

Sewer plant timeline moved up

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

The timeline for John Day's new wastewater treatment plant might move up six months because of a decision to seek federal Community Development Block Grant funding to pay for engineering.

The plant is eligible for up to \$2.5 million in CDBG funding, City Manager Nick Green told the city council Oct. 9, but he had planned to use other funding for engineering and save the federal grant for construction.

Submitting the complex application with a 116-page procedures manual two times posed a tremendous bureaucratic hurdle, Green said, but after talking with Arthur Chaput at Business Oregon, he learned the second application would mostly duplicate the first.

A facility plan for the project is completed, and sufficient engineering analysis has been completed to submit an application, Green told the council. He estimated the total engineering cost for the new plant at \$350,000. The council unanimously directed Green to begin work on the grant application.

In other council news:

- According to a timeline presented by Green, the John Day Planning Commission will hold a hearing on annexation and rezoning requests for four city-owned properties on Oct. 23. The changes would become effective Jan. 1.

- This includes rezoning city park land around the Kam Wah Chung Heritage Site, including Gleason Pool, and newly acquired land along the John Day



Matt Manitsas

River near the north end of Canton Street as park reserve. The state plans to purchase city land around Kam Wah Chung for a state park facility, and the city plans to use the Canton Street property for a new city park.

The city also wants to annex newly acquired property north of the river along Davis Creek and rezone it park reserve, and annex the former Oregon Pine mill site and rezone the portion south of the river as general commercial. Plans call for developing the former mill site as the Innovation Gateway.

Further in the future, the city plans to annex Grant Union Junior-Senior High School and six properties north of the school and west of South Canyon Boulevard. While taxes will slightly increase as the properties move from county to city jurisdiction, water and sewer bills could be cut in half.

Green suggested waiving city taxes for three years for two of the larger lots, which are owned by Old West Federal Credit Union. Following discussion, the council agreed to waive the taxes but not pass on the benefit to new owners if the properties sell.

- The council further discussed an issue raised Sept. 26 by contractor Joe Madden about the city's new urban renewal housing incentive plan. Madden said he was concerned that, because of the lag in awarding incentives, benefits could end up going to new owners and not the builders who took the risk to construct new homes or invest in expen-

sive remodeling projects.

Green said multi-party agreements could be complex and the city shouldn't play the role of broker. He suggested that all parties to a building project, including landowners, builders and buyers, should draft and pay for legally-binding agreements that determine who should receive the city's incentive payment.

Councilor Paul Smith called the proposal a fair solution that put the responsibility back on the builders. Green said he would draft new bylaws and present them to the urban renewal agency for approval.

- Matt Manitsas, the city's agriculture projects leader, described his recent trip to the EuroMex facilities in Mexico. John Day's new commercial greenhouse will come from EuroMex, and Manitsas was sent to learn more about their agricultural operations.

Manitsas spent seven days at the 110-acre Agricola Nueva Generacion farm, the largest in the state of Zacatecas, where 20 greenhouses produce bell peppers, cucumbers and tomatoes. The farm had its own packaging plant, where children worked alongside adults.

Hydroponic farming was new to the farm, Manitsas said, and while some greenhouses were totally climate-controlled, others had dirt floors and tractors driving through them, creating an avenue for pests. The greenhouses were much taller than the one coming to John Day, he noted.

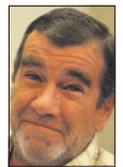
The farm reacted overnight to changing prices in Texas, about eight hours away. Workers were paid about \$6 to \$7 per day, and Manitsas estimated that each worker was responsible for about 5,000 plants.

- The council will meet again Oct. 23.

911 transition won't come cheap

New workstation console could cost \$46,000

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle



Kenny Delano

Progress is being made on preparing the new 911 dispatch center in the John Day Fire Hall, but it won't be cheap.

In a May 21 draft offer to the Intergovernmental Council that will oversee the Grant County Emergency Communications Agency, the city of John Day offered to pay up to \$90,000 for building improvements to the fire hall and \$28,000 for furniture and equipment replacement.

The city council on April 10 also approved financing from Washington Federal to complete the construction of the fire hall, which would include rooms to be used by the new 911 dispatch center.

The \$118,000 in funding for the dispatch center will come from the Washington Federal loan and the \$420,000 appropriation that the city got from the legislature to make up the operations budget shortfall for the biennium.

Bids approved

More details on these costs became evident during the John Day City Council's Sept. 25 meeting. Two bids were approved for equipment and console casework that could total \$100,156.

The council approved a \$34,609 bid from Webster Communications Services to install the new communications equipment and a video security system for the fire hall, to relocate the existing communications equipment and to establish a backup 911 dispatch console at the John Day City Hall.

The council also approved a \$57,947 bid from Evans to manufacture a custom-designed console center for two 911 workstations. The 18-foot long console would include lift columns with control equipment, forced-air heaters for each station and ergonomic-positioning equipment for monitors and keyboards.

City Manager Nick Green explained that the existing console equipment is 20 years old and does not fit the dimensions of the new dispatch center. He also said the price was awarded through a competitive selection process through a cooperative purchasing agreement in Texas.

The cost of the equipment drew a reaction from Mayor Ron Lundbom, who asked if the dispatch center was getting

mahogany furniture. Green noted that Dispatch Manager Valerie Maynard believed she could negotiate the Evans bid down to \$46,000.

The Intergovernmental Council board on May 21 voted 6-0 in favor of leasing space in the fire hall from the city for the dispatch center. The tentative terms for a 15-year lease were \$750 per month for the first 10 years and \$1,000 per month for the next five years.

County approval

The Grant County Court unanimously approved an ordinance for the creation of the Grant County Emergency Communications Agency on a second reading at their Sept. 26 meeting.

Grant County Judge Scott Myers noted that the court had about 90 days to get the ordinance into effect.

A number of questions had been raised at the first reading on Sept. 12. Commissioner Rob Raschio had said he recognized the need for a 911 system but had concerns about the structure of the Intergovernmental Council. John Day and Prairie City each would have two votes — one for the city and one for the rural fire department — while the county would have only one vote, he said.

Commissioner Jim Hamsher said, according to the current budget, combining the sheriff's office's user share with the county's share based on assessed property value came to 58 percent of the total cost share for the 911 system, or about \$117,513.

Maynard told the court the county would not start paying for the new dispatch system until July 2019, when the new fiscal year starts. If the Oregon Legislature raises the 911 telephone tax next year, local agencies would not see the benefit until the additional revenue was collected, which would be after the start of the next fiscal year, she said.

Kenny Delano, Intergovernmental Council chairman, told the court he had heard no opposition to creating the new agency from the eight participating cities.

Hamsher noted that Prairie City, where he serves as mayor, will pay about \$6,000 to the agency but had budgeted about \$20,000. He called the system fair for Prairie City.

Raschio noted that the county could withdraw from the agency if the court finds it necessary.

B2H line faces final rounds of approval

By Antonio Sierra
EO Media Group

The Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line is churning its way toward regulatory approval from the Oregon Department of Energy, which is kicking off the review process with a series of public meetings across all four Eastern Oregon counties through which the line would run.

Idaho Power is proposing a 500-kilovolt, 273-mile transmission line from Boardman to the Hemingway Substation in Owyhee County, Idaho, and just submitted a final application for site certificate. The cost for the transmission line is estimated at \$1 billion to \$1.2 billion.

The proposal has been contentious, and although the tour will not include time for public comment, Idaho Power spokeswoman Julie Stutts said company representatives will be available to respond to residents' questions and concerns after the meetings end in Pendleton, Boardman, La Grande, Baker City, and Ontario.

Critics like JoAnn Mar-

lette of Baker City contend that the transmission line would alter Eastern Oregon's scenery, create negative effects on the environment and create noise issues for local residents.

In an interview Thursday, Marlette said she has suggested Idaho Power instead bury the power lines or invest in microgrids — a small, local grid that has the ability to operate independent from the larger power grids — but her arguments haven't halted the project.

"It's all about the money," she said. "It doesn't matter if they ruin Eastern Oregon."

Jeff Maffuccio, the facility siting coordinator for Idaho Power, conceded that Boardman to Hemingway would likely change some of the views in Eastern Oregon, but it's taking steps during the planning process to make the transmission towers less intrusive.

Maffuccio said none of the towers would have fencing around them and the service roads would be dirt rather than paved streets.

Boardman to Hemingway's application is thousands of pages long, and al-

though Maffuccio said he's confident that Idaho Power has addressed any concerns up to this point, he wants to wait to receive more public input before he's assured that the transmission will clear the regulatory process.

While the line has alternative routes, the general path of the line is the same.

From the Oregon-Idaho border, the line snakes between Vale and Harper before charting a similar path to Interstate 84. The line bypasses Huntington, Baker City and La Grande, splitting from I-84 around Meacham.

Boardman to Hemingway crosses Highway 395 south of Pilot Rock before taking a hard turn north toward Boardman after crossing Highway 207 in Morrow County.

Maffuccio said Idaho Power has altered the route based on local concerns, like moving the transmission line south after realizing how many people lived in McKay Creek area north of Pilot Rock.

"We didn't realize that there's a lot of houses until we got on the ground," he said.

Maffuccio said Idaho Power is also working with Morrow County farmers and the Boardman Bombing Range to address any of their concerns.

Boardman to Hemingway won't go unopposed at the upcoming series of public meetings. Marlette said she plans to attend the meetings in Ontario, Baker City and La Grande.

The Pendleton meeting will be held at the Pendleton Convention Center on Oct. 18 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. The SAGE Center will host the Boardman meeting at the same day and time.

Following the public meetings, the department of energy plans to submit a draft proposed order to Energy Facility Siting Council for either approval or denial in the first quarter of 2019.

Once the order is submitted, the department will hold public hearings in all five counties and begin accepting testimony and public comment on the project.

Idaho Power projects to have final regulatory approval from the state in early 2021 and complete Boardman to Hemingway in 2025.

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