

TOWER

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site is too close to the school and a residential area. Miller agreed it would be too close to the school.

Phippen was also concerned about how the tower would hold up in windy conditions.

Katy Nelson, in the audience, said she lives between Prairie City and John Day and pays a lot for only a little cellphone coverage.

"We desperately need to have a choice," she said.

After the council voted against the proposal, Miller said, "I don't think we would not want it in our area, as long as it's not in a highly populated area."

Primozic added, "We would love to have the tower. It's just the location they picked couldn't be worse from an aesthetic standpoint."

After further discussion, the council unanimously voted to approve of the cell tower, if it could be placed in the area of the city's industrial park.

Malone said she would look into the new proposed site.

City considers joining broadband coalition

The city council meeting included a presentation from John Day City Manager Nick Green about the \$1.82 million in broadband funding awarded to John Day.

The funding from the state legislature will be used to run a 75-mile, 144-strand fiber cable on power poles from Burns to John Day.

So far, John Day, Canyon City and Seneca are prepared to adopt the Grant County Digital Network Coalition agreement and ordinance.

Patterson asked why Prairie City would want to be a part of it.

"We wanted to give every city the opportunity," Green said. "When you have one provider, you may not be in a good position five to 10 years from now."

He mentioned price control and no competition as downfalls to not joining the coalition. Green said the city could join now or later, but there may be a cost to join later once the coalition is established.

"My goal is to take the county from the second worst to the second best (in the state)," Green said.

John Day Police Chief



The Eagle/Angel Carpenter

Tracey Malone, a zoning specialist from Faulk & Foster of Grand Rapids, Michigan, speaks about the proposed plans for a U.S. Cellular cellphone tower, including positive aspects such as creating competition and giving customers options.

Richard Gray, who was a long-time resident of Prairie City, said he approved of the project.

"It would increase internet service," Gray said. "I don't think we're risking anything."

Mayor Hamsher said Prairie City has faster internet than John Day and expressed concern about the city's current problem of residents unable to water their lawns.

"It would be different

if I could see the end cost," Hamsher said.

Some of the pluses to the broadband project Green mentioned included faster speeds and competition, which could result in lower prices, and access to higher education.

"If you're not leading on the cutting edge of technology, then your economy slows down," Green said. "It won't solve our problems, but it would remove a barrier."

When asked, a majority in the audience raised their hands in favor of joining the broadband coalition.

The council voted to send out a mass mailing to residents with information and a survey about the project before making a decision.

Water workshop set for Oct. 18

Public Works Director Chris Camarena said an Oregon Department of Environmental Quality inspection of the city water system had taken place that day, and he would have a report soon.

He said sewer leaks have been an issue. He said the city is also running on borrowed time where the water pumps are concerned.

"If they (break) it could be

catastrophic," he said, adding, "We've got to get another well by spring."

Hamsher set up a water workshop, which will be held at 6 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 18, at city hall, 133 S. Bridge St., and the public can attend.

The mayor said he, the council and Camarena will look at proposed well sites to add additional water to the current system.

In other news, attention was brought to the bill for porta-potties rented during the eclipse. The original bill was \$7,200, yet many of them didn't require being serviced every day. It was noted that city clerk Bobbie Brown saved nearly \$4,000 by making calls about the issue, lowering the price to \$3,276.

Garrison said the group that brought vintage trailers to Christmas on the Prairie last year would like to invite more to join at this year's Nov. 18 event. She asked if they could have permission to use the blacktop, the empty downtown parking lot, for dry camping, which the council approved.

It was also noted the recycling center is seeking volunteers. For more information, call city hall at 541-820-3605.

PALMER

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The investigation found "insufficient evidence" that Palmer destroyed public records, Slauson said, and "the evidence does not support a conclusion" Palmer violated state concealed handgun license laws.

"The scope of our investigation was limited to potentially criminal matters," Slauson said in the letter. "Accordingly, we offer no opinion regarding whether Sheriff Palmer complied with relevant county policies or public record retention laws; rather, our investigation simply has not revealed concrete evidence of criminal conduct."

Slauson said the department interviewed witnesses, reviewed records and policies, examined forensically reconstructed shredded documents and reviewed court documents from The Oregonian newspaper's public records lawsuit against Palmer and the sheriff's office. The lawsuit was dismissed once Palmer produced the records after the suit was initiated, but the judge ordered Palmer to pay \$28,000 in attorney fees to The Oregonian.

Palmer and Gray did not immediately respond to phone and email messages from the Eagle.

911

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need to be familiar with local geography and history. He recalled a time when a dispatcher in Idaho handled an incident involving a lost snowmobiler and didn't know the local area.

Mayor Ron Lundbom asked residents who hear negative comments about the issue to contact the city councilors. He noted that the proposed tax amounted to the cost of two large pizzas per year.

John Day Fire Chief Ron Smith told the Eagle he supported the ballot measure for the reasons outlined by Green. Costs at the dispatch center keep rising every year, he said, and the fairest way to pay those costs would be through an increase in the statewide telephone fee that funds 911 dispatch service in Oregon.

"Raising the fee won't stop people from using cell phones," he said.

Smith also raised concerns about outsourcing 911 dispatch to a regional center.

"I'm afraid our service level will go down," he said. "Local dispatchers know the local geography and the residents. Paying \$38 a year for a \$100,000 home would be money well spent."

Grant County Judge Scott Myers told the Eagle an increase in the state 911 telephone fee "is long overdue."

"It's only fair that all phones are taxed," he said. "Our local initiative only taxes property owners. The state needs to step up and increase the tax, but it sounds like there was a promise made a long time ago between legislators that it would never increase. I don't think it has been given a

very high priority for the next session, if it will be discussed at all."

Oregon State Police Sgt. Tom Hutchison told the Eagle of his concerns if local dispatch was outsourced.

"In my opinion, the local 911 dispatch center is crucial to the security of the citizens of Grant County, because of the ability to immediately dispatch law enforcement, local fire service providers and EMS," he said. "The dispatchers have an intimate knowledge of the area that they are dispatching for, as well as for the first responders that they are working with. This increases response times, which saves lives and reduces property damage. Although a dispatch center out of the area may provide adequate service to Grant County, I don't believe it will be as efficient as the Grant County 911 dispatch center."

Rebekah K. Rand, director of emergency medical services for the Blue Mountain Hospital District, told the Eagle about the crucial role dispatch serves in providing ambulance service.

"Blue Mountain Hospital District EMS is committed to ensuring access to quality emergency medical care close to home," she said. "One of our priorities is to protect and facilitate our timely response to medical emergencies, as time is crucial, especially in our frontier region of Grant County. The 911 Dispatch Center plays a crucial role in our ability to respond timely and accurately to our patients when medical and trauma emergencies occur."

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- Joy Harjo

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GRANT COUNTY'S CHAMBER NEWSLETTER

Hello Grant County, I hope you are enjoying these nice Autumn days, winter is right around the corner! Results of our annual election for Chamber Board of Directors are in and Scotta Callister has been re-elected for another term and Sally Knowles and Elaine Livran have been elected to serve on the board. Each term is three years. Board members and our new President Bruce Ward will be installed in a ceremony to be held November 8th at the John Day Elks Lodge. All Chamber members are invited and encouraged to attend. Dinner will be provided. Guest speakers will be John Day City Manager Nick Green and Oregon State Senator Ted Ferioli. Our October Board meeting and Membership Luncheon will be Thursday, October 19th. The board meets at the Chamber office at 11:00 AM and the No-host luncheon will be at the Outpost at noon. Guest speaker will be Representative Cliff Bentz. On Wednesday, October 18th, the Chamber will host a Forum on Ballot Measure 12-69 -the Local Option Levy to fund our local 911 Dispatch Center for five years. Bob Quinton will be the moderator. Representatives from the City of John Day and 911 Dispatch Center and a panel of representing Cities/County, Law Enforcement, and EMS will be on hand to answer questions and concerns and share their perspectives.

Have you checked out our Interactive Travel Guide App? If not, you really should. Go to your app store and type in: grantcounty.or. When you see our Elk logo, download it. It's not just for tourists and visitors to Grant County. Locals can benefit from it as well! You can access all kinds of information and maps. You can easily find and contact dining establishments who are Chamber members. You can call them right from the app. As of September 30, we have had nearly 3,000 people download our app. There seems to be a lot of interest in Grant County!

If you are not a Chamber member, think about joining us, we'd love to have you!

Tammy Bremner
Manager, Grant County Chamber of Commerce

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A Big Thank You from the Rally for the Cure committee!

We would like to thank everyone who participated, donated items and helped.

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