



GRANT COUNTY TEAMS HAVE WINNING WEEKEND
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Plaintiffs withdraw challenge to county pot ban

Officials to consider referring decision to voters

By Sean Hart
Blue Mountain Eagle

A legal challenge to the Grant County ordinance banning commercial marijuana operations has been withdrawn.

Several county residents had requested a court order invalidating the ordinance, claiming procedural errors in its adoption, but a hearing scheduled for Jan. 6 was canceled after attorneys for both sides discussed the matter.

Attorney Robert Raschio filed a complaint for declaratory and injunctive relief against the county Dec. 28 on behalf of his clients, Jerry Russell, Eva Harris and Paul and Loreen Cooper. Russell and the Coopers sought to legally grow marijuana on their properties in north-

western Grant County, according to the complaint, and Harris is a medical marijuana patient who relies on others for transportation to the nearest dispensary in Deschutes County.

Raschio said County Judge Scott Myers indicated he was willing to hold a hearing on referring the ordinance to county voters, so his clients dropped the complaint.

"We need a hearing on the referral as quickly as possible," Raschio said. "With these assurances, my clients felt it was in the best interest of everyone that the injunction request be dismissed for now as to not cost the county or my clients any more resources. My clients want to bring resources into this county not take it away."

County Judge Scott Myers said he was pleased the issue was resolved without further litigation.

"It was going to be expensive for both sides," he said. "I think it's best for all involved."

Myers said county attorney Ron Yockim is looking into the possibility of the county referring the ordinance to voters, which the county commissioners will consider. Yockim had prepared a 44-page response to the complaint submitted by Raschio, Myers said, and the agreement for the complaint to be withdrawn also included an assurance that the county would not seek attorney fees from Raschio's clients.

Raschio said he believed the county would now refer the matter to the voters, a

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Eagle file photo

From left, Grant County Judge Scott Myers, Commissioners Boyd Britton and Chris Labhart listen Dec. 16 to public testimony about an ordinance banning commercial marijuana operations.

John Day fire hall, street improvement projects continue

Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — What does 2016 hold in store for the town of John Day?

The top priority is the construction of John Day Rural Fire District's long anticipated and much needed new fire station at 316 S. Canyon Blvd.

City Manager Peggy Gray said completion is anticipated this spring.

"Unfortunately, weather hasn't been our friend," she said.

However, once the metal building is up, the contractors should be able to make up for lost time, she said.

The new facility will replace the aging one on Southeast Dayton Street, which was built in 1953. It will be able to better accommodate large emergency vehicles and will have a meeting and training room for community use.

The second major project is continuing the U.S. 395 Sidewalk Improvements Project.

John Day received an Oregon Department of Transportation Enhance Grant for the 2015-2018 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program to construct sidewalks bicycle and parking lanes from Southwest 6th Avenue to Grant Union Junior-Senior High School. While construction isn't scheduled until 2018, ODOT will begin the design engineering phase this year, Gray said.

The city has applied for two more sidewalk projects for the 2018-2021 STIP.

The first would complete the Downtown Improvements Project, starting at the stoplight



The Eagle/Cheryl Hoefler

New pedestrian street lighting with banners depicting historical sites in John Day are among the improvements being made in John Day's downtown business section.

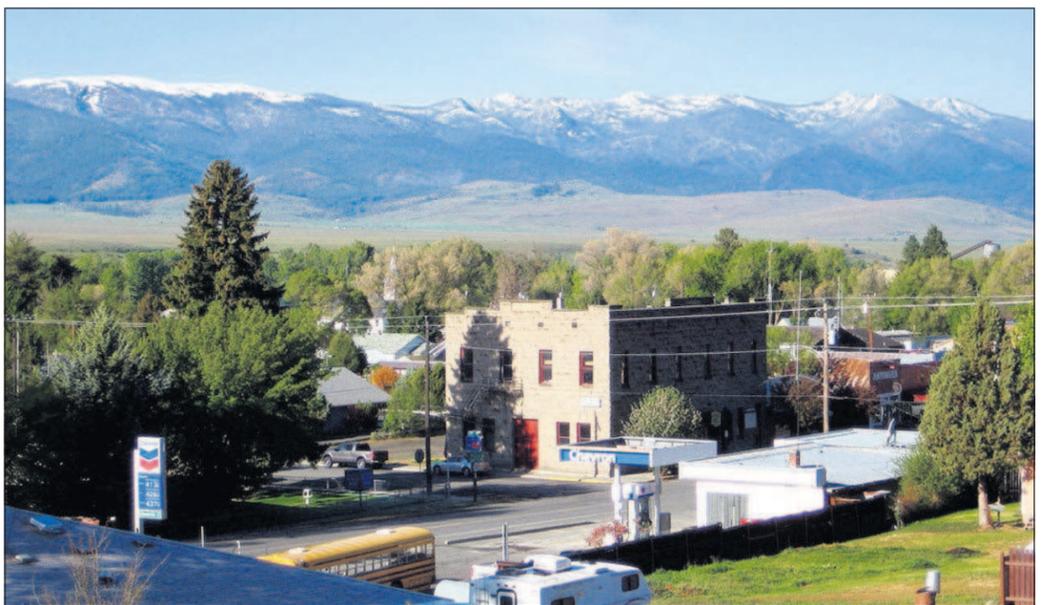
west to Canton Street. The improvements are the same as those completed last year, with sidewalks and pedestrian street lighting along both sides of Main Street.

The second is another sidewalk project that would run from Southwest Second Avenue, where the first work ended, to Southwest Sixth Avenue, where it would connect with the 2018 project.

Projects for the region will be reviewed and discussed at the meeting of the South East and North East Area Commissions on Transportation Jan. 25 at Grant County Regional Airport in John Day. The city hopes to be awarded at least one, with the Main Street sidewalk project being the top priority.

ON THE TOWN

PRAIRIE CITY



The Eagle/Cheryl Hoefler

Prairie City rests at the eastern end of the John Day Valley with the Strawberry Wilderness for a scenic backdrop.

Abundant in recreation, business, community spirit

By Cheryl Hoefler
Blue Mountain Eagle

PRAIRIE CITY — "Rich in history and rich in neighborly compassion" is how Tací Philbrook describes life in Prairie City.

Philbrook, who is the town's city recorder, said, "The sense of community camaraderie is like no other."

Prairie City lies at the eastern end of the John Day Valley, in the shadow of Strawberry Mountain, and on the fringes of the Blue Mountains to the northeast.

With a population of 910, the town is the second largest in Grant County.

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The Eagle/Cheryl Hoefler

With the Prairie City Community Center and Strawberry Mountain in the background, Prairie City park in the heart of town is the site of family gatherings and community events, such as the Grant County Fourth of July celebration.

Preparedness fair slated to address flooding concerns

County event set for Saturday, Feb. 6

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — With the increased likelihood of flooding following local fires, preparation is important.

Grant County officials and the local American Red Cross chapter will hold a Flood Emergency Preparedness Fair from 3-5 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 6, at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in John Day.

Organizers of the event aim to update citizens on flooding risks in the county and share the ongoing mitigation efforts as well as how



The Eagle/Angel Carpenter

A planning meeting for the Flood Emergency Preparedness Fair was held Jan. 7. Pictured at the meeting are, from left, Shilo Burton, Forest Service public affairs specialist; emergency coordinator Ted Williams; Red Cross volunteers Jim Spell and Paula Long. The organizer, Joan Bowling (not pictured) is the local Disaster Action Team captain for the American Red Cross.

they can personally prepare in the event of a flood.

Grant County Emergency Management Coordinator Ted Williams will start the meeting by showing flood plain

maps of the area of Canyon City and John Day, covering the extent of flooding that is possible and answering questions.

Williams said low-lying

areas near Canyon Creek could be at increased risk of flooding for about five years until new vegetation establishes itself within the watershed.

He will share information on a new emergency alert system which allows for mass alerts to go out through emails, land line phones, cell phones, iPods and televisions.

"It's going to be a great thing," he said. "It allows for alerts to go out to hundreds of people at once."

He added the alert system can reach the entire county, or if there is an emergency in Monument, for example, it could reach just those residents. If phone lines are clogged, the high-priority messages would still be transmitted, he said.

Local Red Cross Disaster

Action Team (DAT) members will have information on 72-hour kits, how Red Cross shelters work and more ideas on how to prepare for a flood.

"We're encouraging people to have a plan for what they would do if there was a flash flood — to prepare to be ready — and be aware of handicapped or disabled neighbors and family members," said DAT team captain Joan Bowling.

Light refreshments will be served and activities for children, who are at the meeting with their parents or guardians, will be available.

Contact Williams at 541-575-4006, for more information or to sign up to volunteer, or Bowling at 541-575-1248, to learn more about volunteering for Red Cross.

