

Expanded state program provides more funding for city streets

Council mulls project priorities

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

An expanded program for small cities could mean four times as much funding for city streets, City Manager Nick Green told the John Day City Council at their July 10 meeting.

The Special City Allotment Grant Program from the Oregon Department of Transportation increased from a maximum of \$50,000 per city per year to \$200,000 for two projects, Green said. The deadline to submit grant applications has been moved up to Aug. 1, Green told the Eagle.

An increase in revenue from fuel taxes will further boost street funds for the city, he said. Both provisions were contained in the 2017 state transportation package.

Green said a large number of street projects could benefit from the additional money,



The Eagle/Richard Hanners

Extending Seventh Street through city property toward Patterson Bridge Road is one of the options the John Day City Council is considering for using Special City Allotment grant funds.

and he cited several from the 41 listed in the April 2009 John Day Local Street Network Plan.

Councilor Dave Holland, the former John Day public works director, noted that \$100,000 per project might not be enough to complete some of the larger projects

suggested by Green.

Extending the Ironwood Estates Phase 2 street network or Valley View Drive west to Patterson Bridge Road would provide access to 40 acres of land for house construction, Green said.

The Ironwood extension was ranked medium priority

and medium term in the 2009 plan, and the Valley View Drive extension was ranked low priority and long term.

Holland noted that developing the 40 acres would require expensive infrastructure improvements, such as water and sewer, which the city could not afford. Green

agreed but noted that spending \$100,000 on a street extension would be a step in the right direction. Councilor Shannon Adair said she'd like to see a commitment from the landowners to develop the land.

Extending Seventh Street west to Patterson Bridge Road was another option, but Green said he was concerned construction vehicles working on the new sewer treatment plant and the Innovation Gateway project could damage the new roadway.

Reconfiguring and improving the complex intersection at Charolais Drive, Valley View Drive and Bridge Street was another option. Holland noted that engineering work for that project has already been completed, and Grant County had agreed to assist with that project.

Holland noted that \$100,000 also could pay for a lot of chip-sealing work on city streets. With three councilors absent that night, he suggested holding off a decision on street projects until

the next council meeting.

Green said he would work up some cost estimates for four options and bring them back to the council July 24.

The council also approved two resolutions at their meeting related to construction of a 5,000- to 6,000-square-foot commercial greenhouse at the Innovation Gateway project. A decision to award a bid proposal for the greenhouse was delayed to the council's July 24 meeting because of the technical nature of the two highest-ranked proposals.

A special public works fund loan of up to \$350,000 from the Infrastructure Finance Authority of the Oregon Business Development Department was approved to pay for the greenhouse. The 25-year loan carries a 3.43 percent interest rate.

The estimated total cost for the greenhouse is about \$400,000, including engineering, design, construction, contingency and legal costs. The city expects to make the loan payments from the sale of produce from the greenhouse.

Crews engaging small forest fires

Southern forest implements Phase A public use restrictions

Blue Mountain Eagle

Fire crews spent Monday afternoon and evening locating and fighting fires sparked by two days of thunderstorms and are expecting additional fires to emerge over the next few days.

Efforts by responding crews on the Malheur National Forest have kept the lightning caused fires to less than an acre in size, according to a Forest Service press release.

Crews will continue to staff and carry out suppression and mop-up efforts on existing fires and initial attack any new fires. Hot spots from lightning strikes can smolder for days before flaring up.

Reconnaissance flights were being conducted over the area Tuesday, watching for any new smokes or fires that may flare up as daytime heating sets in.

Continued hot and dry conditions forecast for this area will elevate fire danger, which is already high enough across the region that fire starts from light or moderate amounts of lightning or human sources will challenge initial attack resources.

The public's awareness

of the increasing fire danger and assistance is essential to a safe fire season. Recreationists, firewood cutters, hunters and other forest users can all help by closely adhering to restrictions, operating safely and cautiously and keeping up-to-date on the latest orders and regulations.

Seasonal restrictions are in effect annually from June 1 to Oct. 31 across the forest. Campfires are only allowed in fire pits surrounded by dirt, rock or commercial rings clear of all flammable material at least three feet from the edge of the pit. Campers must have a shovel and gallon of water. Portable stoves are also regulated.

On the southern half of the forest, the Emigrant Creek Ranger District, Phase A public use restrictions are also in effect. Operating a chainsaw is prohibited except between 8 p.m. and 1 p.m., and a one-hour fire watch is required after operations cease. Operators must possess an ax, shovel and fire extinguisher.

Smoking is only allowed in enclosed vehicles or buildings or areas cleared of flammable material with at least 3 feet clearance. Operating a vehicle off-road, on a closed road or where vegetation comes into contact with the vehicle's undercarriage is prohibited.

For more information, call 541-575-3000, or visit fs.usda.gov/malheur.

Prairie City officials violated executive session law

Employee salary discussion not allowed behind closed doors

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

The Oregon Government Ethics Commission recently found that the Prairie City Council violated the state's public meetings law when it went into executive session Aug. 9 to discuss an employee's salary.

In a preliminary finding to a citizen complaint, the commission concluded that sufficient information exists to indicate that a topic not authorized for consideration during executive session had been discussed by the council.

The council had discussed compensation for the city's public works director, Chris Camarena, during the executive session, which was closed to the public other than news media, of which none were present that night.

The commission did not suggest a remedy for the violation, but in a Jan. 2 letter provided to the Eagle by Mayor Jim Hamsher, commission investigator Michael Thornicroft said his recommendation to the commission, based on his preliminary review of the matter, was that the matter "be settled with a Letter of Education and not a fine."



Jim Hamsher

The meeting

Governing bodies can go into a closed-to-the-public executive session if the subject matter fits within a narrow list of exclusions allowed in the state's open meetings law. No executive session was on the agenda for Prairie City's Aug. 9 meeting.

According to the official minutes for the meeting, Camarena requested the executive session at 7:41 p.m. and handed his request to City Recorder/Treasurer Taci Philbrook.

The commission learned from an audio recording of the executive session that Hamsher read the required script used to announce an executive session, stating that the purpose of the meeting was to consider employment of an employee or individual agent and to conduct labor negotiations.

According to the recording, Camarena told the council during the executive ses-

sion that he had been offered a higher-paying job by the city of Joseph, and they needed an answer in two days. No decision was made during the executive session, the commission learned from the recording.

When the council reconvened in open session about 20 minutes later, the official minutes state, a motion was made to increase Camarena's annual salary to \$72,000 in 2017 and to \$75,000 in 2018 as long as he agreed to stay with Prairie City for five years without taking any offers from other cities. The motion passed unanimously.

The complaint

Prairie City resident Dan Becker's complaint about the executive session was received Nov. 9. He later explained that he wanted to get the attention of the council without causing a financial hardship and get them to obey the state's open meeting laws.

Attending the executive session were Hamsher and Councilors Carole Garrison, Georgia Patterson, Les Church, Frank Primozic and Joe Phippen. They responded to Becker's complaint in a Nov. 29 signed statement to the commission.

In their statement, the mayor and councilors said

Philbrook notified Hamsher less than 30 minutes before the council meeting began "that she had arranged for an executive session to negotiate the employee's new contract."

"The mayor trusted that the recorder/treasurer had acted with due diligence on our behalf and that her information was correct," the statement reads.

The commission did not address Becker's complaint that proper notice was not given for the executive session, noting that the commission had no jurisdiction over that matter.

Citing the Oregon Attorney General's Public Records and Meeting Manual, the commission found the Prairie City executive session was not authorized as a labor negotiation because those "take place only between employee representatives, such as labor organizations, and employers" and that discussion about an employee's salary is not authorized under the exception for considering a person for employment.

"We have no other defense except to say that in the future we will make every effort to be better informed and consult the city attorney prior to future executive sessions," the statement from the Prairie City officials concludes.

Attention Grant County Veterans:

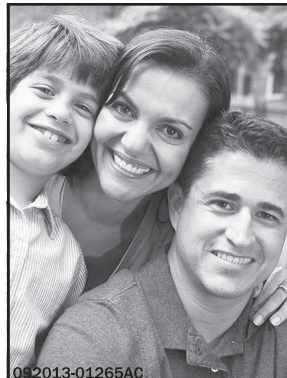


Katee Hoffman

Did you know Grant County Veterans Services Officer is available to assist YOU in applying for all VA benefits you may be entitled to?

See your Grant County Veteran Services Officer today for more information, located at Grant County Court House.

10am-4pm Monday-Friday • 541-620-8057
530 E. Main, Ste. 5, John Day, OR



Balance Today with Retiring Tomorrow

No matter where you're starting from, COUNTRY can help you achieve financial security in retirement. It starts with listening to your situation. Then we help you build a straightforward plan with step-by-step guidance. Call me to get started today.



Debbie Ausmus
245 South Canyon Blvd.
John Day, OR 97845
OPEN WED. & THUR.
9 am - 5 pm
541-575-1113
24 hrs/7 days wk

debbie.ausmus@countryfinancial.com



Your Rural Family Health Clinic		Grant County HEALTH Department 528 E. Main, St. E. John Day
		Monday - Thursday 7am - 6pm Friday 8am - 5pm Mendy Sharpe FNP <i>Appointments available</i>
<i>Services Provided:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary Care • Acute Care • Women's Health Exams • Men and Children Exams • Immunizations • Family Planning • Contraception 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pregnancy Testing & Referrals • HIV Testing & Referrals • Cocoon • WIC • High Risk Infants • Maternity Case Management 	Call and schedule your appointment today! TOLL FREE 888-443-9104 or 541-575-0429

The City of Prairie City and the Parade Committee would like to give a special thank you for all the people who volunteered and helped to make the parade a success this year! Nice job!

Anna Smith, Andrea Moles, Glenda Harvey, Hannah Wall, Pat Amling, Taci Philbrook, Tori Lake, Kathy Moss, Riley Emmel, and Melanie Dejong.

The City of Prairie City would like to thank the following people who helped put on and clean up after the Grant County 4th of July fireworks and event. Awesome job!

Josh Zeigler, Mayor Jim Hamsher, Prairie City Public Works, Undersheriff Zach Mobley and Grant County Sheriff's Deputies, Grant County Search and Rescue, Chief Marvin Rynearson, Prairie City Volunteer Fire Department, Jay Burril and the Oxbow Ranch.

Thank You All!

68843

<h1>Robbins Farm Equipment</h1>		
3850 10th St. Baker City 541-523-6377	62302 Pierce Rd. La Grande 541-963-6577	1160 S Egan Burns 541-573-6377
		86812 Christmas Valley Hwy. Christmas Valley 541-576-2160

66164