

SUICIDE

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Authority. About 25 percent of suicides in Oregon occurred among veterans.

Suicide rates increase as people age, peaking after 85. In Grant County, 22 people died by suicide from 2003 to 2012. Nine were over 65 years, six were from 45 to 64 years, and five were from 25 to 44 years. One was from 18 to 24 years, and one was from 10 to 17 years.

Young people tended to suffer more from poor family relationships, while older people tended to suffer more from physical health problems. Adults between 18 and 44 years who died from suicide were more likely to have had problems with intimate partners. Mental illness was most common among suicide vic-



The Eagle/Richard Hanners
Community Counseling Solutions Clinical Director Thad Labhart has been working as a counselor in Grant County for more than two decades.

tims between 45 and 64 years. A little more than half of suicide victims in Oregon in 2012 used firearms, and about three-quarters of all firearm deaths were suicides, according to the Oregon Health Au-

Suicide prevention resources

- Community Counseling Solutions in John Day, 541-575-1466
- David Romprey Oregon Warm Line, 1-800-698-2392
- Oregon Youth Line, 1-877-968-8491, text 839863, youthL@linesforlife.org
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-TALK
- Spanish Language National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-888-628-9454
- Crisis Text Line: 741741
- Military Helpline: 888-457-4838 or text MIL1 to 839863
- Alcohol and Drug Helpline: 800-923-4357 or text Recov-eryNow to 839863
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center, sprc.org
- SafeOregon reporting line: 844-472-3367 or tip@safeo-regon.com

thority. About 19 percent of suicides in Oregon that year were by poison, and another 19 percent were by hanging or suffocation. Men accounted for 61 percent of suicides by firearm, while women accounted for 42 percent of suicides involving poison. Women accounted for 63 percent of hospitalizations

following a suicide attempt in 2013. The highest rate was for women 35 to 44 years and 15 to 24 years of age. About 90 percent of these hospitalizations involved poisoning, such as overdosing. Only 2.2 percent were by firearms.

The final installment of the suicide series will be published next week.

CITY

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at bringing other events to John Day.

The city’s strategy for growth hopes to attract digital commuters, active retirees and young working families to John Day by providing more recreational amenities, broadband internet access and improved housing stock.

At the same time, the city needs to question spending that does not align with this growth strategy while finding funding for these growth programs. The city was successful in obtaining more than \$2 million in grants

last year.

Green presented a five-year plan with 10 capital projects to accomplish these goals: increasing broadband access with a fiber optic cable, improving the housing stock through an Urban Renewal Agency and incentives, renovating the Weaver Building on Main Street, completing a new sewer treatment plant, installing a tenant in the completed fire hall, improvements to the city shop, implementing a GIS system for city services, extending Seventh Street west, negotiating a package deal that includes sale of the land around the Kam Wah Chung State Historic Site and city pool and build-

ing a new pool at a new park and completing the Innovation Gateway project at the former Oregon Pine mill site.

Green said residents could expect to see several changes this year. Transitioning the dispatch center and reducing the police force to three officers would cut city staff by 30 percent, he said. A review of personnel compensation will evaluate whether city pay is fair and how benefits compare to other local governments.

A local income survey is underway that will determine if John Day is eligible for \$2 million in federal funding for its new sewer treatment plant, Green said. Financing for the

project should be in place by the end of the year, and preliminary engineering should begin after that.

A citywide housing development district and the city’s first greenhouse should be operating by the end of the year, and an area development plan for the former Oregon Pine mill site should be completed by June 2019.

The city is actively working its strategy for growth and raising capital to fulfill that strategy, Green said.

“It’s time for our community to start a new kind of conversation, one that focuses on our future instead of the past,” he said.

ADVISER

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Myers also expressed concern about how to continue funding the position. Hamsh-er agreed sustainability was an issue, but he made a motion that the court at least try filling the position for a year.

The county budget is facing important changes this fiscal year, including loss of federal funding under the Se-

cure Rural Schools Act and the possibility that the Grant County Sheriff’s Office might take over law enforcement responsibilities in Prairie City from John Day, which might relinquish its police contract with Prairie City.

Britton raised concerns about the nature of the natural resource adviser position and how it would be structured. Hamsher said the person would advise the court on natural resource issues, and side-

boards limiting the scope of the position were established in the request for proposals that was sent out.

Britton, however, noted that the county’s counsel, Ron Yockim, had taken a hatchet to the RFP. Myers agreed.

Pointing out that he won’t be on the court next year, Britton said he wanted a clear understanding of what the natural resource adviser would actually do.

Hamsher asked that the court establish a hiring committee to review the three candidates. Britton noted that the hiring process could be lengthy, leaving little time left to perform the job this year, and Myers noted that he already serves on 27 different boards and wouldn’t be available.

Hamsher’s motion died for lack of a second, and Britton asked him to address the

questions raised during the meeting and bring the matter back at the March 28 court meeting.

The court reached consensus to advise the county budget committee when it meets March 19 to find a way to fund the natural resource adviser position through January 2019.

Myers later told the Eagle that he was concerned about hiring a person to fill the position for such a short period of time. He also noted that five county court candidates in this year’s election were in the room during the discussion, and the court’s makeup could dramatically change by next January.

Hamsher has filed to run against Myers for the county judge position, and six candidates have filed to fill Britton’s position. Britton is not running for re-election.

COSTS

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the John Day Rural Fire Protection District lacked the funding to complete their portion of the project, and neither the district nor the city felt the bid was competitive.

Last July, Pinnacle solicited a bid from CSDI Construction Inc. of Boise, which recently completed a major renovation of the Meadowbrook II apartment complex, but CSDI declined to make an offer on the fire hall project.

Pinnacle also solicited a bid from W.C. Construction of Elgin, which came to \$411,329 in January. Pinnacle then asked Kirby Nagelhout for a revised bid in February, which came to \$326,600, a 12 percent increase over the company’s May 2017 bid.

“Given current cost escalations of 10 to 15 percent annually, we will be perpetually trying to make up ground if we delay completing the fire station further,” City Manager Nick Green told the council.

Among the options raised during the meeting were completing only parts of the project and using city crews.

A 20-year loan for \$315,000 at 4 percent interest would cost the city about \$23,000 per year, Green said, which could be split between the city and the fire district based on the five-year average for calls.

Another financing option would depend on whether the 911 User Board decides to keep a dispatch center in the John Day area, Green said. In that case, the dispatch center could be relocated to the fire hall, and the rental payments could be used to pay off the renovation costs, he said.

The council agreed to delay a decision until a later meeting.

In other city council news:

- The council approved an ordinance declaring that blighted areas exist in John Day and establishing an urban renewal agency for addressing this blight.

According to the ordinance, blighted areas as defined by state law “impair economic values and negatively impact the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of the city.”

Blighted areas may be improved by development

or rehabilitation, but some blighted areas “may require acquisition and clearance,” while others “may be susceptible to conservation and rehabilitation,” the ordinance states.

The ordinance establishes the John Day Urban Renewal Agency to address blight in the city. A committee to review and recommend a budget for the agency’s board will consist of the board members and an equal number of citizens appointed for three years by the mayor and approved by the city council.

- Sonie and Les Guttu, neighbors of a property on Canton Street where Sally Knowles plans to build four duplexes, raised concerns about increased traffic, floodplain issues, parking, advanced notification and the potential for low-income renters moving in. Sonie Guttu noted the high cost of a road that “goes nowhere.”

Green said the city will gain eight new housing units. He also said new streets need to be built to city standards. Councilor David Holland said property west of the Knowles property could also be developed in the future using the Canton Street extension.

- An unexpected consequence of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act that President Trump signed into law Dec. 22 was that interest rates on some bank loans increased, Green told the council.

As a result, the terms of a debt consolidation proposal through Washington Federal that the council approved Dec. 12 had changed, reducing the city’s savings by \$40,000, Green said. Under the terms of the agreement, the city would still need to set aside \$228,000 each year to make a \$1.14 million payment due June 1, 2022.

Even with the new terms, the city will save \$230,000 by consolidating the debt incurred from the Airport Industrial Park and the West End Water System Improvement projects, Green said.

The council approved the new terms and authorized Green to sign the loan agreement.

- The council appointed Councilor Steve Schuette to the 911 User Board, which met March 20 to begin discussion on how to transition away from the current John Day 911 Emergency Communications Center.

- The council appointed Councilors Schuette and Holland to serve with Green, senior project manager Aaron Lieuallen and agribusiness project manager Matt Manitsas on a contract review board to look at proposals to build a greenhouse at the Innovation Gateway site.

- The March 27 city council meeting has been canceled. The next meeting is April 10.



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MOVIE SCHEDULE MARCH 23-29

PACIFIC RIM: UPRISING (PG-13)

Jake Pentecost reunites with Mako Mori to lead a new generation of Jaeger pilots against a new Kaiju threat.

FRI-THURS (4-10) 7:10 9:40

SHERLOCK GNOMES (PG)

Animation. Sherlock Gnomes investigates the mysterious disappearance of other garden ornaments.

FRI-THURS (4-20) 7:20 9:45

TOMB RAIDER (PG-13)

Lara Croft must push herself beyond her limits when she finds herself on the island where her father disappeared.

FRI-THURS (4-00) 7:00 9:35

\$9 Adult, \$7 Senior (60+), Youth

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then talk to your primary care doctor to see if a colonoscopy referral is right for you.

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