

Highway littering ordinance considered

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant County's beautiful high-ways are being littered with trash blown out the back of trucks, Dave Traylor told the Grant County Court Sept. 12. An ordinance requiring loads headed to the Clark's Disposal transfer station be covered is needed, he said.

It's not just an aesthetic issue but a public safety concern, Traylor said. Vehicles that swerve to avoid hitting branches or construction debris can end up leaving the road or hitting other vehicles, he said.

Traylor said he's talked to District Attorney Jim Carpenter about the problem for several years and noted that other Oregon counties have ordinances requiring loads be covered and secured.

Traylor also said he's found evidence in trash found along highways that identified the previous owner, but law enforcement officials were not interested in pursuing the matter. He asked that the county ordinance allow citizens to cite litterers.

Gordon Larson commented that nobody likes to see litter along roadways, but he questioned the need for the ordinance when a state law already exists.

Carpenter told the Eagle, under existing state law, a citizen who observes littering can complete a complaint form at the Grant County Justice Court.

"They need as much identifying information as possible," he said. "The offender is then cited into Justice Court to answer the complaint."

The proposed county ordinance is still being formulated, Carpenter said.

"However, the ability of a citizen to make a citizen citation is codified by state law and would likely remain the same, whether there is an ordinance or not," he said.

The court also discussed the merits of increasing the fee at Clark's Disposal for uncovered and unsecured loads to as much as \$50. Myers, however, noted that if the penalty is too high, a person might drive away and dump their trash elsewhere in an illegal location.

Carpenter said he was willing to draft the proposed ordinance, and the court agreed to follow up on Traylor's request.

Treasurer's report

In her department head report to the court, Grant County Treasurer Julie Ellison described her duties in receiving and disbursing all of the county's funds. In addition to paying

invoices and making out payroll checks, she invests the county's \$30 million in reserves and prepares the annual budget document.

Ellison, who's served as treasurer for two years, said larger counties have financial advisors while she works with a broker. She noted that state policies limit how she invests county reserves and prevent her from making longer-term investments that could earn more.

"Under Oregon law, the county is currently restricted to purchasing investments maturing within 18 months," she told the Eagle. "In order to purchase investments maturing longer than 18 months, the county would need to submit an investment policy to the Oregon Short Term Fund Board that allows for a maximum maturity of five years. Once the board reviews the policy and provides their recommendations, the county would adopt the policy and be allowed to purchase investments maturing within five years instead of 18 months."

On the payroll side, Ellison asked the court to consider implementing a policy requiring county workers to have a direct-deposit account for payroll. Administrative Assistant Laurie Wright noted that a direct-deposit system would need to be put in

place before the policy could be implemented.

The court also agreed to create a department assistant position that would be full time but shared by the Justice Court and Assessor's Office. The court had earlier approved creating a part-time position at Justice Court, but then a part-time employee at the Assessor's Office announced he was moving out of the area.

Combining the two part-time positions to create a single full-time position would help retain workers, Wright said. Commissioner Jim Hamsher agreed, adding that it would also reduce training costs. The worker would serve in either position as needed, with more time in the Assessor's Office during tax time.

Commissioner Rob Raschio objected to the requirement for a criminal background check, noting that people who have served their time should not be excluded from applying. He also noted that combining two part-time positions into one full-time position was not budget neutral — a full-time employee would earn certain benefits.

The wording will be amended to allow people with a record of acceptable criminal behavior to apply.

The Grant County Court's next meeting is Sept. 26.

Road worker finds explosive at rock pit

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The Oregon State Police bomb squad was sent from Salem Sept. 12 to deal with explosive device found by a Grant County Road Department worker.

According to Undersheriff Zach Mobley, the road department worker discovered the device at a rock pit and brought it to the road department to be turned in. The device is a commercial explosive used in blasting operations at rock pits, Mobley said. Called a cast booster, the device needs a detonator to initiate it, Capt. Tim Fox at the OSP office in Salem told the Eagle. The commercial device was about 4 years old. The bomb squad collected the device and stored it in OSP's explosive magazine for destruction at a later date, Fox said.

A cast booster is a high-density, high-energy explosive device that is sensitive to detonators or detonating cord.

Mobley reminded the public that if they find an explosive device or something that looks like an explosive device, they should not touch it or try to move it because that could result in catastrophic consequences. Anyone who finds an explosive device should contact 911 so a professional can deal with it, he said.

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