

METH

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nerves and respiratory systems are commonly seen in drug users," OHA said.

Meth is considered especially dangerous because of how quickly it can hook users. Meth users typically exhibit telltale signs, including hyperactivity, incessant talking and wakefulness, according to OHA. Meth produces a false sense of confidence, while users lose appetite and become irritable or moody.

"Prolonged meth abuse can resemble symptoms of schizophrenia characterized by hallucinations, paranoia and repetitive behavior patterns," OHA said.

An extreme example is the delusion that insects have gotten under meth users' skin. Users will incessantly pick at their skin to remove these "speed bugs," which can result in open lesions.

"As the effects of the drug wear off, users may experience drug cravings, depressed moods, lethargy and prolonged periods of sleep lasting 24 hours or more," OHA said.

Health impacts

Meth use is hard on all parts of the body. The corrosive smoke damages lungs and teeth, the risk of heart disease increases and users can die from hyperthermia caused by uncontrollable spiking body temperatures.

Meth use can cause permanent brain damage, affecting emotion, memory, verbal learning and motor skills. Babies of meth users may be born premature with low birth weight and suffer from withdrawal symptoms. Some die in stillbirth.

An acutely intoxicated meth user showing up at the Blue Mountain Hospital's emergency room is not unusual, Dr. Raffaella Betza told the Eagle. Their high blood pressure could lead to a stroke, and their fast heart beat could impact circulation and lead to seizures.

Meth-related deaths in Oregon have increased from 73 in 2007 to 232 in 2016, according to data from the State Medical Examiner.

Often a meth user is brought to the hospital by law enforcement at night after someone reported a person acting unsafely, Betza said. Sometimes they are very agitated and even psychotic and need to be restrained. She noted that local doctors, paramedics, law enforcement and 911 dispatchers underwent special training last year on how to handle acutely intoxicated and agitated patients.

Community impacts

The impacts of meth use are seen in families and communities. Betza said it's not uncommon to learn that parents who use meth were neglectful in feeding, clothing or supervising their children.

"Meth affects entire communities, not just users," OHA said.

Meth use contributes to domestic violence, child abuse, motor vehicle accidents and the spread of infectious diseases through shared needles. There are increased costs for medical services and emergency room use, and governments must dedicate additional tax dollars to law enforcement, prosecution and social services.

Homes used to manufacture meth are often damaged by fires and explosions and require expensive decontamination. Meth users often resort to crime to pay for their habit or living



Contributed photo
A glass pipe and methamphetamine that was seized by local police.

expenses when they can't hold down a job.

A 2005 survey by the National Association of Counties found that 62 percent of law enforcement agencies cited higher domestic violence rates as a result of meth use, and 70 percent of law enforcement agencies cited increased cases of theft because of meth use.

In Oregon, meth possession convictions increased by 20 percent from 2,550 in 2012 to 3,085 in 2017, according to data from the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission. The total number of meth offenses increased from 4,845 in 2014 to 8,150 in 2016, according to the Oregon National Incident-Based Reporting System.

"Meth users will often begin to engage in person and property crimes which quickly escalate to serious degrading or criminal conduct, including burglary, prostitution or sex trafficking to fuel their need," Carpenter said. "As long as our state does not correlate meth use and the rise in person and property crimes, and continues to minimize the crime seriousness of meth in general, the local meth epidemic will persist, and crimes committed in the pursuit of meth will continue to rise."

Over half the drivers arrested by OSP troopers in Grant County in 2018 were driving while under the influence of a drug other than alcohol, or in combination with alcohol, Hutchison said.

"It's up to everyone to help stop this epidemic," Hutchison said. "Support your local law enforcement officers. Notify law enforcement when you believe drug dealers are operating in your area, and report criminal activity immediately. We can stop this epidemic, but we need your help."

Treatment options

Help for meth users is available through counseling, medication, family education, structured lifestyle support and behavioral therapy. It's hard to recover from meth use, but it can be done, Betza said. Treatment can require both counseling and medical care when organs have been injured and when medication is needed to deal with the depression or anxiety that comes with withdrawal.

Helplines are not for urgent care emergencies. If a situation is life-threatening, people should call 9-1-1 immediately. For additional information or advice over the phone, call these numbers:

- Community Counseling Solutions, 541-575-1466.
- Oregon Crystal Meth Anonymous helpline, 855-638-4373.
- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration national hotline, 800-662-4357.

PALMER

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as required. The laws cited by Boyd in the complaint apply only to tort claims, which The Oregonian lawsuit seeking public records was not, Warren claims, and the complaint does not provide the required facts for a common-law claim that a debt was paid to a third party, that the county is also liable to the third party and that the county ought to pay rather than Palmer or the sheriff's office.

Alternatively, Warren argues, if The Oregonian's lawsuit was a tort claim, Boyd failed to provide notice of his clients' loss or injury

within 180 days as required. Boyd said in his complaint a tort claim notice was served Jan. 19 — 181 days after the final supplemental judgment document in The Oregonian lawsuit was filed July 21, 2017. Warren argues, however, that Boyd's clients "knew they had suffered the 'harm' of incurring their own attorney fees" by Dec. 28, 2016, when the county declined a request to cover the fees — if not Nov. 3, 2016, when the initial judgment was entered that stated it did "not preclude Plaintiffs from submitting a request for attorney fees."

Finally, Warren argues the complaint should be dismissed because required follow-up mailings regarding the service of the summons

and complaint were not sent. Boyd subsequently submitted an affidavit May 10 stating he had mailed the documents on May 4.

Before Warren's motion to dismiss was filed, Boyd filed notice April 24 his clients intended to apply for a default order because the county failed to respond within the required time frame. Boyd also filed a motion March 27 to disqualify Grant County Circuit Court Judge William D. Cramer Jr. from serving as judge in the proceeding because his clients "believe that they cannot have a fair and impartial trial or hearing" before Cramer.

A hearing in the case is scheduled June 1 before Judge Patricia Sullivan.

HOUSING

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home sold in John Day over an 18-month period in 2016 and 2017 was \$88 per square foot, but the average price to build a new home is \$155 per square foot — nearly twice as much.

The city's proposed urban renewal district encompasses about 178 acres of land in John Day, including rights-of-way, amounting to about 20 percent of the city's \$100 million total assessed value.

Six of the 12-member John Day Technical Advisory Committee attended the committee's first meeting May 8 to review the proposed program.

Incentive programs

Two incentive programs have been proposed to encourage improvements to the city's housing stock. Under the New Home Incentive Program, the city would rebate 7 percent of the increased assessed value of a property to the property owner and waive system development charges for water and sewer.

There would be no limit on the number of times a person could apply for benefits under the program, Green said. A contractor could submit multiple properties or multiple phases for a single project. Manufactured homes would not be eligible, and "tiny homes" were not considered, he said.

According to the program's draft report, the average assessed value of new homes in John Day is \$208,000, and the average assessed value of undeveloped lots is \$30,000, giving an average net increase of \$178,000 for a new home.

With an average rebate of

\$12,460 and system development charges of \$7,400 per lot, the total incentive for new homes would average \$19,860.

Under the Existing Home Remodel Incentive Program, the city would rebate 15 percent of the increased assessed value of a property to the homeowner. The minimum assessed value increase to be eligible for the rebate would be \$10,000. The draft program report assumes an average of \$30,000 per remodel, giving an average rebate of \$4,500.

Tax financing

The city would recoup its incentive payments by using tax revenue on the increased assessed value resulting from new home construction or remodeling. The city expects the incentives for each property would be paid back in seven years.

The city would not pay the incentives until the increase in assessed value shows up on the tax rolls, so there is no risk to John Day, Green said. The program's projected estimate is for three new homes and three remodels per year to 2026, at which time those numbers could increase.

Tax payments from property inside the urban renewal district to the eight taxing jurisdictions — including the county, Grant School District 3, Grant County Education Service District and Blue Mountain Hospital — would be frozen at the level when the program is initiated. Tax revenue on the increased assessed value resulting from the program would not become available to these taxing jurisdictions until the incentive for each property is paid back.

"While the other tax districts in the city do not receive immediate tax benefits from

the area, these agencies will realize an increase in their tax revenue that would not exist but for the creation of the incentive program," the program's draft plan states.

According to the projected tax impact in the program's draft report, the county could see a \$747,402 increase in tax revenue at the end of 20 years if the program is successful. The school district could see \$974,012, and the hospital could see \$866,671.

Looking forward

Under state law, John Day does not need approval by the Grant County Court or other taxing jurisdictions to implement the urban renewal district, but voters could bring forward an initiative to change the district.

If the program is unsuccessful in spurring new home construction, there would be no loss to the city and no loss to other taxing jurisdictions, Green said.

If the program is "wildly successful," the city would need a line of credit to cover the incentives, but significant new development would be good for the economy and the affected taxing jurisdictions, Green said.

The John Day housing program is supported by the Oregon general fund through the Department of Land Conservation and Development, which considers the urban renewal district a pilot program.

The John Day Urban Renewal Agency, which is composed of John Day city councilors, will oversee the program. The agency will hold its first meeting May 22. The John Day Planning Commission will review the program May 24. The city council will hold a public hearing and vote to adopt the proposed program on June 12.

BROADBAND

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laterals connecting homes and businesses along Highway 395. A fiber cable would be run to the Fall Mountain Communications Tower, and broadband service would be provided to the Swick Old Growth Interpretive Site and the Starr Campground on the Malheur National Forest.

In addition, broadband service would be provided to the city hall and post office in Seneca. The community will be undergoing significant water and sewer infrastructure improvements in the next three years, and fiber-to-home connections could be completed as part of those projects.

About \$1.3 million in state funding would remain after Phase 1 and could be used to leverage additional funding for Phase 2, in which the fiber backbone would be run from Seneca to Burns, Green told the council. After that, the network could be expanded east, west and north from John Day in Phase 3.

Kluser told the Eagle that Ortelco has sufficient fiber backbone and employees to absorb the needs of the 100 new customers expected in the Phase 1 area. Details on Ortelco's role in running fiber to



Eagle file photo

Kelvin Taysom, left, temporarily left his engineering post at Oregon Telephone Corp. Nov. 17 to help field technician Cory Hayes run fiber cable to the Families First office on South Canyon Boulevard in John Day. Ortelco is entering a public-private partnership with the Grant County Digital Network Coalition to expand broadband access.

Fall Mountain, Forest Service campgrounds and homes in Seneca were not known at this time, she said. As for Phase 3, Kluser said Ortelco would continue to look at ways to expand service to outlying areas in Grant County, including Long Creek and Monument.

The company continues to plan for expanding service in the John Day area, including the industrial park area near the airport and the Edgewood Drive area east of Canyon City. Kluser said Ortelco budgets for expansion a little bit at a time each year as finances allow.

The partnership

The goal is to have the Grant County Digital Network Coalition own and operate the fiber backbone and have Ortelco be the internet provider to the end user, Green told the council. He wanted the coalition to be in the wholesale business, not the retail market.

Much of the plan rests on the coalition being awarded the federal grant. Green noted that the USDA will be impressed that the coalition can cover the \$450,000 match with about \$1.3 million left over and by the strength of the team the coalition has put together.

The team already included Fiber Channels Inc., which will negotiate with internet service providers for access to the fiber backbone at Burns, and Commstructure Consulting LLC, which will provide infrastructure design and project management.

New to the team are CTC Technology & Energy, which has specialized in broadband financial analysis and network strategic planning since 1983, and the Cohen Law Group, which specializ-

es in telecommunication and broadband matters.

According to the city's grant application resolution, Grant County ranked second highest among Oregon counties on the Digital Divide Index produced by Roberto Gallard at Purdue University. The Digital Divide "is the number one threat to community economic development in the 21st century," the resolution states.

Difficult terrain and small remote communities in Eastern Oregon present financial hurdles to internet providers. As a result, major internet cables are routed along U.S. highways 97 and 20 and Interstate 84 — basically circling around Grant County, Green told the city council.

County approval

The Grant County Court approved a letter in support of John Day's Community Connect grant application April 25. The court ratified creation of the Grant County Digital Network Coalition through a second reading May 9 on a 2-1 vote, with Commissioner Jim Hamsher opposed. A March 28 vote to create the coalition required a unanimous vote because it was an emergency ordinance, but Hamsher had voted in opposition.

Hamsher also asked to be appointed to the coalition board, but Grant County Judge Scott Myers noted that the board's two at-large seats must be filled by the three current board members, which represent John Day, Grant County and Seneca.

Myers said the plan presented by Green should put to rest concerns that the county was competing with the private sector by participating in the Grant County Digital Network Coalition.

Blue Mountain Eagle

EARLY DEADLINE

**For May 30th Edition
Ad, Classified & Legal Deadline
Thursday, May 24th by 5 p.m.**

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