

Cell tower lease could help well upgrade

Hamsher: A win-win for Prairie City

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle



Jim Hamsher

Relocating a cell tower initially opposed by neighbors to city-owned land near the former Prairie Wood Products mill could also help the city address its water issues.

Income from the lease to U.S. Cellular could be used to help pay for upgrading one of the city's main water wells, Mayor Jim Hamsher said.

"To me it's a win-win — good cell coverage for Prairie City residents with a lease that provides income to the city," he said.

The communication company's request for a conditional-use permit for a cell tower was turned down Oct. 11 during a standing-room-only hearing at city hall.

U.S. Cellular wanted to join Verizon and AT&T as a local cellphone provider, but their choice for the 195-foot tall tower at 10th Street and Hall Avenue next to the school drew a number of concerned neighbors to the hour-long hearing. The city council unanimously voted to approve a U.S. Cellular tower if it could be located in the city's industrial park.

Hamsher told the Eagle negotiations with U.S. Cellular have begun. In ad-

dition to being located on city property zoned industrial, the proposed tower will only be 70 feet high — less than half the height of the original proposal.

The city would like to use income from the cell tower lease to pay for an upgrade to one of the city's water wells. Last June, a perfect storm ensued when lightning struck a power pole near the city's No. 2 well, just as crews were in the process of TV-scanning the well casing.

Not only was work on the No. 2 well delayed, but damage to the city water system's electrical controls led to the water level in the million-gallon reservoir dropping to only four feet during the summer, triggering water restrictions.

Hard water deposits had plugged perforations in the No. 2 well's casing, which not only impeded water flow into the well but caused sand to be drawn into the pump's impeller.

Work on the No. 2 well is complete now. Public Works Director Chris Camarena said the city had been running the pump as low as 50 gallons per minute, but now it's up to 100 gpm.

"It's back to normal," he said.

The city would now like to upgrade its No. 3 well, which was engineered for an 800-foot depth but was only drilled to 400 feet. The city contracted with a well

driller to deepen the No. 3 well on March 1, but the work hasn't started yet, Hamsher said.

"It should be done before summer starts," he said, adding that the cost of deepening an existing well should be much lower than for starting a new well.

Hamsher said there never would have been a need for water restrictions last summer if the lightning strike had not occurred.

"But this past winter was very dry," he said. "We're hopeful no water restrictions will be necessary this summer."

He noted that the reservoir tank needs to be kept full in case of a fire in town.

Work on the city's sewer system also will take place this summer and fall, funded by a U.S. Department of Agriculture loan and a grant, Camarena said. Four lift pumps and several check valves will be replaced at the booster site and treatment plant, aging pipe in the forced main alongside Highway 26 will be replaced and leaking collector pipes on North Johnson Avenue and other sites around town will be replaced, he said.

The work will take place in late summer or fall because of high groundwater levels, Camarena said. How much additional work can be done will depend on how far the funding lasts, he said.

In other Prairie City news, Glenda Harvey has been hired to fill the city clerk's position. Bobbie Brown is the city recorder.



Eagle file photo

Grant County Sheriff Glenn Palmer speaks during a past Grant County Court Meeting in this file photo.

Unexpected events add to sheriff's costs

Rainbow Gathering, two shootings add to workload

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

The Grant County Sheriff's Office has accumulated about \$17,000 in overtime costs since last July, but sufficient funds exist in the current budget to handle the unanticipated expenses, Sheriff Glenn Palmer told the county court April 11.

While the county could anticipate increased needs for the eclipse event last year, they were not able to plan for the Rainbow Gathering, Palmer said a few Rainbow members are still in the county, and deputies have had to respond to domestic disturbance calls for two of them.

Two shooting cases added to the sheriff's workload since last July, from securing the crime scene and investigating the case to providing courtroom security and testimony.

There also have been five suicides and 12 search-and-rescue missions since last July. SAR missions tend to be late at night or off-shift and labor intensive, Palmer said. He said he's trying to limit deputy assignments to the more serious ones.

In other county court news:

The court approved an intergovernmental agreement for the Grant County Digital Network Coalition by 2-1, with Commissioner Jim Hamsher opposed. The amended ordinance that created the coalition was approved by 2-1 on March 28 with Hamsher opposed.

Grant County Judge Scott

Myers held off signing the intergovernmental agreement until April 11 so Hamsher could speak more with county counsel Ron Yockim before giving his approval. Hamsher said he still had concerns with the agreement as a matter of policy and voted against it.

The court also appointed Dan Becker to represent the county on the coalition's five-member board. Becker owns a computer and technology support business. Members from the county, John Day and Seneca will choose two at-large members to fill the remaining seats.

The court approved a request from Blue Mountain Hospital CEO Derek Daly and Community Counseling Solutions Executive Director Kimberly Lindsay to provide Grant County's share of state marijuana tax revenue to the Community Health Needs Assessment Substance Abuse Committee.

Myers said the county will provide \$15,175 of its marijuana tax revenue to the program. He also noted that future funding for the program was possible if the initiative to legalize recreational marijuana use in Grant County passes this year.

The court reviewed and approved an order for the sale of 31 tax-foreclosed properties, which were deeded to the county April 10. The court earlier approved Grant County Assessor David Thunnell's suggestion that the minimum bids be set at 50 percent of each property's real market value. An auction will take place in the county court meeting room at 10 a.m. May 17.

The court approved hiring Salem-based attorney Gerald L. Warren to represent the county for certain legal services.

Four-way stop proposal draws debate

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

A request by Leanna Perkins for a four-way stop at the intersection of Third Street and Northwest Bridge Street was discussed at length by the John Day City Council at their April 10 meeting.

The proposal was not new. Both Public Works Director Monte Legg and Councilor Dave Holland, the former public works director, were familiar with the idea.

Perkins reported seeing several near-accidents at the intersection. In one case, a teenager on a bicycle was struck by a car, but the incident was not reported. She also said Police Chief Richard Gray put an electronic radar speed sign at the intersection, but she wasn't sure if it made a difference.



The Eagle/Richard Hanners

Perkins said the problem becomes worse during baseball season, when she typically sees more vehicles speeding on Northwest Bridge Street. She said she's seen people jumping onto the curb to avoid being hit.

Holland said he didn't

think a four-way stop would address the issue and noted that the council opposed a four-way stop there in the past. Stop signs provide a "false sense of security," and bicyclists often ignore stop signs, he said. He also noted that the city was laid out with north-south through-streets and stop signs on east-west streets.

Holland asked if the council wanted to "chop up" the city with stop signs. Speeding is a problem all over town, he said, suggesting that the problem could be addressed through social media. He also said he expected more accidents would occur if a four-way stop was put in place at the intersection.

Councilor Paul Smith agreed that speed was the real issue, and Councilor Shannon Adair suggested that

stop signs would slow vehicles down. Councilor Steve Schuette, however, noted that vehicles would get back up to full speed within a short distance after stopping at a stop sign.

John Day resident Beth Spell said she was familiar with the intersection and felt the neighborhood had changed. The safety of children and pedestrians was important, she said, and if the city did not install a four-way stop, then it should consider installing speed bumps.

Councilor Gregg Haberly said he supported using speed bumps, and Perkins said she would be happy with that. Mayor Ron Lundbom recommended that the matter be brought to the city's safety committee, which is composed of three councilors.

Income survey results qualify for wastewater grant

More than half of families report low or moderate income

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

Results from the John Day and Canyon City local income survey indicate 57.3 percent of residents qualify as low or moderate income, according to census criteria established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The Survey Research Lab at Portland State University worked with the city of John

Day to conduct the survey, which will help determine if they can qualify for a federal Community Development Block Grant to partially fund the new wastewater treatment plant to serve both cities.

To qualify for the CDBG funds, 51 percent or greater was needed. A total of 362 families in the service area responded to the anonymous survey, providing an overall response rate of 77.4 percent.

The survey found that 209 families representing 461 residents were in the low or moderate income categories. But the results also revealed a polarized distribution of incomes in the city, Green said.

A total of 157 families or 43.4 percent of the respond-

ing families reported family income below \$29,900 and 54 families or 14.9 percent reported family incomes from \$29,901 to \$34,150, while 81 families or 22.3 percent reported family incomes of \$56,301 or more. The six income categories in the middle accounted for only 19.4 percent of the families.

Councilor Paul Smith commented that the city lacked median wage jobs. Councilor Dave Holland said timber mill jobs paid those median wages, but the mills are gone. Mayor Ron Lundbom said he believed the city has been in this state for a long time.

Public wastewater projects could receive as much as

\$2.5 million from the CDBG program. According to City Manager Nick Green, the city will submit the income survey results to Business Oregon for certification and then begin the application process for preliminary engineering funds to design the new wastewater treatment facility.

According to the city's time line, Anderson Perry & Associates of La Grande and Sustainable Water of Richmond, Virginia, will complete a Wastewater Facilities Master Plan and reclaimed water feasibility study by June. The city will then choose a design, and preliminary engineering will begin after July 1, Green said.

NATIONAL
Sexual Assault
AWARENESS & PREVENTION
MONTH

Help is available for victims of sexual assault in Grant County. If you or someone you know has been a victim of sexual assault, please call:
Heart of Grant County
541-620-1342

Grant County Victim Assistance Program
541-575-4026

Remember: sex without consent = sexual assault

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Youth & Technology - Are our Children At Risk?

Brought to you by:
The Grant County Juvenile Department
Community Counseling Solutions
The Department of Human Services
The Grant County District Attorney's Office
Grant Union High School

When: April 23, 2018 at 6:30
Where: Grant Union Library

Target Audience: Parents and community members who want to know:

- What children are doing online via social media
- How to better monitor and protect the tech savvy child
- Parental rights

Review

- Social media use
- Sexting
- Cyber bullying
- Suicidal ideation
- Commercial sex trafficking
- Safe Oregon Program
- Creating the nexus between sexting, bullying and suicide
- Q&A Session
- Resources & Handouts

Presenter:
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