

John Day City Council starts work on annexations

Plans for greenhouse are finalized

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

With a delay in the processing of a state planning grant for the Innovation Gateway project, the John Day City Council has turned its attention to annexations and lot line adjustments related to the project.

The lot line adjustments between the former Oregon Pine mill site and Mills Building Supply, JD Rents and Clark's Disposal initially were delayed until the new commercial greenhouse could be sited, City Manager Nick Green told the city council Aug. 28.

Because the annexation process can be complicated, Green advised combining the annexation of the Oregon Pine property, which the city acquired in 2017 for the Innovation Gateway project, with other annexations.

That includes a portion of the Hills property recently acquired by the city, an island

of land near the Charolais Heights Road intersection that is in the county but totally surrounded by the city.

The city is also considering annexing Grant Union Junior-Senior High School and nearby properties owned by the Old West Federal Credit Union, which lie in between the cities of John Day and Canyon City.

The council will hold its first study session to discuss the annexations at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 4, at the John Day Fire Hall.

Bureaucratic delays have held up the state Transportation Growth Management grant, worth nearly \$200,000 including city's \$27,000 match, Green said. The grant will provide a framework for planning, financing and implementation of the Innovation Gateway project.

A public process for the planning will include three meetings of the city's advisory committees, three open houses for the public, a joint working session with the city council and city planning commission, public hearings before the city council and city planning commission

and a launch event at the conclusion of the public process sometime next summer.

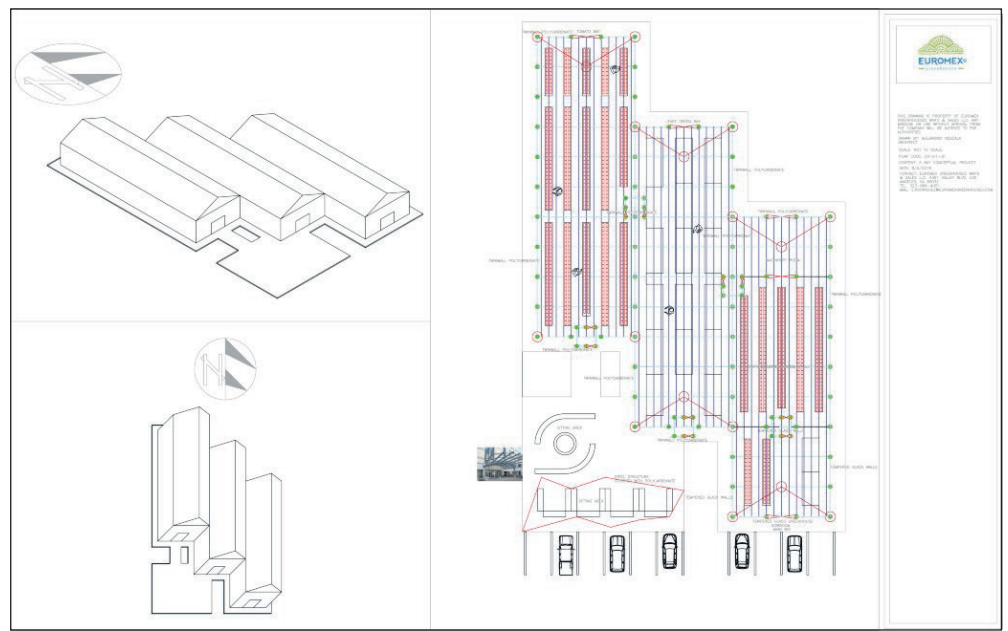
Greenhouse plans

The council also reviewed final plans from EuroMex for the city's commercial greenhouse and approved a purchase and sale agreement. The total price came in higher than originally submitted at \$367,320, but it includes about \$39,000 in add-ons at no extra cost.

EuroMex threw in a public art package for an outdoor sitting area worth \$14,000 that the city must assemble, grow lights and outdoor lighting worth \$10,000 and a two-week training trip to Mexico for John Day Agribusiness Manager Matt Manitsas worth \$12,000.

The final design, tweaked by EuroMex officials who recently visited John Day, calls for three 2,000-square-foot bays offset to maximize viewing by visitors on Highway 26. The public viewing area features a show room area with tempered glass.

Joe Hitz of Sisul Engineering sited the greenhouse to allow two more bays to be



Contributed image

The final conceptual drawing by EuroMex for the commercial greenhouse at the Innovation Gateway includes three offset bays and a public viewing area.

built to the east, Green said. EuroMex will send a crew to install electronics and oversee local workers who will assemble the greenhouse.

The Grant County Planning Commission approved the city's land-use application for the greenhouse Aug. 23 but requested a revised map showing access from High-

way 26.

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

The estimated total cost for

the greenhouse is more than \$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, which is expected to be 30 tons of vegetables per year — enough to meet the city's needs.

Durr sworn in as chief

John Day Police Department now fully staffed

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

The John Day Police Department and Emergency Communications Center are both up to full staffing levels, and construction of dispatch center facilities at the city fire hall is making progress, City Manager Nick Green told the city council Aug. 28.

Interim Police Chief Mike Durr was sworn in as the city's new police chief at the meeting. He has also taken on the duties of a school resource officer for Grant Union Junior-Senior High School.

Durr joined the John Day Police Department in April 2014 after retiring from the Oregon State Police. He received his advanced certification from the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training in December 2015.

He left to work for the Baker City Police Department in 2018 and then returned in April to become interim police chief during former John Day Police Chief Richard Gray's absence.

The school resource officer position went into effect Aug. 27 following talks between



The Eagle/Richard Hanners

Mike Durr is sworn in as the John Day chief of police by City Manager Nick Green on Aug. 28.

Green and Grant School District 3 Superintendent Bret Uptmor. A memorandum of understanding between the city and school district will be drafted later and submitted for approval to city council and school board, Green said.

Funding for the position will be split 50/50 between the city and the school district. The additional funding enabled the city to get back up to a full staffing level of four officers, including Durr, Scott Moore, Andrew Martin and Sam Stinnett.

Stinnett, who was a corrections deputy at the Grant County Jail, started with John Day July 9. He will attend the state police academy from October through February to receive his police officer certification, Green said.

Construction at the John Day Fire Hall for the 911 dispatch center has been moving right along, Green said. A CenturyLink technician traveled from Salem to install

emergency communications wiring on Aug. 29.

The Oregon Office of Emergency Management has approved the fire hall location and will provide \$36,928 for the move from the John Day City Hall, Green said. The Intergovernmental Council will take over management of the dispatch center from John Day on Jan. 1.

The dispatch center is also up to full staff with the hiring of Ryan Palmer on Aug. 11. He will attend basic telecommunications training from Oct. 29 through Nov. 11 and emergency medical dispatch training from Nov. 12-14, Green said. Palmer will transition to management under the IGC in January.

New Umatilla National Forest staff introduce themselves to court

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

Umatilla National Forest Supervisor Eric Watrud, Heppner District Ranger Brandon Houck and North Fork District Ranger Paula Guenther introduced themselves to the Grant County Court Aug. 29.

All three are new to their jobs at the Umatilla Forest. Watrud, who worked for a time as a regional silviculturist in Portland, expressed a strong interest in working with local counties. Houck and Guenther moved to Oregon from Wyoming.

Guenther, who is based in Ukiah, explained that the large response to the 30-acre Harrison fire in the wilderness near Olive Lake resulted from its proximity to Greenhorn and the availability of firefighting resources at that time. Otherwise, the Forest Service might have left the fire to "creep around" and reduce forest fuels that had been building up in the area, she said.

She also explained that the former ranger station in Dale was slated for demolition as funding became available to handle hazardous materials in 14 buildings at the site. The site had been



The Eagle/Richard Hanners

From left, Heppner District Ranger Brandon Houck, Umatilla National Forest Supervisor Eric Watrud and North Fork District Ranger Paula Guenther.

scheduled for decommissioning for the past 15 years, she said.

Grant County Judge Scott Myers explained how the county had been interested in making use of the facility 10 years ago, before the buildings were overrun by packrats and started to decay.

Several members of the public joined the court in expressing interest in seeing the site converted into an RV park or a campground once demolition is completed and the site cleaned up.

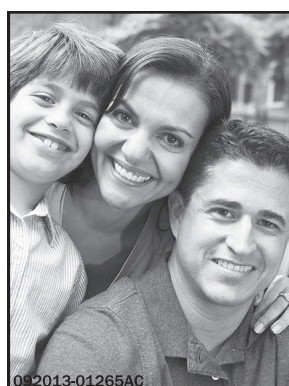
The court also approved an ordinance that establishes a process to reduce the two-year redemption period for tax-foreclosed properties based on statutory criteria and procedures.

The court will use the process to take ownership of two properties in Long Creek and Prairie City that have become significant nuisances and hazards to neighbors and other residents.

The court's next regularly scheduled meeting is Sept. 12.



Mike Durr



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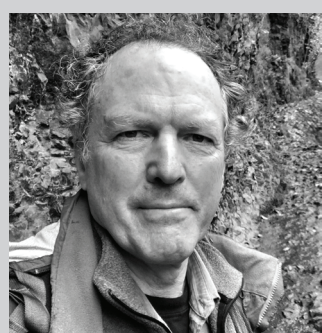
Grant County Health Department does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, or age in admission, treatment, or participation in its programs, services and activities, or in employment.

I would like to thank everyone and all of my friends who sent cards or flowers or brought food while I was in the hospital for my heart surgery.

Sincerely,
Judy Nelson

The Juniper Arts Council, The Oregon Cultural Trust and the John Day United Methodist Church cordially invite you to an evening with Oregon Poet Laureate Kim Stafford Thursday 9/13 at 7 PM at the John Day United Methodist Church.

Readings of his poetry with dessert reception to follow. For more information call Kris Beal at 541-932-4892.



Kim Stafford, founding director of the Northwest Writing Institute at Lewis & Clark College, is the author of a dozen books of poetry and prose, including The Muses Among Us: Eloquent Listening and Other Pleasures of the Writer's Craft and 100 Tricks Every Boy Can Do: How My Brother Disappeared.

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