

# Fire tanker demo impresses crowd

Landowners, state forest officials meet at airport

Blue Mountain Eagle

The East Oregon Forest Protection Association held its 50th annual membership meeting April 24 at the Grant County Regional Airport conference room in John Day.

There were 65 landowners and state fire and forestry officials in attendance, including State Forester Peter Daugherty.

Cooperator reports were given as well as a history presentation by Mike Dykzeul of Wilsonville who covered the past 50 years of the EOFPA.

The attendees gathered on the tarmac after the meeting for a fire tanker air drop and a helicopter bucket-drop demonstration.

Flying from Redmond Airport, an MD-87 airtanker made a low flyby, dropping 3,000 gallons of water.



An MD-87 fire tanker owned by Erickson Aero Tanker flies by, making a 3,000-gallon water drop for a crowd of spectators April 24 at the Grant County Regional Airport in John Day.

A visiting Baker Aircraft helicopter took off from the Malheur National Forest airbase, part of the local airport and, after filling up nearby, made a bucket drop of water for the crowd.

Oregon Department of Forestry aviation manager Neal Laugle of Salem said the demonstration provided an opportunity for a close look at the equipment used in firefighting, including the big

water drop from the MD-87 next-generation airtanker.

"Landowners rarely get to see what their fire patrol assessment brings to bear on fires," he said, noting the Oregon-based company Erickson



The Eagle/Angel Carpenter

Two spectators take video of a low-flying MD-87 fire bomber during an airdrop demonstration at the Grant County Regional Airport.

Aero Tanker, has a contract with ODF.

District Forester for Northeast Oregon Joe Hessel said the big airtankers are used in initial attacks, and can be instrumental in big fires as well.

"These aircraft have made a huge difference in our ability to catch fires before they become an issue," he said.

EOFPA treasurer Lance Barker of Canyon City said the nonprofit corporation is made up of members who are private landowners who are not in a fire district.

He said the visitors were impressed by the airport facility and added, "Having the state forester there was quite an honor for us."

## GUNS

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officer or arming teachers and staff.

Larry Maplesden spoke in favor of arming teachers at the meeting. He said the teachers must be willing and trained.

"If someone in the school is armed in an active-shooter situation, you have some kind of stopping power," he told the Eagle. "A school resource officer might not be in the right place."

A school aide said she'd feel safer if armed teachers were in the building. She said Humboldt holds lockdown exercises and "we feel like sitting ducks." A teacher said she'd rather see a child protected than hiding under a chair.

Izee rancher M.T. Anderson noted that a lot of good points had been brought up at the meeting — especially the district's poll of students and staff. He supported arming teachers if they receive proper training.

"Nobody expects teachers to be bodyguards, just to be there in case of an emergency," he said.

## Opponents' concerns

Darin Toy said he had a 5-year-old in school and was a gun owner, but he was opposed to arming school staff. He said he was concerned about the level of training teachers get for education, let alone for firearms use.

Savanna Randleas, the only student to address the school board, said she didn't think arming teachers was necessary and wanted the district to take other measures.

"We're teachers, not law enforcement," Kris Beal, retired school teacher and principal, said. She also noted that she had concerns about some of the teachers or staff who might volunteer to be armed.

Beal said she wouldn't want to work in a place where people carried guns, and she expected children would be scared by the sight of guns. School resource officers provided the "best bang for the buck," she said, and arming teachers would create a culture she didn't favor.

Cindy Dougharity-Spencer asked how the district would pay for all the training and the safes. She said she had talked to other staff about the matter

## OFFICER

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grant funded. When the grant ran out, Grant County funded the position for one year more and then the position went away.

Mike Durr, who began work at the John Day Police Department May 1 and will be appointed interim police chief, noted that an SRO is not needed at the schools during the summer, and the fourth police officer could be available for the city during the busy tourist season.

School Superintendent Curt Shelley said the district has set aside \$45,000 in next year's budget for an SRO, but the school board still needs to approve the budget. He noted that funding from the Oregon State School Fund will be higher than expected for next year, which could help cover the SRO cost.

Shelley said he'd also like to see an SRO for Humbolt Elementary and Seneca School, and he noted that providing an SRO didn't rule out other school safety measures, such as securing access to buildings and arming teachers.



The Eagle/Richard Hanners

Grant School District 3 board member Zach Williams.

and felt it would be better to address access and security issues and hiring a school resource officer first.

Kristi Moore, a teacher at Grant Union who once taught in large urban schools, said she was concerned about anyone getting shot in school and wanted the district to take other steps before "jumping to the extreme" of arming school staff.

Full-time teachers already have a big job, and adding the responsibility of firearms training would just increase their workload, Sena Raschio said. She said she was uncomfortable around guns and couldn't believe they were talking about this. She said hiring a school resource officer would be great.

Ken Olson, a certified firearms instructor, said he hadn't made up his mind yet about arming school staff. He cautioned the school board to take its time making a decision. A handgun is a bad choice for a weapon, Olson noted.

"You use your pistol to fight your way to your rifle," he said.

With adrenaline flowing during an active-shooter event, he expected many armed school staff would miss their targets.

## Complex issue

School board vice chairman Zach Williams said he wanted people safe, but he also wanted teacher support, should the

## Audience survey\*

An interactive survey using smartphones was conducted during an April 25 meeting about arming teachers. There were approximately 50 people in attendance.

**Question:** Would you support the district hiring a school resource officer?

Unsure: 8%

Yes: 92%

**Question:** Do you support arming school staff?

Yes: 43%

Unsure: 25%

No: 30%

**Question:** Do you support keeping guns locked in a safe or carried on person?

Unsure: 12%

Safe: 62%

Carried: 27%

**Question:** Should school staff have a mental health evaluation before being armed?

No: 4%

Yes: 96%

\*Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Source: Grant School District

EO Media Group graphic

idea move forward. He said he wanted input from all the staff before making a decision. The idea was "not half-cooked, not even in the oven," he said, and he was not "hellbound" to make a decision by June.

Superintendent Curt Shelley said the proposal raised numerous questions, concerns and other considerations: insurance costs for the school and insurance availability for individual teachers carrying firearms; hiring a John Day police officer as a school resource officer; allowing concealed-carry or locking firearms in a safe; securing access to schools (Grant Union has 13 doors, he noted); installing alarm systems separate from fire alarm systems; installing more secure fencing or metal detectors; locking doors more regularly; and holding monthly lockdown drills.

Shelley explained, if guns are locked up in school, it would likely be in a

thumb-operated safe that could be opened quickly. But teachers might not always be near the safe, he said. They might be with students on the playground, in the cafeteria or in the library.

He noted that attitudes are changing and huddling in a corner doesn't work — "We need to fight back," he said.

But concerns exist that a teacher might shoot the wrong person or leave a firearm unattended, he said.

"Are guns helpful or harmful?" he asked, adding that probably both answers are true.

Staff who volunteer to carry a firearm would undergo a background check and regular training, Shelley said. They also would undergo annual mental health evaluations. The matter would be a policy issue decided by the school board, he noted.

Grant School District 3 will further discuss the school safety matter at the May 16 board meeting.

## METH

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drug-related counts, all felonies. He faces multiple charges of possession, manufacture and delivery of meth and one count of civil forfeiture.

The state alleges that the following property is subject to civil forfeiture: \$270 in cash; the land, improvements and single-wide trailer at a site on East Riverside Street in Mt. Vernon; a white 1986 Ford pickup; and a black Toyota Corolla. Tietjen is being held in Grant County Jail on a \$240,000 bond.

• Olle L. Starnes, 47, John Day, was charged with 11 drug-related charges, including seven felonies. Several charges allege possession, manufacture and delivery of meth, and one count is for criminal conspiracy with Nicole Shaffer, who was also arrested and charged.

Starnes was also charged with one count of frequenting a place where controlled substances are used. That place is a house on Highway 26 west of John Day. The state filed a criminal forfeiture charge alleging that the John Day property is subject to forfeiture to the state. Starnes is being held in Grant County Jail on a \$150,000 bond.

• Elizabeth Pace, 40, John Day, was charged with eight drug-related counts, including three felonies. In addition to charges of possession and delivery of meth, she faces one charge of tampering with physical evidence by allegedly trying to destroy meth and one charge of frequenting a place where controlled substances are used, that is the same house on Highway 26 west of John Day.

The state also filed a criminal forfeiture charge seeking forfeiture of \$148 in cash; the property on Highway 26 west of John Day; and a 2008 Lexus E35. Pace is being held in Grant County Jail on a \$95,000 bond.

• Katie M. Watt, 31, Mt. Vernon, was charged with nine drug-related counts,

including five felonies.

In addition to unlawful possession, manufacture and delivery of meth, she faces one count of criminal conspiracy, one count of frequenting a place where controlled substances are used, that is the house on Ingle Street in Mt. Vernon, and one count of endangering the welfare of a child. Watt is being held in Grant County Jail on a \$125,000 bond.

• Nicole C. Shaffer, 21, Mt. Vernon, was charged with five drug-related counts, including three felonies. In addition to possession and delivery of meth, she faces one count of criminal conspiracy with Starnes. Shaffer is being held in Grant County Jail on a \$90,000 bond.

• Mitchel D. Long, 47, John Day, was charged with three drug-related counts, including one felony charge of meth possession and two misdemeanor counts of frequenting a place where controlled substances are used, that is on North Mountain Boulevard in Mt. Vernon and the same house on Highway 26 west of John Day. He is being held in Grant County Jail on a \$35,000 bond.

• Aaron M. Roseberry, 31, Canyon City, was charged with felony possession of meth and a misdemeanor count of frequenting a place where controlled substances are used, that is on Ingle Street in Mt. Vernon. He is being held in Grant County Jail on a \$15,000 bond.

• Kathy L. Meyer, 45, Mt. Vernon, was charged with felony criminal conspiracy with Tietjen that involved the delivery of meth and possessing materials for packaging meth. She is being held in Grant County Jail on a \$20,000 bond.

• Glen Wadley is listed in the Grant County Sheriff's Office's press release as part of the drug bust, but no court information was available at press time. He is being held in Grant County Jail on a probation violation, according to the jail roster.

## 911

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window to negotiate a new contract.

The IGC is not required to participate in the Oregon Public Employees Retirement System (PERS), Delano said. It was too early to know for sure, he said, but he had been told both the IGC and the dispatchers could benefit from a 401(k) retirement system instead.

"The main concern is where to house the center and

budgeting," Delano said, adding that the transition will not be as complicated as many had feared.

"Let's work together and get this done," Canyon City Fire Chief Matt Turner said.

Turner had played an active role in helping reestablish the council and the board. He told the Grant County Court at its April 25 meeting that it didn't make sense to ship \$310,000 per year of spending for dispatch out of the county.

The Frontier offer was attractive to some 911 User

Board members at its March 20 meeting, and the offer got better after Frontier offered Grant County a voting position on its board. Turner told the court that Frontier said its offer would still be good three years from now. Turner warned the court, however, if 911 dispatch leaves the county, it likely will never come back.

Delano told the joint meeting that John Day had offered to let the dispatch center continue to operate at its current location while the IGC finds and equips a new location.

Maynard said she had a \$30,000 estimate for moving all the dispatch equipment to a new location, including some wiring and moving the backup generator, if necessary. That estimate depended on the state Office of Emergency Management approving the new site and picking up some computer costs, she said.

Six locations that were discussed included the county's L Building on East Main Street and a former road department building south of the courthouse. Prairie City of-

fered a building rent-free, and John Day offered to rent space in its new fire hall after remodeling is completed in September. Space in the federal building was available for \$25 per square foot per year.

Todd McKinley, a member of the John Day Rural Fire Protection District knowledgeable about radio communications, noted that line-of-sight with Eagle Peak was needed for good communication, something both the L Building and the Prairie City site lack.

Both the John Day Fire Hall and the former road depart-

ment building had good line-of-sight opportunities with Eagle Peak, but the best location in the long term would be a lot in the John Day Industrial Park near the airport, he said. That would eliminate layers of communication relaying needed at the current dispatch site.

Delano said the IGC needed to get up and running now and could look at a capital investment in an airport site five years from now.

"We need a quick decision now," Delano said. "The IGC has zero money, and John Day is helping us transition."