

FOREST

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be addressed through the constitutional initiative process.”

The new petition came after Grant County Circuit Court Judge William D. Cramer Jr. ruled in 2016 the measure approved by county voters in 2002 to create a forest commission should not have been placed on the ballot because it conflicted with paramount federal and state law by asserting authority to manage all public lands within the county. Residents can form a commission “to develop plans for future management” or “to provide advisory information” to the Grant County Court, Cramer said in the ruling, “but any such measure should clearly state the commissions (sic) limits, must meet the procedural requirements in its inception and validation, and must not violate other superior or paramount laws.”

Traylor was also the chief petitioner for the 2002 measure. Except for a slight change from “shall assume the responsibility to manage public lands within Grant County” in the 2002 initiative to “shall assume the responsibility to manage any and all public lands ceded to the County at any point in the future,” the initiatives are very similar.

The initiative sought to establish a publicly elected seven-member board with the responsibility of managing land and resources ceded to the county, allowing hiring of personnel, distribution of revenue, purchase, trade and sale of public lands and reallocation of any federal fire-fighting funds to the commission.

Traylor said he was not surprised by the decision. He said he plans to try to meet with Yockim to establish a clear criteria for a petition.

“We got set back, but we’re not done yet,” Traylor said.

WINGS

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“It’s time to get out of the saddle and hang it up,” he said.

JD Rents owner Robert Watt quite literally hung up Feiger’s wings for him.

Feiger had gone into JD Rents for a new chain for his chainsaw and remarked to Watt he planned on using it to cut up his plane after he finished with the firewood. Watt thought it would be a shame to see a perfectly good plane cut to pieces and proposed hanging it in his store.

Watt removed the engine, leaving the plane at about 500 pounds, and used scissor lifts and fork lifts to raise and rotate the plane before hanging it from the ceiling with cables.

“I just enjoy everything aviation, and to have something that somebody put so many hours in that looks so immaculate, it would be sad to destroy that kind of project.” Watt, a former airplane mechanic, said.

The plane has a 22-foot wingspan and is mostly wood, Feiger said.

Unable to afford a new or used aircraft, he built the plane from a kit in his garage for about \$7,000. When a Federal Aviation Administration inspector looked at the plane, he said the workmanship was in the top 10 percent of aircraft he had reviewed, Feiger said.

“This isn’t a project you take lightly,” Watt said. “Every joint he laminated and glued and fastened had to be right.”

The small plane has a cozy cockpit, from which Feiger remembers flying all over the region. Before the days of GPS he would fly using landmarks and a stopwatch to navigate.

He moved to the area in 1976 to work for the Forest Service as Prairie City’s first silviculturalist. Feiger began work on his plane in 1981 and finished in 1984. Before starting on the project, he had only flown model radio control planes. Halfway through, he began taking flying lessons from Bill Krayer, a former Navy pilot.

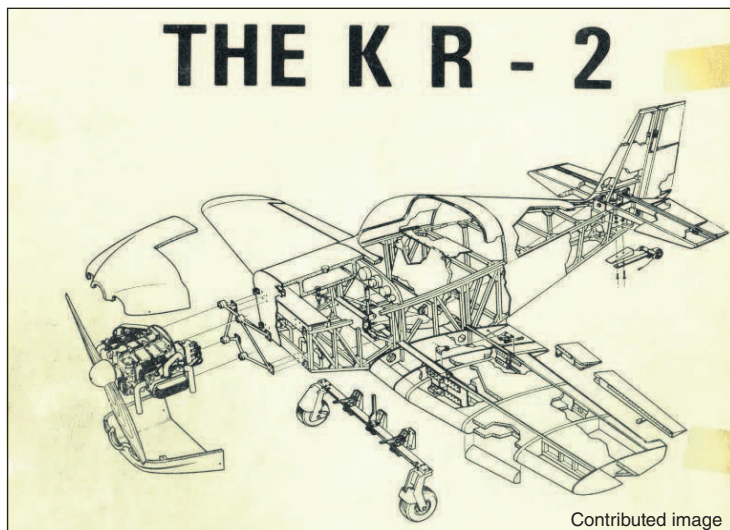
“Good training from one helluva good pilot,” Feiger said.

After 30 years of flying and 1,500 hours in his plane, Feiger said he’s ready to call it quits. However, a trip down memory lane is never far away.

“Whenever I get the urge in my old age to have another look at it, all I have to do is drive down to JD Rents,” he said.



The Eagle/Rylan Boggs
JD Rents owner Robert Watt (left) and Dave Feiger stand for a photo in front of Feiger’s retired plane, which now hangs in JD Rents. Watt wanted to see the plane hung instead of scrapped.



Contributed image

WALDEN

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and bogged down with regulations and bureaucracy, all of which could lead them to non-logical decisions. He asked what could be done to help the agencies function more effectively.

Walden said people voted for President Donald Trump because they wanted change, and could expect it to happen under his administration. One example he gave was better fire prevention through management. Walden claimed it’s four times cheaper to prevent fire through proper management than to fight it. He said over time this management would pay for itself. Grant School District No. 3 Superintendent Curt Shelley said he approved of Walden’s work on education but said the local school system was strained and underfunded and that unfunded mandates were a huge problem. Grant Union social sciences teacher Cindy Dougharty-Spencer said she was fearful of Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos’ past history and called on Walden to help defend public education for all.

Walden sympathized with them and said the state’s Public Employee Retirement System placed a huge burden on the schools and the state in general. He pledged to communicate their needs in Washington, D.C.

Resident Sharon Livingston thanked Walden for his service and expressed her repulsion at the treatment of Trump’s cabinet nominees. Both she and Frances Preston called for Walden to free Dwight and Steven Hammond, Burns ranchers who were imprisoned after a fire burned from their property onto federal lands.

Walden said he supported freeing the Hammonds, and it was an ongoing concern of his.

Livingston also said she did not want the federal government controlling water and water rights in rural communities.

Walden said President Barack Obama’s administration had fought rural values and tried to shut down the local way of life. Another resident voiced concerns about the federal hiring freeze enacted, specifically regarding the local Natural Resource Conservation Service office, which he said was being run by a “skeleton crew.”

Walden assured him the hiring freeze was only temporary and had been put in place to prevent the remnants of the Obama administration from hiring people to serve during the current presidential administration.

In response to a question about Oregon’s status as a sanctuary state — which would not help the federal government deport illegal aliens if their only crime was being in the country unauthorized — Walden said he was unsure if Gov. Kate Brown even had the authority to declare Oregon a sanctuary state. However, he said there was a nexus in place used in the past to remove federal funds to states, if needed. He mentioned examples when it had been used to lower speed limits or raise the drinking age.

The issue of broadband connectivity was brought up, and Walden said there were federal programs in play that would help rural communities increase connectivity in the future.

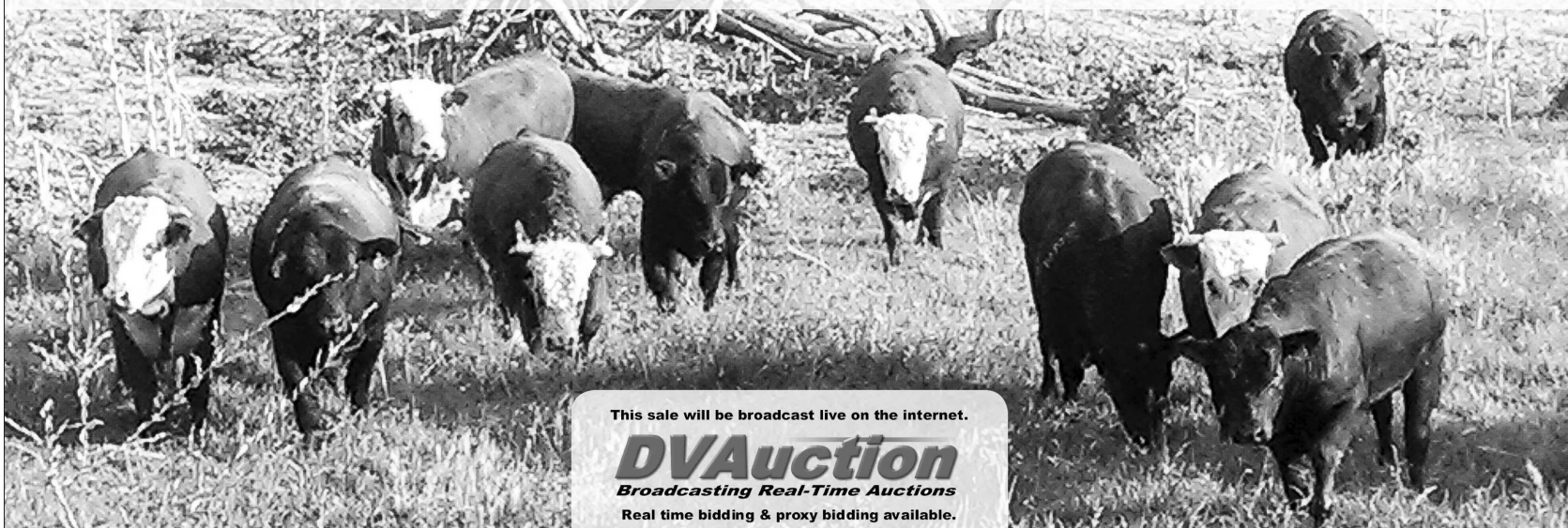
Grant County Commissioner Boyd Britton voiced concerns about whether or not the county would continue to see Payments in Lieu of Taxes funding. Walden assured the commissioner they would continue to receive PILT funds.

At the end of the meeting, Walden took time to answer follow-up questions and confer with those who still had concerns before leaving for Baker City for another meeting.

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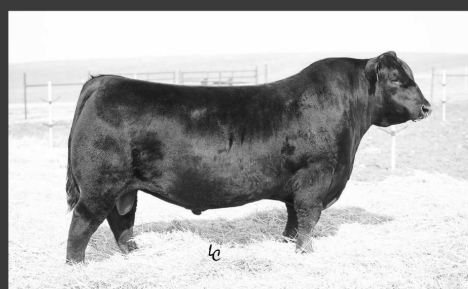
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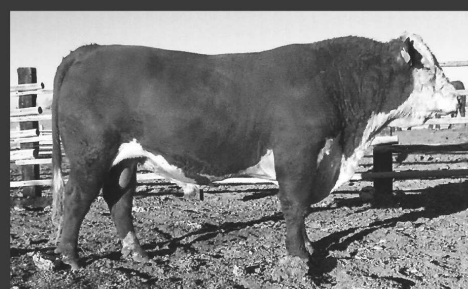
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