

Court applauds veteran services office

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

The Grant County Court applauded the work of the Grant County Veteran Services Office under the direction of Katee Hoffman during their July 25 meeting.

County Judge Scott Myers said the court has heard great things about Hoffman's work at the office since she took over in September 2017. Commissioner Jim Hamscher said he has spoken to many veterans in the county and never heard a negative comment about Hoffman, only positive things.

Hoffman, a disabled Army veteran, updated the court on the office's work, including meeting with numerous vets at the office's new location in the county's L Building on East Main Street in John Day or at their individual homes.

About 550 veterans are registered with her office, but Hoffman estimates about 1,200 veterans live in Grant County. About 148 veterans came to her office in the previous 90 days, and she met with another 11 at their homes, she said. She travels to Monument the second Tuesday of each month to meet with veterans.

Hoffman also assists with numerous wartime, disability and death benefit claims. The turnaround on claims has improved on average from 18 months to less than four months, she said.

The office recently received a \$4,700 grant for suicide prevention efforts. She cited one case where a veteran's suicidal problems were related to his insufficient retirement income, a problem that was helped by addressing his veteran claims.

Hoffman said she is seeking ideas for how to spend the grant money. Myers noted the grant was entirely discretionary.

In other county court news:

- An agreement allowing the Grant County Sheriff's Office to provide law enforcement services to the city of John Day was amended after Commissioner Rob Raschio noted the agreement did not have a fixed term and "would last forever" at the stated hourly rates for deputies, \$35 per hour, and cost for gas.

Raschio said he had talked to John Day City Manager Nick Green and Green was agreeable to reviewing the agreement every two years. Raschio noted that this agreement could lead to more deputies working for the sheriff's office, and County Judge Scott Myers said the court would be watching the sheriff's office's budget closely.

- Pat Holliday was appointed to the Grant County Planning Commission.

- The court went into executive session to consult with the county's attorney regarding current litigation or litigation that is likely to be filed.



Katee Hoffman

Council applies for grants for two street projects

By Richard Hanners
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The city of John Day moved ahead last week with commercial greenhouse plans for the Innovation Gateway site at the city's west entrance.

The city council approved a notice of intent to award EuroMex, headquartered in Spain with offices in Los Angeles and Mexico, a \$337,590 bid for a 6,240-square-foot greenhouse that will produce about 30 tons of produce per year, meeting the city's demand.

EuroMex, which typically builds large facilities, outscored Clearspan, City Manager Nick Green said. The greenhouse's three 16-foot high, 26-by-80-foot bays will have clear walls so visitors can view the facility without going inside and possibly contaminating the environment.

Green said EuroMex will send personnel to John Day to install electronics and oversee city crews who will assemble the greenhouse. If the project works out, the city could build additional greenhouses and start exporting produce, Green said.

The city council will take up the EuroMex bid at its Aug. 14 meeting. The project will be reviewed by the Grant County Planning Commission later in August because the 2-acre site lies outside the city limits.

Street projects

In a busy meeting, the council also picked two street projects to apply for funding from Oregon Special City Allotment grants, which recently increased from \$50,000 per year to \$200,000 for two separate projects. The deadline for submitting the grant application was Aug. 1.

The council agreed to apply for the grant funding to extend Valley View Drive to Patterson Bridge Road near the Malheur National Forest building, which would provide access to street networks within Phase 2 of Ironwood Estates.

This street plan was approved earlier by the city. Joe Hitz of Sisul Engineering said the road is about 80 percent built and estimated completion costs at \$282,000.

The council also agreed to reconfigure and rebuild the intersection of Charolais Drive,



From left, Councilors Dave Holland and Paul Smith watch a presentation on the city's strategy for growth during the city council's July 24 meeting.



The Eagle/Richard Hanners

John Day City Manager Nick Green describes progress in the city's strategy for growth during the city council's July 24 meeting.

Valley View Drive, Bridge Street and two other streets. Valley View and Bridge Street would become a through-street. Green noted that parking for the future Davis Creek trail system and botanical gardens would be located near this intersection.

Engineering for this project was completed, and John Day Public Works Director Monte Legg said the Grant County Road Department was still on board to assist. Hitz estimated the cost to complete the project at \$244,000.

The option to extend Seventh Street west from Bridge



Contributed photo

John Day is considering purchasing a commercial greenhouse from EuroMex, a company that manufactures very large commercial greenhouses like the one shown in this contributed image.

Street to Patterson Bridge Road was turned down because it's too early and too expensive. Extending Seventh Street would provide access to Innovation Gateway from the north side of the river and provide a second bridge connection for the city's north side.

The design, however, is not final because the city's new sewer treatment plant has not been sited, and the city was not sure what will happen to the existing percolation ponds, Green said.

The street project is also very complex and expensive.

According to preliminary plans, the middle segment calls for wider lanes, a landscaped median, parallel parking, a 200-foot bus turnaround circle, four special parking spaces for buses and street lights. Fully developed, the estimated cost is \$3.2 million.

Another option turned down by the council called for various chip-sealing projects.

With the county already doing chip-sealing projects this year, Legg suggested holding off chip-sealing until 2020.

Recreation plans

The council also moved ahead with several long-range plans for city parks and trails.

Green was directed to continue negotiations with the Oregon Department of Parks and Recreation for the sale of 3 acres of city land adjacent to the Kam Wah Chung State Heritage Site.

The state wants to use the land, which includes Gleason Pool, to build a new interpretive center. Chris Labhart, who works at the museum, said the state might pay \$1 million for the city land.

The council also authorized Green to sign a purchase and sales agreement for 10 acres of land on both sides of the John Day River near Canyon Creek owned by Colleen and Celeste Hill.


The 4-acre property on the south side of the river would be used for a new city park. Green noted that additional property needed for a trail along Canyon Creek linking the new park to Kam Wah Chung would be provided through lot-line adjustments.

Two neighbors, however, expressed security concerns if a public trail is built right along their backyards. They also noted that the city's creekside property may be too narrow in places for a new trail.

Lastly, the council approved a \$17,500 feasibility study agreement with consultant Councilman-Hunsaker for options for a possible new aquatic center to replace Gleason Pool. Green assured Mayor Ron Lundbom that the funding was available and said he hopes to leverage the \$17,500 into a regional investment to attract people to John Day.

The city council's next meeting is Aug. 14.

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CHRISTOPHER ROBIN (PG)
A working-class family man, Christopher Robin, encounters his childhood friend Winnie-the-Pooh, who helps him to rediscover the joys of life.
FRI-THURS (4:20) 7:20 9:40
MISSON: IMPOSSIBLE - FALLOUT (PG-13) Ethan Hunt and his team, along with some familiar allies, race against time after a mission gone wrong.
FRI-THURS (4:00) 7:30
MAMMA MIA! HERE WE GO AGAIN (PG-13) Five years after the events of Mamma Mia! Sophie learns about her mother's past while pregnant herself.
FRI-THURS (4:10) 7:10 9:35
\$9 Adult, \$7 Senior (60+), Youth