

TRUST

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public's engagement with the Forest Service, she said.

"The whole purpose of tonight's meeting is to improve relationships," Blue Mountain District Ranger Dave Halemeier said. "I need to hear people, and you need to know I'm listening, but there is a process I need to follow."

Halemeier said it was hard to change the "paradigm," but at the same time people needed to agree on terminology – such as the meaning of cooperation and collaboration.

"It would take another day to go through all the topics raised tonight," he said.

One word that came up several times at the meeting was "coordination." One man noted that the word was miss-

ing from Ediger's PowerPoint presentation, and he claimed that many government agencies in the past had "refused to coordinate." A woman said she wanted "coordination" put on Ediger's list because the public doesn't understand it.

"I've been hearing a lot recently about coordination," Ediger said, adding that it involved intergovernmental relationships, such as between the Forest Service and Grant County, and there wasn't enough time to go into that topic that night.

The NEPA process

One man said that he tried to obtain information through the federal Freedom of Information Act but was told he would have to pay Forest Service staff to collect the information. The public had a right to know, and he shouldn't have to pay for that, he said.

Sasha Fertig, a forest planner with the Malheur National Forest, explained that decision-making for agency projects followed a formal process under the federal National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA. Decisions are made based on public and agency input using credible science and other factors, she said.

Members of the public could comment on proposed projects during the scoping and comment periods, but under NEPA rules only those who commented during those periods can file comments during the objection period, she said.

It was also important for comments not to be generalized. It was better to offer specific recommendations or to request specific information, Fertig said. A comment that simply said "Don't close any roads" would be difficult to

interpret by agency staff, she said.

"All comments are accepted, but some are hard to interpret without detail," Halemeier said. "More specificity gives a comment more standing."

Working with the agency

Wade Tait, a panelist from the Eastern Oregon Trails Alliance, described the four-year process his group underwent to get Forest Service approval for a network of mountain bike trails in the Magone Lake area.

Starting in 2014, a "loose group" of mountain bikers solicited feedback from local and regional bikers and began to verify Forest Service claims that mountain bike trails already existed in the Malheur National Forest, Tait said. The trails that had been identified as mountain bike trails were covered with fallen trees and were

"completely unrideable," he said. This established a "need" for their proposal, he said.

Tait's group followed the NEPA process, working with the Forest Service's recreation planners, holding meetings and soliciting comments. Suitable areas needed to be identified using input from silviculturists and botanists, Tait said.

To be successful, a group needs to limit the scope of its proposed project and to develop the "capacity" to persevere through the many years required under the NEPA process, Tait said. Identifying and dealing with potential conflicts early in the process would be beneficial, he said.

"Collaboration is key," he added.

A final decision approving the Magone Lake mountain bike trail system was made on May 3, Tait said. Next up was

raising the \$750,000 needed to construct the trail system.

A second panelist, Katherine Rose, helped organize a program under the North Fork Watershed Council that provided jobs for youths performing restoration work on Forest Service and other lands.

She had managed to obtain funding and work for about 50 youths and their crew leaders, but she said it was frustrating at times. She cited long wait times and having to show up in person at Forest Service offices to get things done.

Rose said she's already started organizing next year's program, but with the turnover at the Forest Service, she'll need to start over again. The past summer's turnover created a "perfect storm," she said.

"It's always a puzzle," she said. "My current goal is to start the process now."

WATER

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The city has three municipal wells, but the No. 1 well is old and available for emergency use, Camarena said. The city uses nearly 400 gallons per minute in summer and nearly 200 in winter. The No. 1 well can produce 50 gpm but only for about six hours before it "collapses," according to Councilor Georgia Patterson.

The No. 2 well was rated at 150 gpm, but over time that fell to less than 100 gpm. The well casing was re-perforated in 2008 to improve performance, but production fell to about 70 gpm, and the city looked into the matter, Camarena said.

Sand and aggregate in the No. 2 well damaged the pump's impeller, and hard water deposits had clogged holes in the well casing, Mayor Jim Hamsher said. The city was getting ready to address the two issues when the lightning strike occurred.

The upgrading work was



The Eagle/Richard Hanners

From left, Prairie City City Councilor Joe Phippen, Mayor Jim Hamsher, Councilor Carole Garrison and Councilor Dottie Miller discuss options during an Oct. 18 water workshop.

delayed, and crews worked to get the No. 2 well back into service. By adjusting the pump depth and variable motor speed, the well was fine-tuned so it could stay in operation – but it was down to 50 gpm. Now that the reservoir is up to a safe water level, the city could consider getting the needed work done on the No. 2 well, which requires taking it out of operation.

Well No. 3 was drilled in 2011 and can produce 150 gpm

except in summer, when output drops to about 50 gpm. The city also obtains water from infiltration galleries near Dixie Creek.

The Dixie Creek water is treated in a \$2 million slow-sand filtration system installed in 2008 – two 50-by-50 foot cells filled with special sand and aggregate. The system is shut down for maintenance in summer because of low water flows, Camarena said.

Hamsher said when he was mayor in 2005, he wanted the

city to invest in a new well at Fainman Springs rather than the slow-sand filtration system. The city holds water rights at the location but not access. The Fainman Springs well could produce up to 600 gpm – twice what the city needed, Hamsher said.

The estimated \$900,000 cost of a well at Fainman Springs would include two miles of pipe, a pressure-reducing valve, bringing in three-phase power and building an

access road. Hamsher suggested cost savings for that project could include using a propane generator rather than running power lines and using the city's equipment to build an access road.

Prairie City resident Melanie DeJong spoke to the council about selling a piece of land with a residential well capable of producing about 50 gpm. The DeJongs spent about \$55,907 in 2008 on the property and would offer the city financing, she said.

"I just want to see the city have a more reliable water system," she said.

The city is also working on a new master plan for its water system with a two-year deadline. The city has applied for a \$20,000 grant to pay half of the engineering costs for the plan, Hamsher said.

Finding funds for all this work could be difficult. The city used low-interest U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development loans to pay for the slow-sand filtration system and the No. 3 well, and the USDA

said it would not refinance the city's outstanding loans, Hamsher said. Also weighing on the city's finances is a \$1.8 million sewer project that will go to bid in a few months, Hamsher said.

Although the city's well water can smell or taste "funny" at times, Prairie City's water is safe to drink, Hamsher emphasized at the meeting.

"There is nothing wrong safety-wise," he said. "I've been drinking city water for years. If I thought Prairie City water was not safe, I'd be using bottled water, which I'm not."

The council directed Camarena to bring some cost estimates for the various options to their next meeting on Nov. 8. He noted that preliminary engineering for a new well could take until January, but planning could be accelerated by using the same engineering firm that handled the No. 3 well.

"We can't expect our citizens to go through another summer like this one," Patterson said. "If we need a new well, then we need to start drilling."

BENTZ

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legislation was finalized. One of the reasons it was successful – and was not referred to voters for approval on the ballot – was because people were consulted and apprised beforehand, he said.

Having the time to do so was critical, he said, to educate voters and work through issues.

After broad discussions, the final version of the bill included more funding for rural areas – a \$5 million small cities allotment and a \$5 million large county, low population allotment – where fewer registered vehicles and more miles of roads created funding disparities, Bentz said.

The bill also contained

modifications to the low carbon fuel standard, which aimed to reduce the carbon content of fuel by 10 percent from 2015 to 2025. Bentz said he is opposed to the standard and worked to mandate disclosure of the costs of the program and to provide "consumer protections," which would extend the deadline in response to certain situations to prevent economic problems such as fuel shortages and resulting price spikes.

The bill, which also increased funding to each city and county through increases to the gas tax and other fees, was largely hailed as a success for both Republicans and Democrats.

Bentz said the first step toward a similar bipartisan approach to the major issues of spending and tax reform was to select the right people for

the committee. He said they would then have to agree on the definition of the problem.

"You can't solve a problem if you don't agree on what it is," he said.

However, he admitted the transportation package was much easier because the problem of crumbling roads and bridges was known and unanimous support existed to come up with a solution.

With issues such as taxes, health care, education and state employees and benefits, Bentz said agreeing on the problem would be difficult because perspectives vary dramatically. He said, however, he believes the committee could help solve the problems, despite the difficulty.

"You don't do this job unless there's a big challenge out there," he said.

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Have a Happy, Healthy & Safe Halloween!

Here are some tips to keep your little goblins and ghouls out of harm's way.

HALLOWEEN SAFETY TIPS

KIDS

- Walk with a group or trusted adult.
- Walk from house to house, and look both ways before crossing the street. Don't run, and use sidewalks and crosswalks when possible.
- Put reflective tape on your costume or treat bag, or carry a flashlight with you.
- Examine all of your treats to make sure they are safe and sealed before eating them.
- Don't approach dark houses when trick-or-treating, and never go inside a stranger's house.
- Don't approach pets while wearing a Halloween costume. They may not recognize you.



PARENTS

- Provide healthier or non-edible options for trick-or-treaters.
- Slow down and be on the lookout for trick-or-treaters when driving.
- Accompany your child if they are under age 12, and make sure older children are with a group of trusted friends.
- Go over the planned trick-or-treat route with your child, and be sure to set a curfew.
- Keep your porch and walkway well-lit, and move any potential tripping hazards out of the path of trick-or-treaters.
- Keep family pets away from trick-or-treaters, even if they are friendly.
- Limit the amount of candy your kids eat each day, and encourage them to give away excess.

