

Broadband board gets boost from city

Project starts with service south to Seneca

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

Bringing broadband internet service to Grant County is not about binging on Netflix, John Day City Manager Nick Green told the Grant County Digital Network Coalition board at its first meeting — it's about improving the local economy.

There shouldn't be cities in Grant County without cellphone coverage or places where one neighbor has internet access and another does not, he said. The county needs to keep up with technologies that create new opportunities and not be a laggard, he said.

Green advised the board that the coalition's goal should be to provide the fastest internet possible at the lowest price possible to as many residents as possible. Broadband access will enable area residents to be educated online or for high-tech businesses to create new jobs in the county.

Public-private partnership

Established April 10, the coalition is an intergovernmental agency between Grant County, John Day and Seneca with a cost-sharing agreement that commits financial resources from each participating agency on a per capita basis.

To achieve its goals, the coalition formed a public-private partnership with the Oregon Telephone Corporation, which has already run fiber to many of its customers. Green



The Eagle/Richard Hanners

Joe Rigney, an outside technician with Oregon Telephone Corporation, works on a fiber cable drop for a home in John Day on Aug. 24.

said competition from a public entity will motivate private enterprise to improve internet service in Grant County.

"Many residents in the county have questioned why we are proposing to create an additional connection to the main internet when there are already existing fiber connections," Green said in his memo to the board. "The simple answer is that, even though those assets were financed using public funding, they are owned and operated exclusively by private sector providers. These providers can regulate where and under what conditions our residents have access to the internet."

Dan Becker, representing Grant County, Josh Walker, representing Seneca, and Brandon Smith, representing John Day, listened to a presentation by Erik Orton, owner of Commstructure Consulting, and James Greenwood, the company's

budget manager.

Commstructure, which will provide infrastructure design and project management for the first phase of the coalition's broadband network, helped draft an application for a \$2.9 million U.S. Department of Agriculture Community Connect grant.

Grant requirements

The city of John Day applied for the grant in May, intending to cover the 15 percent match of \$450,000 from the \$1.8 million it received as a state appropriation in 2017. Leveraging the state funding by 7.5 times is good use of that money, Green noted.

The city spent significant funds on due diligence for the competitive grant, and the USDA will send personnel to Grant County to verify internet access conditions, Green said. The coalition will learn if it is awarded the grant in about six weeks, but the lag time in receiving the funds after that could be reduced as a result of the pre-planning already accomplished, he said.

"Our state funding was just to build the dark fiber connection to Burns," Green told the Eagle. "The USDA grant broadens the scope significantly by providing a direct connection to almost every property owner along that route."

The plan submitted to the USDA calls for running a main fiber cable from Canyon City south to the Harney County line. Connections will be made to all premises within the plan's service area along Highway 395 and the city of Seneca. Free internet access will be provided at Seneca City Hall.

Greenwood said the service area currently has very poor internet access, so improved access will meet the goals of the grant.

"There were specific bandwidth and coverage requirements that had to be met for the grant application, so they adjusted the approach to meet those," Green told the Eagle about Commstructure's work. "The biggest one was that anyone within the proposed funded service area had to be given access to the network."

If homes or businesses are located just outside the service area, a fiber drop still could be provided through the public-private partnership with Ortelco, Green said. If a small neighborhood outside the area wanted service, they might need to form an improvement district to help pay for the line, he said.

Phased growth

Green outlined four network development phases for the coalition board. Phase 1 includes planning, design and financing; Phase 2 will begin upon approval of the USDA grant and involves running a main cable all the way to Burns and hooking up to the internet backbone running along Highway 20; Phase 3 includes building out to main urban areas in Grant County and residents within the initial service area; and Phase 4 will expand coverage to outlying communities.

If the coalition receives the full \$3 million USDA grant, Green said, it would be able to construct a line from Canyon City to Seneca, connecting all Seneca premises and many along the way.

The \$1.3 million left over from the state appropriation will be used to leverage grant applications to complete Phase 2 and begin Phase 3, Green said, adding he's already working on a separate funding package to complete the line from Seneca to Burns. Ideally, the entire line from Canyon City to Burns would be built

at the same time in a single contract, despite multiple funding sources, he said.

The initial project will not connect all of John Day but will get the network closer to the "big pipes" along Highway 20, including the state of Oregon's internet backbone, Green said.

The board could consider operating the network under three possible models — as a wholesale dark fiber provider, with private companies responsible for delivering broadband to each premise; as a public utility like city water or sewer, as established in Sandy; or as an open access network that functions like a public highway open to all transportation, as set up in Ammon, Idaho. Green noted that the coalition lacks the resources to pursue the second option.

Board matters

To help the coalition get started, Green offered to serve as executive director. His pay would come from a 1 percent administrative fee on certain grants he helps the coalition obtain.

Noting that the coalition didn't have any financial history established, Green said John Day could continue to provide financial services for procuring planning, technical and network design services.

In the spirit of transparency, Walker suggested accepting letters of interest from the public to fill the board's two at-large positions. The board agreed. Becker said he'd like to see leaders from other parts of the county joining them, and Walker said people with technical knowledge should get higher priority.

The board also agreed to meet at 6 p.m. the third Tuesday of each month. The next meeting will be Sept. 18 at the John Day Fire Hall.

COPS AND COURTS

Arrests and citations in the Blue Mountain Eagle are taken from the logs of law enforcement agencies. Every effort is made to report the court disposition of arrest cases.

Grant County Circuit Court

Misdemeanor charges against Robert D. Herrera, 60, John Day, of strangulation constituting domestic violence, menacing constituting domestic violence and harassment stemming from a May 15 incident were dismissed Aug. 22. The Grant County District Attorney's Office motioned to dismiss the charges in the best interests of justice.

A felony charge against Kathy L. Meyer, 46, Mt. Vernon, of criminal conspiracy constituting unlawful delivery of methamphetamine was dismissed Aug. 23. The Grant County District Attorney's Office motioned to dismiss the charge on the grounds that plea negotiations warrant that the matter be dismissed.

Kevin J. Rapp, 33, John Day, pleaded guilty Aug. 14 to felony first-degree assault and misdemeanor possession of methamphetamine committed on Oct. 16, 2017. He was sentenced to prison for 85 months with good-time credit limited to 20 percent and no more than six months transitional leave,

three years post-prison supervision, 18 months supervised probation and \$300 restitution. Charges of attempt to commit murder and unlawful use of a weapon were dismissed.

Grant County Sheriff

The Grant County Sheriff's Office reported the following for the week of Aug. 22:

Concealed handgun licenses: 11
Average inmates: 22
Bookings: 15
Releases: 15
Arrests: 2
Citations: 3
Fingerprints: 4
Civil papers: 11
Warrants processed: 3
Asst./welfare check: 0
Search and rescue: 0
Aug. 16: Curtis Clark, 27, Pendleton, was cited for driving with a suspended license.

Aug. 20: Maxwell Donahue, 21, Missoula, Montana, was cited for speeding, 51/35 zone.

Aug. 20: Mary Brown, 56, Glide, was cited for speeding, 42/25 zone.

Oregon State Police

Aug. 20: Responded to a commercial vehicle accident on Highway 26 west of Prairie City where a westbound Peter-

bilt truck hit a cow elk.

Aug. 22: Dispatched to a report of a vehicle hitting a flagger at a construction site on Highway 395 south of Canyon City. Jeffrey Leeman, 56, Gaston, was cited for reckless endangerment of a highway worker.

Aug. 22: Responded to a single-vehicle crash on Highway 402 near West Cottonwood Creek Road in Monument. A 36-year-old had reached for something that slid off the seat, and the 1999 Subaru drifted off the westbound lane for about 180 feet. The driver over corrected, causing the vehicle to trip, roll and go airborne before hitting a large juniper tree and resting on its top. The driver was transported to the hospital and was released without injury.

Aug. 24: Dispatched to North Mountain Boulevard in Mt. Vernon. Kristini R. Perry, 33, Mt. Vernon, was cited for possessing a home-grown marijuana plant in public view.

Aug. 24: Responded to a single-vehicle crash on Highway 26 near Dixie Summit. A state trooper, sheriff's deputy and ambulance crew member reported that the driver was highly intoxicated and admitted he believed he was traveling 90 mph when he crashed. The 674-foot long crash scene included 60 feet of torn-out guardrail on the westbound

lane and extensive damage to the guardrail on the other side of the highway. A blood draw at the hospital indicated the driver had a 0.217 percent blood alcohol content. Aaron L. Hancock, 27, Prairie City, was charged with driving while under the influence of intoxicants and reckless driving.

Dispatch

John Day dispatch worked 133 calls during the week of Aug. 20-26, including:

• **John Day Police Department**

Aug. 20: Dispatched to Highway 26 in west John Day for a suspicious persons report. Georgia Kadin, 53, was arrested on a Crook County warrant.

Aug. 21: Responded to a mobile home park in John Day where Caleb Vielma, 29, turned himself in on a warrant for violating a release agreement.

Aug. 22: Dispatched to East Main Street in John Day for a report of a restraining order violation.

Aug. 23: Responded to a barber shop in John Day. Robert Herrera, 60, was arrested and charged with a restraining order violation.

Aug. 24: Following a traffic stop on Highway 26 near Bear Creek Road in John Day, Paul H. Reeder, 72, was cited for speeding.

Aug. 24: Following a traffic stop at Highway 26 and Gunther Street, Jeremiah C. Van Arsdall, 19, Gresham, was cited for minor in possession of alcohol.

• **Oregon State Police**
Aug. 20: Received a livestock complaint for Highway 26 near Pine Creek Road.

Aug. 26: Received a report of a noninjury crash on Fields Creek Road.

• **Grant County Sheriff's Office**

Aug. 20: Received a report of suspicious circumstances on Dog Creek Road in John Day.

Aug. 21: Advised of a missing person in Mt. Vernon.

Aug. 23: Received a report of a dispute on Screech Alley Loop in John Day.

Aug. 24: Advised of a missing person on West Bench Road in John Day.

Aug. 25: Received a report of a crash with injuries on Forest Service Road 16 in the Logan Valley area.

Aug. 25: Advised of a non-injury crash on Forest Road 36.

• **John Day ambulance**
Aug. 20: Responded to Highway 402 near Monument for a 2-year-old boy.

Aug. 20: Dispatched to West First Street in Long Creek for a diabetic issue.

Aug. 20: Responded with Long Creek ambulance and sheriff's office to Highway 395 for a man with abdominal pain

and difficulty breathing.

Aug. 21: Dispatched with the sheriff's office to Widows Creek Road for a medical condition.

Aug. 22: Transported a patient to the hospital in John Day.

Aug. 22: Responded to Northeast Dayton Street in John Day for a medical alert alarm.

Aug. 22: Dispatched with Monument fire and ambulance to a single-vehicle rollover crash.

Aug. 23: Transferred a patient to the airport in John Day.

Aug. 24: Responded with state police to an accident on Highway 26 near Dixie Summit.

Aug. 24: Dispatched with Monument fire and ambulance and air ambulance to Cottonwood Road near Monument for a 27-year-old man who lost consciousness and stopped breathing.

Aug. 25: Responded with Prairie City ambulance to South Bridge Street in Prairie City for a 12-year-old boy with seizures.

Aug. 26: Dispatched with Seneca ambulance, state police and sheriff's office to Highway 395 near Starr Ridge for a single-vehicle rollover crash.

Aug. 26: Responded to Little Dog Creek Lane in Canyon City for a 56-year-old man with an ankle injury.

Attention Grant County Veterans:



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.


Katee Hoffman
10am-4pm Monday-Friday • 541-620-8057
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A MOST HEARTFELT THANK YOU

To all our friends and family that attended, supported, participated and helped in Darrel's (Moose) benefit for medical equipment. It was a huge success, thanks to all of you. Our family is truly blessed to live in this great community.

Darrel (Moose) & Teresa Simmons
Maria, John, Alexis & Carson Higgins
Wayne Simmons & Emily Oden

Eagle Cap Excursion Train

Saturday, September 1, History Train
Guest speaker, Gwen Trice,
Maxville Heritage Center

September 8, Mystery Tour Train
Sept. 15, Fall Foliage Photo Train
Sept. 29, Wine & Cheese Train
October 6 & 13, Train Robberies
October 20, Season's Bounty

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