

**PALMER**

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The county needs to return to its roots to improve the economy: timber and agriculture. Palmer said he's been working on some small business development ideas that involve agriculture and will create "a lot of new jobs," but it was too early to announce any details. Palmer said he's a fiscal conser-

vative but believes people should earn a living wage. At the same time, people need to live within their budget.

Palmer said he supports the county joining the Grant County Digital Network Coalition to improve internet access. On the other hand, he said he's not sure how he would have voted on the county's new 911 dispatch service because he didn't participate in the discussions from the very beginning to

ensure the result was fair for county taxpayers.

He noted that residents in northwest Grant County around Monument and Long Creek feel "out of sight, out of mind," and he said he'd like to set up a liaison position to represent these residents and report to the court on a quarterly basis. Cellphone service needs to be improved in the area as a matter of public safety, he said.

**LARSON**

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band internet and cellphone service.

The county road department is an effectively run operation with the capacity to accomplish large tasks, Larson said. The county should find ways to assist communities in maintaining their roads through inter-governmental agreements

or memorandums of understanding. The county did the right thing in accumulating a large road fund, but the county must be careful about how it uses that fund and exercise due diligence. It should not be regarded as a go-to fund, he said.

The divisiveness in Grant County has made campaigning a very difficult process, but he's an optimistic person and bullish on the county, Larson said. Most people who

live here choose to live here because it's a safe and livable place, with great vistas and numerous outdoor recreational opportunities, he said.

But the county needs to support that environment by promoting broadband, lobbying the state to improve highway bottlenecks that limit truck loads and lengths and ensuring that the federal forest lands remain open to all users, from hikers to grazers.

**PLANT**

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the residential zone as possible, more than 200 feet distant, the report said.

The new plant also will be more than 150 feet from the John Day River, and no disturbances to streamside vegetation are expected during construction. The Oregon Department of State Lands responded to the application by noting that wetlands exist on the parcel and should be delineated ahead of time to determine if any additional permits are required.

In an Aug. 30 letter to the planning department, neighbors John and Diane Aasness, Patricia Cotham and William Choate claimed large amounts of black smoke were released in the off hours at the mill and the emissions coated surfaces at their homes.

They also claimed they were breathing emissions from a chemical used to manufacture wood pellets for home-heating, and they expressed concerns over truck traffic and speeds on Highway 26 and noise after 9 p.m.

**Company response**

Koerner and Rich Fulton, general manager at Malheur Lumber Co., responded to the neighbors in a Sept. 7 letter. They noted that the mill operates under a state-issued air contaminant discharge permit with stringent standards.

Koerner and Fulton said the mill has no recorded violations for particulate limits under the permit with no evidence of particulates landing on mill buildings. In addition, mill personnel have no knowledge of black smoke releases in off hours, they said.

"Having said that, the new equipment installations associated with the Restoration Fuels project will employ state-of-the-art emissions-control technology and are expected to reduce the overall site emissions of particulate material," they said in the letter.

Koerner and Fulton noted that the shiny surface seen on manufactured wood pellets is created by the smooth metal dies used to squeeze the wood fibers into pellets. No chemical additives are used to bind the pellets, they said. The same type of high-pressure densification will be used to produce torrefied briquettes, they added.

Koerner and Fulton agreed that traffic on Highway 26 "needs to be controlled at safe speeds and with appropriate controls," but the issue "is outside of our control." As for noise, the torrefaction plant "is not expected to produce any inordinate amount of noise or off-site disturbance."

"However, if it is determined that a particular piece of equipment does produce any high decibel or high frequency noise, we will address it as appropriate to prevent off-site disturbance," they said.

The DEQ has not yet received an application from Restoration Fuels or Malheur Lumber Co. for a modification to the plant site's existing air contaminant discharge permit, DEQ spokesman Greg Svelund told the Eagle. He said the companies have done some modeling based on estimated emissions from equipment to be installed for the torrefaction plant, but that modeling has not yet been presented to the DEQ.

According to the DEQ website, Malheur Lumber Co. was found to be in violation of its air contaminant discharge permit on Dec. 16, 2014. The company reportedly violated its plant site emission limit and paid a \$5,316 fine.



Contributed photo/Oregon Torrefaction

**In order to use as biomass, woody debris must undergo a process called torrefaction, described as a 'half-step below making charcoal.'**

**MAYOR**

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structure projects to complete, but Garrison said she also wants to see lesser known projects on the back burner also completed, including updating the city's ordinances, policies and agreements.

Some ordinances lack the teeth to be enforced, and the city can't afford a compli-

ance officer, so another solution must be found, she said. Most of those ordinances involve overuse of utilities, fire hazards, overgrown grass or weeds, garbage in yards and roaming dogs.

Garrison said she'd like to find grant money to update Front Street, including new streetlights, sidewalk repairs and a pocket park — providing another place for people to sit and enjoy downtown

Prairie City.

She also wants to see several large infrastructure projects completed. A bid has been awarded for a large wastewater project, but the city is waiting on the arrival of new pumps. The city is also in the process of completing a cell tower contract that will provide revenue to the city.

The city is finalizing a loan and grant to address the recent water emergency, she said. A

new well at Fainman Springs could meet the city's water demand, but Garrison said she wants the city to pursue another good water source for the future.

**Frances Preston**

Preston was born in Prairie City and raised in Bates, where she attended school through the eighth grade. After graduating from high school in Prairie City, she attended business school in Boise, Idaho, and took the civil service exam.

She worked for the Forest Service in Oregon, Idaho and Alaska for about 50 years as a contract administrator, project leader, budget analyst and team leader supervisor. She and her husband retired and moved to Prairie City in 2015.

Preston is a member of the American Legion Auxiliary Post 106 and has served as a committee chairwoman and board chairwoman for the Prairie City Senior Center. She also served on Prairie City's budget committee, was a charter member of the city's Emergency Management Committee, was chairwoman of the Grant County Seniors Advisory Council and is a member of the Mt. Vernon Grange No. 659.

She regularly attends Grant County Court sessions, collaborative meetings with the Forest Service and Prairie City School board meetings. She recently was appointed a Republican committee person for the Union Precinct No. 4.

Preston has developed a platform with six goals. The first is to promote economic development by encouraging DR Johnson Lumber and Woodgrain Millworks to establish mills in Prairie City. She also wants to ensure the safety and financial security of young families and senior citizens, including talks with the Grant County Sheriff's Office, which now provides police service to Prairie City.

Preston said she will work to bring a hardware store and pharmacy to Prairie City and cooperate with the county health department to establish a clinic in town. She wants to ensure a stable water and sewer system going into the future, including taking a close look at the new well project at Fainman Springs.

Establishing regular events for youths and seniors and a "day of fun" around the city's Fourth of July festivities is also on her list of goals. She noted that homes are selling in Prairie City, but supply cannot keep up with demand. There are also new businesses in town, and school enrollment is higher, she said.

**Jim Hamsher**

Hamsher was born and raised in the Prairie City area. After graduating from Prairie City High School, he worked in ranching, at local sawmills, as a fuel truck driver and for a helicopter company with Forest Service contracts.

He has served one term as a Prairie City councilor and is in his third term as Prairie

City mayor. He also is serving his first term as Grant County commissioner.

Hamsher said he changed his mind about running for mayor after he learned about a delay in financing for the Fainman Springs project. The state has agreed to provide the city a \$950,000 loan and \$550,000 grant to pay for developing the water project, but Hamsher said he recently learned the funding will need to go before a review board.

He arranged for an interim loan to get the project going. Once the sticky clay soils near the wells freeze this winter, crews can get up there and start installing water mains and power lines. The city has used interim financing in the past for a sewer project, he said.

The new pumps for a \$2 million sewer project will arrive soon, and negotiations continue for a cell tower lease on city-owned land that will provide revenue to pay off the Fainman Springs project.

The city is also applying for a \$1 million federal emergency grant that could be used to pay off the state loan for the water project and the cost of hauling water to Prairie City from John Day, he said.

These are complex and technical projects, Hamsher said, and he felt an obligation to the residents of Prairie City to see them through. He said he's been putting stickers on his old yard signs promoting his write-in campaign and handing out flyers. It's a small town and word gets around, he added.



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