



District 3 preps for transition at the top

Board makes pact with Baker over Witty's time

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

CANYON CITY – The Grant School District No. 3 board of directors voted March 18 to approve the contract with Curt Shelley, finalizing his hire as the new superintendent.



Mark Witty



Curt Shelley

He will succeed current Superintendent Mark Witty, beginning July 1. Shelley's salary is set at \$110,000, which board president Chris Cronin said is mid-range for superintendents in districts of a similar size in Oregon, according to a survey by the Confederated School Administrators.

As Shelley is the outgoing principal at Grant Union Junior-Senior High School, that position is now open for applicants. It has a pay rate of \$84-94,000.

Officials hope to have the Grant Union post filled by the end of the school year, with a starting date of July 1.

The board also approved a contract with Baker School District 5J for Witty's services in the coming months, before he leaves his District 3 job. Under the contract, Witty will provide consulting services to assist in structuring Baker district's leadership team, advise on new administrative hires, and provide input on the 2015-16 budget and policies.

The Baker district will reimburse District 3 for Witty's time in Baker as the school year winds down. He said he expects to spend about four days a month in Baker through the end of the school year.

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School funding forecast: Cuts ahead?

By Scotta Callister
Blue Mountain Eagle

Local school officials are sounding the alarm about state funding projections, saying the latest scenario at the Legislature would trigger a new round of cuts for most districts in Grant County.

They join a chorus of concerns from educators across the state, even as conflicting reports surface about the impacts of a \$7.24 billion budget for the state school fund in the coming biennium.

Proponents say that's a \$600 million hike, but district officials caution that figure comes with a significant twist that will turn a positive into a negative.

They say the bonus would largely be wiped out by the requirement for full-day kindergarten, and they worry this level of funding will undercut staffing and program gains made recently as the state recovered from the recession.

The specter of slipping backward was underscored last week by Ryan Gerry, Prairie City School

District superintendent.

In a March 17 email, he said funding at \$7.24 billion would put some local schools back in "a cut mode."

"Prairie City SD 4 would be in this position and forced to make difficult decisions between balancing facilities, curriculum, technology and other essentials while keeping students' needs at the center of the discussion," he said.

He cited Oregon Department of Education figures showing his district could lose per-pupil funding of \$86, or more as

kindergarten implementation costs add up.

For other Grant County districts, the department estimated the following hits to per-pupil funding: \$148 in Monument School District, \$80 in Grant District 3, and \$74 in Dayville.

"The current biennium has allowed many districts around the state, including ours, to get their feet back under them and allocate funds back toward

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HAPPY CAMPERS

Lake Creek Youth Camp fundraiser tops the charts



Eagle photos/Scotta Callister

Lloydene Thomas holds her grandson, Clive Northway, who won a pellet gun in the kids' drawing at the Lake Creek fundraiser. With them are his sisters Adeline and Emmalyn.

Event draws about 200 people to Grant County Fairgrounds

Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY – A change in venue proved to be just the ticket as the Lake Creek Youth Camp held its most successful dinner auction ever.

The event drew about 200 people to the Grant County Fairgrounds last Saturday evening. It also attracted a bounty of donations for the silent and oral auctions: rifles, 4-wheeler equipment, vacation stays, artwork, metal sculptures, and more.

"We had so many donations this year," said Lindy Bastian, a Lake Creek board member and event organizer.

In addition to the auctions, the event featured several games of chance, a champagne glass drawing for

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Browsers check out the silent auction goods at the Lake Creek Camp fundraiser.



Master of ceremonies Marissa Williams and auctioneer Jack Southworth trade jokes as the live auction gets underway.

STUDENT ART



Delaney Freeman
Grade 4
Prairie City School
Teacher: Sue Thompson

Forest road idea sparks dialogue

Residents say county should explore options

By Scotta Callister
Blue Mountain Eagle

CANYON CITY – Rancher Loren Stout thinks the county should take on maintenance of roads in the national forest, funding the work by logging in a 300-foot swath on both sides.

He sees multiple benefits in such a plan.

"The fire break it creates would limit the size of the fires,

plus you could keep the roads open," he said.

Stout laid out his idea for the Grant County Court at its March 18 session. The topic drew about 20 people for a lively discussion about the possibilities, obstacles and practicalities.

Stout said he got the idea after the South Fork Complex fires, when he came to the conclusion, "They're managing a forest to burn it."

He said years of low timber harvest, road closures, grazing restrictions and more have allowed fire fuels to build up while preventing

access to fight fires.

Stout said if the county took over the roads with a 99-year lease and harvested trees on both sides, it would be a plus all around.

"The roads would be maintained, and it would generate money for the schools, the roads, the county," he said. "It also would supply logging jobs."

Proponents of the idea noted the Forest Service doesn't have money for road maintenance.

County Judge Scott Myers asked if that kind of program would be sustainable. Stout

projected a selective cut program could keep going 40-50 years.

Jim Sproul suggested the Grant County Forest Commission could come up with plans for the program. He said the forest should more than pay for the road maintenance costs.

Hank Lissman said the concept sounds great, but he wondered about the liability and how the county would pay for any environmental litigation that might be sparked by the logging.

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