

LA GRANDE

PUC sets B2H public comment hearing

BY ANDREW CUTLER
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The Oregon Public Utility Commission is holding a public comment hearing on an Idaho utility's petition for a certificate of public convenience and necessity.

The hearing is scheduled for 6 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 16, at the Gilbert Center on the campus of Eastern Oregon University, La Grande.

Idaho Power has requested the petition for its Boardman to Hemingway transmission line project. The certificate details the purpose and route of the transmission line, its cost estimate and other relevant information.

"These events provide the public opportunities to speak directly to the commissioners about the application with the PUC to issue a CPCN related to this project," a release from the public utilities commission said. "If granted, Idaho Power would use this certificate in any court proceeding where it seeks to condemn an interest in land along the transmission line's path. We encourage you to provide your thoughts."

Fuji Kreider, a member of the Union County-based Stop B2H Coalition, said the upcoming public hearing isn't necessarily about any particular properties, which is why the Stop B2H Coalition is involved in the hearings.

"Right now, we are just helping people through the bureaucracy and what to do with the rules and regulations," she said. There is a second public



S. John Collins/Baker City Herald, File

The proposed Boardman to Hemingway power transmission line could follow the route of an existing line that runs along the eastern edge of Baker Valley near Highway 86.

comment hearing scheduled for Dec. 5. However, unlike the hearing at Eastern Oregon University, the December hearing will be all virtual. The Stop B2H Coalition is encouraging people to attend both hearings.

"People should participate to express to the commission that they need to consider the economic impacts to the people and the communities and they need to assess alternatives before they decide to take people's land," Kreider said.

She said Idaho Power's petition for a certificate of public convenience and necessity allows the consideration of alternate routing — something that's very important for Union County.

How to call in

Public comment priority will be given to individuals attending the hearing in person, but there is a call-in option available by calling 669-254-5252, entering the webinar identification number (161-548-6812) and the passcode (7667963170).

"This opens up the (Bureau of Land Management) route again in a way," she said. "It must be considered in the context of this condemnation. That's probably the biggest news for people locally."

In September, Oregon's Energy Facility Siting Coun-

cil approved a site certificate for the B2H project. The permit authorizes construction of the 290-mile, 500-kilovolt line across five Eastern Oregon counties, including Union County. Federal agencies have already granted permission for the line to cross land they manage.

The proposed transmission line would connect a new station near Boardman to an existing substation in southwest Idaho near Melba. Supporters of the project say the transmission line would provide a crucial link to move energy, much of it from hydroelectric, wind and other clean sources, between the Pacific Northwest, where energy use peaks in the

winter, and the Intermountain West, where energy use peaks in the summer.

"We're looking forward to moving this crucial project forward, and this meeting is one step in that process," Sven Berg, a spokesperson with Idaho Power, said. "For more than a year, we've worked hard to reach agreements on easements with private landowners along the project route. We are committed to working with landowners, and the meeting won't change that. In fact, the meeting will be another chance to interact with them and make our case for how important B2H is as we continue providing reliable, affordable, clean energy."

Lampkins

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But Lampkins has stories. And, at age 100, he is believed to be the oldest World War II veteran in Baker County.

He and 12 others were honored on Veterans Day, Nov. 11, in a ceremony at Meadowbrook Place, where he has lived for about 6 years.

"We should always continue to honor our veterans," said Julie Daly, community relations director at Meadowbrook.

Spurred by Pearl Harbor

Lampkins joined the U.S. Navy in 1942, prompted by the bombing of Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941.

He enlisted with a buddy, who joined the U.S. Marines.

"He never spent any time in a war zone, and that's where I spent all my time," Lampkins said.

He was stationed on a Navy destroyer, the USS Bradford, in the South Pacific. The ship's mission was to intercept Japanese kamikaze pilots before they got to the main fleet.

His fleet was Task Force 58 with 1,500 ships.

Lampkins was assigned as a radar operator, which meant he watched the radar screen for four hours at a time. U.S. aircraft carried a special signal, so he could decipher between U.S. and Japanese planes.

"Every one was identified," he said. "You had to know who everybody was."

During his tour, his ship shot down 15 Japanese airplanes, and sank a Japanese cruiser and several smaller ships.

His own ship was never hit by enemy fire.

Others weren't so lucky and he, along with other sailors, were sent to find the survivors after an attack.

In a 2019 interview with the Baker City Herald, Lampkins recounted that grim task.

"There weren't many (survivors) — oil burning on the water, the ship still exploding," he said.

Lampkins was discharged in 1945. He'd married his wife, Virginia, on Sept. 11, 1944, during a 10-day leave.

They were married for 70 years. She passed away in 2014.

He still carries the stories of World War II. And he'll talk about them, a bit, in his quiet voice.

"That's a long time ago," he said.

Sacrifices

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"The War on Terrorism has helped us all realize how truly unique the American way of life is," she said. "The freedom we enjoy is extremely special, and that is why we must defend it."

Little encouraged the audience to defend that way of life even if they don't join the military.

"We can protect our freedom simply by maintaining it here in America," she said. "If we want to preserve our freedoms, we must put them into action — for example, by voting in elections or speaking out against injustices. We must also ensure that everyone feels the benefits of freedom. We can do that by volunteering in our communities or teaching our children what it really means to be an American."



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

About 75 people attended a Veterans Day ceremony on Friday, Nov. 11, 2022, outside the Baker County Courthouse.

Duncan Pierce, chaplain with the Baker American Le-

gion Post 41, and a retired first sergeant, told the audience that

he wanted to honor someone with whom he had served on

a crew that fired antiaircraft missiles.

Pierce said another first sergeant, Calvin Foster, a rancher who lives near Baker City, lost his military honors in a house fire many years ago.

Pierce asked Foster to come forward, handing Foster an engraved meritorious service medal.

"Thanks, Cal," Pierce said.

Little concluded her address — she made it brief, she said with a laugh, in deference to the cold — by asking the audience to remember that Veterans Day is a celebration of America.

"Veterans Day isn't just a day for veterans — it's a day for all Americans," she said. "It's a day to remember why they were fighting and a day for all of us to begin our journey of protecting our freedom and the freedom of many future generations."

Council

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In May the clerk's office received 61 postmarked ballots within seven days of the election. Some of those were from voters who live outside the Baker City limits. Only voters who live within the city limits vote on Baker City Council races.

If the current order of candidates remains, Diaz, Guyer, Waggoner and Calder would join incumbent Jason Sprit starting in January 2023.

Two other current councilors — Kerry McQuisten and Shane Alderson — will both be leaving the council before the end of the year.

McQuisten is moving outside the city limits and thus won't be eligible to serve as a councilor. Her last meeting is Nov. 22.

Alderson was elected Nov. 8 as chairman of the Baker County Board of Commissioners. Alderson said he will stay on as a councilor through December.

The city charter states that "a vacancy in the council shall be filled by appointment by a majority of the council."

As for the term of the appointed councilors, the charter states that if the vacancy is filled more than 90 days before the next general election — which is the case, since the next general election won't happen until November 2024 — "the appointee's term of office runs only until the first council meeting in the year immediately following the election, and at the election a candidate shall be elected to the council for a two-year term."

Preliminary results

The closest margin in preliminary results is between Calder, who has the fourth-highest vote total at 1,830, and Katie LaFavor in fifth with 1,779 votes. That's a margin of 51 votes.

If the current order stands, Calder would serve a two-year term.

The top three candidates would serve four-year terms

— Diaz, 2,357 votes, Guyer, 2,068 votes, and Waggoner, 1,893 votes.

Diaz said he's "pretty excited" about receiving the most votes.

"I think it's an opportunity to move forward and kind of get past what happened in the previous city council, I think there's some changes that should be made and probably need to be made but

I'm excited for the future," Diaz said. "I think we have a good team and we'll have a great opportunity to secure the future of Baker City."

Guyer, who was appointed on Dec. 14, 2021, to fill a vacancy on the council, said he's "fine with the group that was voted for" in the Nov. 8 election.

"I think that all of them that, along with the current residing councilors, can work together

for the good of the community and I don't see any problem with that," Guyer said. "I'm looking forward to working with each of them as we go forward."

Waggoner, who was elected to a two-year term in 2020, said he thinks the new council will be "a good council because there's a lot of, I guess I would call us holdovers. So we all have

a gist of what's going on rather than somebody that's fresh to the council and has no information on anything and hasn't sat or been to the council meetings in quite a while. I see the biggest hurdle we've got coming up is money and how to keep the city solvent. And hire a police officer and maybe increase some of the fire department in the near future.

I think police and fire need one or two people so we've just got to figure out how to fund that."

Calder, who served on the city council from 2000-10, said she wants to encourage more public input at council meetings and schedule regular work sessions "where members can fully discuss and explore options, with the goal of becoming a better informed and more productive council. This will allow the council to listen to

more public testimony at the council meetings. There should be time in each meeting to hear from people on all sides of an issue. Council can better understand the priorities of the community this way as well as fostering more involvement which leads to better future leaders," she said.

Calder also said she wants the council to add a Future Committee to its roster of advisory boards and committees.

"I have been so impressed by the young people and their educators in our city and I believe we should get them involved now in helping the council to plan for their future," she said.

"There is also the opportunity to include many agencies and organizations in our community to better understand the needs of our older citizens, as well as other community members that are underrepresented."

Calder noted that despite the council setting "prioritizing public safety" as its top goal, "we lost the city ambulance service which subsidized our fire department and left the community shaken and a fire department with many challenges."

"Our city manager must bring forth plans and solutions," Calder said.

"That position is tasked with the responsibility of running the business of the city, not just pointing out the challenges. As the creator of a successful business, I know what is involved in anticipating future challenges, planning for how to adapt, and making sure my staff is prepared to seamlessly carry on. It's something every small business

owner in this city knows well.

"This election brings significant change to both city council and the county commission. I am hopeful that we can begin building a working, mutually beneficial and cooperative relationship between the two entities. We consolidated the Emergency Dispatch Center years ago but we need to explore other possible efficiencies that could provide our community with sustainable public safety, good roads and emergency services. Overall, I am ready to get to work and putting the public good back in focus."

Command

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The command center will be made available when possible to other local agencies, including Baker City Police, Oregon State Police and Baker County Emergency Management, as well as search and rescue operations in other counties.

Money for the trailer comes from Oregon's State Preparedness and Incident Response Equipment (SPIRE) grant program. The amount the county receives will depend on the final cost of the trailer.

The program is part of Oregon House Bill 2687, which the Legislature passed in 2017.

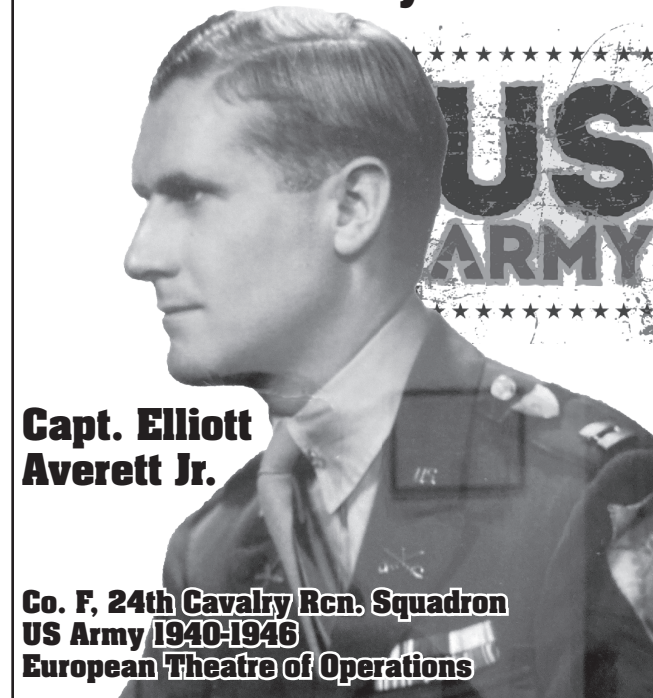
Sheriff Travis Ash applied for the grant earlier this year.

According to a state document, the SPIRE program "provides equipment to local governments and other recipients for emergency preparedness. The program funds the purchasing and distribution of equipment, including vehicles and other property, to be used during an emergency to decrease the risk for loss of life and property damage."

Baker County's command center will be equipped with an 8-kilowatt diesel generator.

McClay said the unit probably won't arrive for several months.

In memory of



Capt. Elliott Averett Jr.

**Co. F, 24th Cavalry Rcn. Squadron
US Army 1940-1946
European Theatre of Operations**