Betty Palmer from Baker City, Mark Witty from John Day and Robert Vian from Orofino, Idaho on Feb. 20. The candidates will tour the district in the morning and interview in the afternoon. There will also be a "Meet and Greet" open house at the high school from 4 - 6 p.m. the same day.

Bailey Hill was introduced at last week's school board meeting by BHS Principal Ben Merrill as Baker High's Promise Student of the Month. Merrill shared with the board members Hill's leadership as this year's Student Body President and, most importantly, his strengths as a person steadfast in his own beliefs, supportive of his friends and mentors, and respecting of those around him.

Eagle Cap Update

Eagle Cap instructor Megan Pearle-Alamada presented the board with an update on the Ostwald Machine Shop property, which is an abandoned piece of property located at 2430 Balm Street bequeathed to the School District to sell for district scholarship funds. In 2010, soil and water testing showed the property to have contamination. Sparking a necessary cleanup with Brownfield Funds, and with extra grants and support from the Environmental Protection Agency, Northeast Oregon Economic Development District, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality and Business Oregon, the Ostwald Brownfield Site was created. Eagle Cap Innovative High School's Environmental Science class, Brownfield in Baker class sprouted alongside it.

The site has had two sets of students studying it since the class was developed at the beginning of the second semester of last year, and Alamada reported a large amount of work has been accomplished during that short amount of time. A new, updated sign was recently created and posted at the property giving information about it. Currently, in the midst of researching and editing drafts of the request for quotations (RFQ) in preparation for cleanup of the site, students are volunteers of the Powder Basin Watershed Council and make monthly visits to the Powder River to take water samples to create a water quality database. Alamada plans to have a final draft of the RFQ finished by the end of this school year.

Wirth Reports on Argentina Visit

Malena Wirth followed with a report on her visit to Argentina. In November she was called by the American Federation of Teachers, Classified Division, to attend a founding meeting called Public Service International (PSI) as a delegate. The first duty of the delegates of the 23 countries represented was to come up with a charter that everyone could agree on for PSI so that it could not only be a collaboration of international unions just in education, but could also involve public service entities.

Wirth explained the schools in Argentina were more like institutions for specific subjects, such as art, music, engineering, etc. and the students attend them for half of their school day before attending the classes for their core subjects. Due to the presence of the cartel in the country, the international teachers were escorted and hosted the entire visit by the university teachers. Many of the pictures in her slideshow did not show detailed faces of students and pictures were not allowed to be taken during community events due to the possibility that one or more of the cartel family members might be present in them. Another difference between school structures is teachers focus on cooperation,

and not competition between students, "unless you are talking about soccer!" Wirth asserted. The teachers instruct with few or no books and very few supplies.

Wirth's job while she was there was to speak on outsourcing. The reason why she spoke to privatization was because of her experience with it here, and the people she spoke to had no idea where to start when it came to organizing anything similar, either internally or externally. She also educated staff there on another important topic: how to communicate with administrators. This was a very new concept for the people there due to the rigid structure of the country's hierarchy system.

"The schools' conditions are horrific...and yet they have very happy children, very smart students and the teachers are amazing," Wirth commented. The high school library is tiny and classrooms are small and cramped and they use a lottery system to determine who gets to attend in most cases. There is no transportation except for a school bus for preschool and kindergarten students, and every student Wirth spoke with wanted to be an exchange student to the United States.

Unfortunately, a charter was not reached while she was there because of some exclusive language, but Wirth thanked the board members and South Baker Principal Betty Palmer for the opportunity to have the ten-day experience.

All Day Kindergarten

Walt Wegener asked the Board for their consent to move forward with preparations in light of the possible move to an all-day kindergarten set to begin next Sept. The final decision has not been mandated by the state as of yet, but it is almost a certainty. Wegener wants to get prepared for it now in an effort to be on or ahead of the schedule should the mandate be implemented on March 2.

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News of Record

Marriages

Dec. 25 - Ryan Sullivan to Nicole Ruth Butler, both of Baker City.
Jan. 17 - Andrew Derek Charpiloz to Kelsie Lynn Anderson, both of Baker City.
Jan. 20 - Vivian Lynn Rhodes to Melanie Claire Brown, both of Baker City.

Arrests

Jan. 23 - Alicia Marie Vowell of Baker City for Theft I.
Jan. 26 - Jessica Faye Nordbye of San Burno, Calif. for Violation of Release Agreement.
Jan. 26 - Kayla Marie Ruth Johnson of La Grande for PCS Methamphetamine, Theft by Receiving, and Unlawful Possession of Oxycodone.
Jan. 26 - Wiley Alexander Dean Volz of Ashland for PCS Methamphetamine, Theft by Receiving, and Unlawful Possession of Oxycodone.

Baker County Circuit Court

Jan. 13 - State of Ore. v. Timothy Patrick Keefe regarding Criminal Impersonation, felony.
Jan. 14 - Portfolio Recovery Associates v. Robert L. Cutshall regarding Civil Money Action.
Jan. 14 - State of Ore. v. Coty Hanson regarding Burglary I, felony.
Jan. 15 - State of Ore. v. Jacob Peterson regarding Domestic Relations Fin. Resp.
Jan. 16 - Quick Collect, Inc. v. Travis Weiner regarding Civil Transcriptive Jgm.
Jan. 22 - State of Ore. v. Kyle D. Arthur regarding Domestic Relations Filiation.
Jan. 22 - State of Ore. v. Kevin H. Trego regarding Domestic Relations Fin. Resp.
Jan. 22 - In matter of Kelly Lee Lethlean regarding Domestic Relations Dissolution.
Jan. 22 - State of Ore. v. Michael Ray O'Donnell regarding Criminal Mischief II, misdemeanor.
Jan. 22 - Midland Funding, LLC v. Brenda Sheburn regarding Civil Money Action.
Jan. 23 - Cam Credits, Inc. v. Cindy K. Baird regarding Civil Transcriptive Jgm.

Commissioners Support Historic 'Revitalize Main Street Act' and Dental Project

By Emily Braswell

The regular Commission session was held last Wednesday, minus the presence of Commissioner Mark Bennett. After approval of the previous meeting's minutes, the board heard an update from Veteran Services Officer Rick Gloria.

Electronic Claims Processing System for Veterans

Gloria reported on the new electronic claims processing system established by the Oregon Department of Veteran Affairs (ODVA) called VetraSpec. This system allows veteran claims to be filed in an expedited manner, cutting the entire transaction time by up to one year while giving the filer access to the actions being taken at every step in the process. At this time, 107 Baker County Veterans have had their claims entered into the VetraSpec system. Gloria's goal is to get the 800 active files currently sitting in his office entered into the new electronic system, and ultimately the approximately 2,000 veterans currently residing in Baker County. He reports the system has been very useful and the compensation monies recovered for just the 107 files switched over to VetraSpec totals \$195,409. If all of the active files in his office were filed electronically, Gloria estimates just over \$1.5 million in compensation money would be recovered for those veterans. He is actively seeking to reach out to the veterans residing in Baker County through radio and newspaper advertising.

Grant for Veteran Transportation Signed

Another service being offered to assist veterans is the the Veteran's Transportation Grant and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Baker County and Community Connections of Northeast Oregon. This grant comes from ODVA and is channeled through Baker County to Community Connections to provide veterans with transportation services throughout eastern Oregon and over into the Boise area. Community Connections has a full time staff and handicapped accessible vans to accommodate all veterans. This is a one-time grant, however, there is a possibility to get it again if they are able to show significant success the first time around. Signing of the MoU was tabled at the last session; at this meeting, the Commissioners received the MoU signed by Community Connection's County Manager Mary Jo Carpenter. Harvey and Kerns approved and signed it, so the \$45,000 grant is ready to be utilized. For more information on rural transportation routes, veterans may contact Rick Gloria at 541-523-8223 or Community Connections at 541-523-6591.

Miners Address Commissioners

Arthur Sappington was present for citizen participation. He represents the Jefferson Mining District regarding a court case that transpired in California which made the Department of Fish and Wildlife's permitting process for placer mining illegal. Sappington's concern is that Oregon's mining regulations have a habit of coinciding with California's, and he and his allies are working hard to make sure permitting for placer mining stays legal and water rights are maintained so water necessary to mining operations continues to be available for use.

Kenneth Anderson, semi-retired Mining Geologist Engineer, also spoke to the Commissioners regarding the necessary utilization of the materials of the Earth. He stated, "No life on earth can survive unless we harvest the food and resources of the earth." He urges all governments and all citizens to reassess the access and use of the land policies before a full economical breakdown occurs. "We've regulated the people who support our country, more or less, out of business," Anderson commented.

Dental Agreements Reviewed

The Commissioners revisited the agreements with Advantage Dental as recommended by Robin Nudd. In her staff report, she described the agreements as a joint venture that will provide a dental screening project within the county's Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program. Advantage Dental will provide free dental exams and fluoride varnish to any residents enrolled in the WIC program and the Baker County Health Department will provide the exam rooms. The exams will be offered in the morning on the first Wednesday of each month beginning Feb. 4 and ending Oct. 31, 2015. The Commissioners voted to approve this program.

Bishop Asks for Support

Timothy Bishop presented information and requested support for the proposed 'Revitalize Main Street Act' which would give a 25 percent rebate for certified rehabilitation of historic commercial buildings, with a minimum \$10,000 investment. This new state rebate can be paired with the 20 percent Federal Historic tax credit, filling in a huge cost gap that could mean the difference between whether or not a building gets the necessary repairs or restoration upgrades to meet building codes. The Commissioners agreed to send a letter to the Oregon legislators requesting support of this Act.

90 Day Extension Requested

Other items on the agenda were letters to be approved and signed, the first of those being a letter to Don Gonzales, Vale District Manager of the Bureau of Land Management, requesting a 90 day extension of time to review and comment on the Idaho Power Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project (B2H). Reasons cited for the extension include confusion of route designations, the delay in document presentation and the overall complexity of the project. The letter was approved and will be sent to Gonzales.

Foreclosure

A residence located at 1244 Third Street was foreclosed on by Baker County due to back taxes in the amount of \$4,836 owed. The property is now abandoned and the board can make a decision on its future status. An order was written up to set a minimum bid and list the property for sale, however, Commissioner Kerns asked to table the order until the 5-J School District could be contacted to see if they may have interest in the property, as it is located across the street from South Baker School.

Lime Property Inquiry

Ed Trindle came to the board at the end of the session inquiring about the county's property in Lime. Trindle is interested in the acreage outside of the industrial area that could be utilized as grazing land. The area would need to be fenced off first, but he asked the Commissioners to consider creating a lease for the area.

The next Commission meetings are scheduled for Feb. 4 and 18, and there will be a work session on Feb. 11.

NE Area Commission on Transportation meets Feb. 5 in La Grande

The North East Area Commission on Transportation will hold its next meeting on Feb. 5 from 9- noon at the Oregon Department of Transportation Region 5 Headquarters, located at 3012 Island Avenue, La Grande. The general public is invited to attend. The meeting location is accessible to persons with disabilities, per the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The NEACT is comprised of transportation stakeholders from Morrow, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa and Baker counties, and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

Time has been set aside for public comments regarding project proposals and other transportation related topics. To schedule time on the agenda at NEACT meetings, please contact Lisa Hill at (541) 963-3179.

An Area Commission on Transportation is an advisory body chartered by the Oregon Transportation Commission to help address all aspects of transportation. More information about ACTS is available at the ODOT Web Site at www.oregon.gov/ODOT/COMM/act_main.shtml.

Public Comments Sought on East Face Vegetation Management Project

Public comments on the East Face Vegetation Management Project Proposed Action are being sought through Feb. 13, 2015. The Proposed Action focuses on Forest Service (FS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands located 20 miles south of La Grande, along the east face of the Elkhorns, between Ladd Canyon and Anthony Lakes, encompassing portions of Union and Baker counties. The full scoping letter and maps can be accessed at: www.fs.usda.gov/goto/EastFace.

Fuel reduction activities proposed in the 47,621 acre treatment area represents the federal component of the collaborative East Face of the Elkhorn Mountains Partnership. Activities focus on fuel reduction treatments to accomplish the goals of the Cohesive Wild-fire Strategy (CWS) on USFS and BLM lands and complement the fuel reduction activities which have occurred or are planned on adjacent State and private lands.

"The proposed action was developed to embody the 'All Hands, All Lands' goals established under the Joint Chiefs Restoration Initiative," says District Ranger Bill Gamble. Doing so will reduce the threat of wild-fire and its impact to the watersheds that contribute to the irrigation needs of local farmers, and create areas of reduced fuel loadings near the municipal water supply for La Grande. It will also protect key habitat for federally-threatened bull trout that occupy streams in this area.

Potential treatments include commercial and non-commercial harvest to meet fuel reduction objectives, precommercial thinning with machines and by hand, prescribed fire, hand piling and burning to manage and improve vegetation and treat fuels within wildland urban interface areas and along private/public land interfaces.

Post project road management is also an important part of this proposal. The area encompasses two green dot closure areas (Indian-Gorham and Clear Creek) and due to the presence of unroaded and backcountry recreation areas has a low current open road density. Nearly 65 percent of the 366 miles of roads within the project area are already closed with many of them grown in over the years due to non-use. These roads were put into storage many years ago after past harvest and historic fire suppression activities. Approximately 105 miles of currently closed road would be re-opened to facilitate logging systems to remove fuels within the project area.

One dead end, draw bottom road has been identified as a water quality issue and will be closed for that reason. All other presently open roads are proposed to remain open at the conclusion of the project. In addition to those open roads, several currently closed roads which are not creating any resource problems in an area with very low current open roads densities are also being recommended to remain open. A number of currently closed roads averaging less than a half mile in length were also identified as either no longer needed for resource management or duplicate access to areas which are being recommended for removal from the landscape and returned to growing trees.

Comments will be considered and used to identify issues associated with the proposal and develop alternatives that are responsive to the identified issues. It is anticipated that the decision document will be signed in the spring of 2016.

Written comments should be addressed to Bill Gamble, District Ranger, La Grande Ranger District, 3502 Highway 30, La Grande, OR 97850 or by email to bgamble@fs.fed.us. For more information, contact Gamble at (541) 962-8582.

Baker County Museum Manager Position Available

Baker County is accepting applications for a part-time Museum Manager through Jan. 30, 2015. For more information contact the State Employment Department or visit our website at www.baker-county.org. All applicants will be pre-screened. EEO