

# COURT

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not dissimilar, minus the freight dolly, from Anthony Hopkins being wheeled off the plane in “The Silence of the Lambs.”

Ryan’s voice far preceded him up the stairs, incessant, almost nonsensical. He wore a spit mask and was shackled hand and foot. He donned a suicide gown, essentially a hospital gown, and had reportedly attempted to end his own life earlier that morning in Umatilla County Jail.

Spurning the orders of Judge Russell B. West, Ryan kept up his endless chatter, liberally sprinkling his language with every imaginable profanity. Deputy District Attorney Rebecca Frolander served as prosecutor while attorney James Schaeffer provided defense. A plea deal had been agreed to for Ryan.

Ryan seemed unable to make up his mind about nearly every question West asked of him, up to and including whether he was happy with his attorney or whether he pleaded guilty of his own free will. He often interrupted West and in a complete non sequitur, told Frolander she was very beautiful, which caused one of the other women in the courtroom to visibly blanch.

Frolander said that Ryan



Wallowa County Courthouse was locked down while Preston Robert Ryan was hustled in and out of Circuit Court by law enforcement Feb. 7.

had showed up at his father’s house approximately three days before Christmas and had probably used meth shortly after he arrived, as well as the

day of the incident that led to his arrest. His father and step-mother were sitting inside the house when they heard gunshots outside.

Ryan’s father ventured outside and found his son with an AR-15 assault rifle. After calming him and having him relinquish control of the rifle,

the father also found a shotgun. Both weapons were turned in to law enforcement.

West followed Frolander’s sentencing recommendation, which included 30 days of jail with credit for time served, three years of supervised probation as well as drug and alcohol treatment and a mental health examination.

Frolander said that Ryan’s initial arraignment, which took place by video from jail, was delayed for some time by Ryan’s antics in being removed from his cell. Two guards had to escort Ryan to the video hearing, where he wore restraints, including the spit mask.

The incident also disrupted the plans of a group of Enterprise Elementary School students who were planning to work on a documentary about the courthouse. They finished a truncated version of their project later in the day.

District attorney Mona Williams said although Ryan’s court hearing was unusual, law enforcement has dealt with

similar situations previously, including transporting prisoners trying to kick out vehicle windows.

She said that one person brought into the court for a mental health issue turned over the courtroom employees scurrying for an exit as law enforcement took the defendant down.

“It’s the only time that sort of thing has happened in the court room since I’ve been here,” said Williams.

Ryan was taken back to Umatilla County Jail. Although he had long ago served the 30 days in jail, he was being held on additional charges stemming from his time there. Those charges include two counts assaulting a public safety officer, one of the reasons for the spit mask, unauthorized use of a motor vehicle and aggravated harassment. His bail is set at \$60,000.

Ryan told the court he intends to reside in Oregon after his release.

# FIRES

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presenters at the meeting were focused on helping Wallowa County residents prepare for the inevitable.

“It’s not if, it’s when,” said USFS Wallowa Unit Forester Matt Howard. “We live in a fire dependent ecosystem. We all have a choice: to be proactive or reactive.”

The wildfire protection commission, which includes Wallowa County Emergency Services Manager Paul Karvoski, Wallowa Resources Director Nils Christoffersen, Wallowa County Natural Resource Advisory Commission Chairman Bruce Dunn, representatives from ODF and USFS and many others, worked for 18 months to produce the plan.

Wallowa County as a whole faces “high and extreme” risk



Key players in the creation of a new fire plan for Wallowa County met to explain the process and need Feb. 7: Stewardship Forester Tim Cudmore, left, Wallowa Resources Director Nils Christoffersen, Wallowa Unit Forester Matt Howard, Gary Willis of Lostine and Ron Polk of Lostine.

for catastrophic fire, said Jenny Reinhart, a member of the commission. Other counties in that category include, in order of risk, Grant, Klamath, Wallowa, Umatilla and Baker.

The U.S. Forest Service, Oregon Department of Forestry and local fire departments are experienced and will act quickly when a wildfire starts, said Howard, but whether they’re dealing with

an entire neighborhood going up in flames or fighting to create a fire break between forest and homes is a choice homeowners may make for them.

“Are you out looking at your home, pulling needles out of your gutter, moving your wood pile, pulling back your vegetation in June or are you wishing you’d done that in August as a fire comes down and threatens your property?”

‘If a fire threatens their communities, they will have a plan, they won’t have to think it up as they go.’

Matt Howard  
USFS Wallowa Unit forester

As you are evacuating, are you hoping for the best when you come back? Did you do that up front? Did you work with your community?”

Besides Joseph, four communities ranked as having

“extreme” wildfire risk in Wallowa County: Allen Canyon/Bear Creek; Imnaha Corridor; Lostine Canyon; and Wallowa Lake-Ski Run. Others with “high” wildfire risk are Alder Slope; Davis Creek; and Divide/Prairie Creek.

Mitigating risk in those areas will be discussed in future meetings.

One community is already addressing those risks. Lostine has become the first community in northeast Oregon to begin the process of becoming an official “Firewise” community.

“What these folks are doing for the Lostine, I hope will be a model,” said Howard. “They are working together to

make their homes and properties more resilient to wild land fire. They will work through an evacuation plan. If a fire threatens their communities, they will have a plan, they won’t have to think it up as they go.”

A copy of the county’s plan will be posted online through Wallowa Resources; other informational meetings are planned including several meetings with Wallowa County Commissioners.

ODF can assist landowners in finding funding to reduce fuels and make their property fire resistant and defensible. ODF Stewardship Forester Tim Cudmore is the contact person for that information: Timothy.J.Cudmore@oregon.gov.

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