

# City lays out plans for internet coalition



**John Day City Manager Nick Green.**

## County residents could have fiber-optic internet by October of 2018

By Rylan Boggs  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Using the roughly \$1.8 million provided by the state, the city of John Day plans to provide access to high-speed internet to John Day, Seneca, Prairie City and Canyon City.

These four communities plan to partner with Grant County to form the Grant County Digital Network Coalition, with John Day acting

as the lead agency, according to City Manager Nick Green.

While the \$1.8 million from the state is enough to install a fiber optic line from Prairie City to Burns, Green said the coalition would use the funds as match money for grants to help fund the project.

Cost sharing would be based on the population, with John Day paying 23 percent,

Prairie City paying 12 percent, Canyon City paying 10 percent, Seneca paying 3 percent and Grant County paying 52 percent.

Green said he was unsure if the coalition would provide the service as a utility or if the coalition would contract with a private firm to provide these services. He said the average download speed in the county is about 10 megabits per second, and he expects 30 mega-

bits or faster from the new network.

The network will be created in four phases with the first phase being the design and financing of the network.

The second phase will construct the main fiber optic line from Prairie City through John Day and into Burns where it will link up with the network there. Connections will be made to schools, city halls, the hos-

pital and county courthouse.

The third phase will extend services to residents through either fiber to the home or wireless service.

The fourth phase will extend service to the northern and western parts of the county where lower population densities will likely require a wireless solution.

Green said he hoped to have the intergovernmental agreement adopted in September and begin servicing residents by October of 2018.

## Firefighters extinguish blaze in John Day

### One building destroyed, fire contained

By Rylan Boggs  
Blue Mountain Eagle

A fire scorched grass, trees and a building Saturday morning in John Day.

A Juniper Ridge Acute Care Facility employee called to report the fire at about 9:45 a.m., and John Day Police Department, John Day Fire Department, Canyon City Fire Department, Oregon Department of Forestry and the John Day

ambulance responded.

The fire, just west of Juniper Ridge, was roughly an eighth of an acre when firefighters arrived and quickly contained it.

A small shed was destroyed, and the cause of the fire is still unknown.

Crews had the fire under control quickly and were mopping up just after 10:30 a.m., according to John Day dispatch.

The John Day Fire Department was still investigating the fire Monday afternoon and was not able to state the cause, according to Lt. Ronda Metler.



The Eagle/Rylan Boggs

A firefighter drags a hose to a blaze west of the Juniper Ridge Acute Care Facility Saturday, Aug. 26. The fire was roughly an eighth of an acre and firefighters quickly contained it.

## Fire burns 25-35 acres near Mt. Vernon

Blue Mountain Eagle

A fire burned 25-35 acres near Mt. Vernon on Monday night.

The fire, southwest of Mt. Vernon in the Riley Creek area, was initially called in by Mt. Vernon Fire Department just after 9:30 p.m., according to John Day dispatch.

Mt. Vernon Fire Department, John Day Fire Department, Canyon City Fire Department and the United States Forest Service responded and contained the fire by 1 a.m., according to dispatch.

No structures were damaged, and no injuries were reported. The cause of the grass fire is currently unknown, but dispatch received reports of a number of lightning-caused fires.

## State economists: Taxpayers can expect a 'kicker'

By Claire Withycombe  
Capital Bureau

State economists say nearly \$464 million will be returned to taxpayers next year, after income tax collections were higher than expected.

Oregon operates on two-year budget cycles. The most recent biennial cycle concluded June 30.

When income tax collections exceed projections for the state's budget period by more than 2 percent, Oregon law requires that the money be returned to taxpayers, a phenomenon called the "kicker."

Since the state has collected about 2.3 percent more than predicted in May 2015, about \$463.5 million will be returned to personal income taxpayers during next year's tax filing period.

A similar "kicker" rule applies to corporate income taxes, except the excess is kept and set aside for education funding. Corporate excise taxes ended the biennium at about \$111 million more than the close of session forecast.

Wednesday's forecast was the first after a legislative session where revenue was a key point of contention between legislators who advocated for restructuring the state's tax system to boost revenue and those who wanted to cut costs.

Senate Minority Leader Ted Ferrioli, R-John Day, argued that the strong forecast and the expected "kicker" indicated that a sales tax on corporate sales was unnecessary.

"To me, this forecast signals two things: first, that we do not need a gross receipts

sales tax, as our budget is in balance and our economy is producing surpluses," Ferrioli said. "And second, Oregonians will have larger refunds or lower tax bills which will act as a further economic stimulus."

Senate Majority Leader Ginny Burdick, D-Portland, said that the forecast showed "our policies are supporting a more prosperous statewide economy."

However, she also advocated for tax reform.

"The economy swings up and down, and the responsible thing to do right now, while we enjoy the good times, is to take a serious look at our revenue structure," Burdick said. "We need to use this time to create a more stable system that works for all Oregonians."

Many Democrats had ad-

vocated for tax reform during the session, specifically shifting from a corporate income tax to a tax on corporate sales.

In the next biennium, which began July 1 and ends June 30, 2019, the "kicker" will mean a slightly lower general fund revenue outlook, but will likely be offset by a robust lottery sales forecast, new legislation and higher ending balances, state economists said.

While Oregon's economic growth has slowed from previous levels, overall, the state's economy is still performing well.

"Our growth still looks

great compared to the typical state," said State Economist Mark McMullen, who added that there were some signs of slowdown, in indicators of income such as salaries and wages, as well as retirement and investment income.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown promoted the state's job growth and used the economic forecast as an opportunity to tout the state's economic development policies.

"Oregon businesses and workers develop world-class products and ideas — and that's something to celebrate," Brown said. "But we can't rest on our laurels."

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