

WOOLSEY: Has to run inspections about a half-dozen times before a project is complete

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and even steer wrestled at the Round-Up once, he said, but repeated injuries took their toll. And when he became a father at 25, he decided to retire from the sport.

Woolsey got a degree in diesel mechanics from Central Oregon Community College in 2003, but by the time he finished the program he wasn't interested in that line of work anymore.

In 2009, he moved to Boise and took a job with a construction firm that contracted with federal agencies like the Bureau of Indian Affairs and U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife for large scale projects.

As a foreman and equipment manager, Woolsey crisscrossed the country while he worked on fisheries, armories and water treatment plants. But all the travel required for the job meant a lot of time spent away from his young family.

"When I came home, my kids didn't look the same," he said.

Coupled with his late mother's cancer diagnosis and his father being involved in a car accident, Woolsey returned to Oregon in 2013.

By that time, Chuck Woolsey had become the Hermiston building official

and relocated to Stanfield, weary of Bend's growth into a large metro area. Upon his son's return, Chuck Woolsey advised his son to become a building inspector, utilizing the skills he learned in the construction trade.

Woolsey began volunteering with Pendleton in 2014, using it as a building official apprenticeship. Immersing himself in Oregon's building codes, he said he would sometimes wake up in the middle of the night and begin studying when a question struck.

Woolsey didn't stay a volunteer for long. Less than a half year after starting with the city, he was promoted to a part-time building inspector and was bumped up to full-time shortly after that. Woolsey was promoted to interim building official in November 2016 and in July, his job was made permanent.

Having worked both sides of the counter, Woolsey, now 33, thinks one of his best skills is communicating the building code in a way that contractors and laymen can understand.

Whatever needed to be said didn't take long during a round of inspections in Pendleton on Wednesday, with each visit taking no longer than five or 10 minutes.

"It's the inconsistencies that really hurt"

— Neil Brown, Pendleton city council president, on past problems with in the building department

Woolsey drove his truck to a manufactured home construction site on Houtama Road, checking for factors like setback size and if the ground level would be conducive to draining as a construction crew worked on the foundation. Unless a significant issue arises, Woolsey said he doesn't write down his observations, preferring to tell the supervisor or contractor in person. He will have to run inspections about a half-dozen times before the project is complete, double for stick-built homes.

Woolsey crossed Southgate for his next inspection at a home on Tutuilla Road, where contractors from Round-Up City Plumbing are connecting the resident to the city's sewer system. Woolsey checks for the depth of the

sewer lines and if it has locate wires, briefly chats with one of the workers, then departs. Woolsey remarked that there isn't much to note on projects done by professionals.

"They know what's up," he said.

Woolsey's work hasn't gone unnoticed. During an Oct. 10 workshop, the Pendleton City Council told Woolsey that they were hearing good things from the community and less complaints than they used to.

In an interview Thursday, Councilor Neil Brown said a "previous regime" in the building department led by John Lindstrom could be difficult to work with. Besides being a city councilor, Brown is a former licensed contractor who owns rental properties.

A self-described "stickler" for doing things by the books, Brown said the old building department would act "tired and grumpy" when inspecting projects he was involved with. Brown recalled a conversation with a foreman on the Pendleton Heights housing development who told him that the building department had gotten on his case for the placement of electrical outlets.

"It's the inconsistencies that really hurt," he said.

Brown said he wasn't trying to "roast" anyone specifically with his comments.

Lindstrom was placed on leave last November without public explanation from the city and resigned shortly thereafter.

When asked if the building department's previous reputation was earned, Woolsey was diplomatic, saying there's "two sides to every story."

Brown said he hasn't heard the same complaints

about the building department recently and has actually heard positive comments from the community. But he said Woolsey has "a big, big job," which is further compounded by the fact that the city has a contract with Wallowa County to provide inspection services.

While Woolsey started receiving part-time help from a retired building official who lives in Wallowa County, he's been trying to find another full-time building inspector to fill his department for the past month.

Woolsey said he's received only one application from a qualified applicant during that time, and 85 percent of building inspectors will migrate out of the profession within the next five years, according to the International Code Council.

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ENERGY: Hansell's district has 235 clean energy jobs

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Oregon hosted a public meeting at the Pendleton Center for the Arts to discuss the benefits of cap and invest. Speakers included Don Sampson, climate change program director for the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians.

Sampson, an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and former executive director of the CTUIR from 2003-2010, said the effects of climate change were on full display this summer across Oregon, as wildfire smoke filled the skies and dropped air quality to unhealthy levels.

"It's only going to continue to get worse, unfortunately, unless we do something," Sampson said.

About 15 people attended the meeting, and Sampson said they intend to return to Pendleton for a rally Saturday, Nov. 4. Details will be posted on the Renew Oregon website.

"We want to spread the word and get people excited about this," Sampson said.

Also on hand Wednesday were Jana Gastellum, climate program director for the Oregon Environmental Council, and Steve Frisch, president of the Sierra Business Council in northern California. Frisch provided some background on California's Cap-and-Trade Program, which took effect in 2012 and has since been renewed through 2030.

It may not be perfect, but Frisch said the program has helped to grow California's economy while shrinking carbon emissions. He emphasized that rural Oregonians and businesses need to be involved in crafting a bill that will benefit local communities, and not just the major metro areas.

"We can effect what happens in our future," Frisch said.

Earlier in the day, Frisch and Gastellum met with Robert Echenrode, general manager of the Umatilla Electric Cooperative, and Gary Neal, general manager of the Port of Morrow. The most recent iteration of the bill — Senate Bill 1070 — would set a carbon cap at 250,000 tons of greenhouse gases per year. Beyond that, companies and utilities would need to buy emission allowances on the open market.

Ted Case, executive director of the Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association in Wilsonville, said UEC would be one of three consumer-owned utilities over the 25,000-ton threshold. The association is working to determine what exactly that would mean for Umatilla County ratepayers.

"Nobody knows yet," Case said. "We're looking at this very carefully."

A spokesman for UEC added that the co-op buys more than 90 percent of its electricity wholesale from the Bonneville Power Administration hydro system, a carbon-free source of power.

"What's undeniable is we do have a clean resource," Case said.

Neal, who has overseen dramatic growth at the Port of Morrow, said there is some concern among businesses about how the legislation will be drafted. For example, Neal said the bill needs to consider what is already being done locally to save energy, and avoid putting the area at a disadvantage.

"We think we're already the most advanced area in the country for pumping water," Neal said. "But we don't get any credits for what we've done."

Thanks in large part to food processors and data centers at the port, Morrow County employment has risen more than 40 percent over pre-recession levels and its workers are paid the third-highest average wages statewide. However, Neal cautioned that development could be slowed depending on how cap and invest is implemented.

"You can see businesses and industry considering doing things outside of Oregon if it's not crafted in a way that's more of an incentive than a penalty," he said.

Mike Mercer, a consultant with Environmental Entrepreneurs in Portland, points to strides in the clean energy industry across Eastern Oregon. According to data from the organization, there are at least 235 clean energy jobs in Senate District 29, represented by Bill Hansell, and 95 clean energy jobs in Senate District 30, represented by Ted Ferrioli. Ferrioli's district also leads the state in solar power generation, with 50,000 kilowatts of capacity.

Mercer argues that cap and invest would only bolster those figures.

"Jobs are being created across the state," he said. "As cost comes down, it just becomes that much more reasonable for these renewable energy projects to move forward."

The bill would gradually reduce the carbon cap over time, enforcing the state's existing climate goals with a final target of 80 percent carbon reduction below 1990 levels by 2050.

A report from the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality released earlier this year suggested a carbon market could be a cost-effective mechanism for lowering greenhouse gas emissions, though low-income and rural communities may be disproportionately affected since they spend a higher proportion of their income on energy and are more reliant on vehicle travel using fossil fuels.



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