

Sewer treatment plant options presented

Green: No plan to seek bond for project

By RICHARD HANNERS
Blue Mountain Eagle

With an estimated \$12.5 million construction cost and \$616,864 in annual operation and maintenance costs, a new sewer treatment plant for John Day and Canyon City poses tremendous liabilities for a community with declining population and a sagging economy.

But John Day City Manager Nick Green wants to turn those liabilities into an asset by producing 80 million gallons of reclaimed water that can be used by the city or sold to customers to help pay for the new plant.

It's been 70 years since the sewer treatment plant for John Day and Canyon City was constructed at the confluence of Canyon Creek and the John Day River, Green explained at a special meeting at Grant County Regional Airport on Dec. 4.

The facility saw major additions in 1970 and 1978 to keep up with population growth. Today the plant's aging concrete and plumbing handles wastewater from about 2,440 people in 1,036

households.

The treatment plant has been operating with an expired permit since 2007, and the state Department of Environmental Quality wants the plant brought into compliance, Green said.

A wastewater facilities plan completed by the consulting engineering firm Anderson Perry in 2010 found that sewer rates were too low and city reserves were insufficient to meet the major financial commitment.

Shortly after he was hired in 2016, Green proposed the idea of reclaiming the wastewater. A feasibility study was conducted using \$70,000 in state grant funding, and a treatment plant design from Sustainable Water was approved by the city council in June.

The city purchased the former Oregon Pine mill site in 2017 with plans to build the new plant on land outside the floodplain on the north side of the river. The existing mechanical treatment plant, drying ponds and percolation lagoons would be eliminated and replaced by a more compact facility using hydroponic agriculture to treat the wastewater.

An income survey found that 57 percent of John Day and Canyon City households were classified as low



The Eagle/Richard Hanners

About two dozen people attended the John Day City Council's special joint meeting at the Grant County Regional Airport on Dec. 4.

to moderate income, which meant the project was eligible for up to \$2.5 million in federal Community Development Block Grant funding. The Dec. 4 public hearing was a requirement for the federal funding.

An updated facility plan was submitted to the DEQ in August. If all goes according to plan, construction of the new plant could begin in winter 2019, and the facility could be operating by spring 2021, Green said.

A survey found uses for about 139 million gallons of reclaimed water, far more than the 80 million gallons the plant will produce. A problem is that virtually none of the potential uses exist in winter, leaving the

city with a wintertime disposal problem.

Injecting the water underground for storage would require special approval by the DEQ, which could take time, Green said. The latest proposal is to bury perforated pipe between the frost line and the water table to disperse the reclaimed water underground at the Oregon Pine site, he said.

Green said the city's goal is to fund the \$12.5 million plant with 60 percent grants and 40 percent loans, but a 50/50 ratio is more typical. Since the plant will sell reclaimed water, alternative funding sources are possible, he said.

The sewer fund has manageable debt, Green said

— a \$500,000 loan to be paid off in four years and a \$29,217 per year payment on a 30-year loan for the Oregon Pine property.

Operations and maintenance costs are expected to climb by 6 percent a year, but according to Business Oregon's affordability index, a minimum sewer rate for the new treatment plant would be \$34.66 per month. The current rate is \$46 per month.

Green said he doesn't expect a bond will be presented to the voters to pay for the project — what isn't paid for with grants should be absorbed by the treatment plant's ratepayers.

In other city news:

- The council approved a \$110,000 contract with ECONorthwest and subcontractor Bell and Funk for help developing a comprehensive economic development strategy for the John Day area. Most of the funding will come from federal and state grants.

The contract calls for assessing potential growth in the hydroponic industry, digital marketing and branding, hosting meetings on tourism and recreation, supporting the city's efforts to improve broadband access, assessing the local housing situation and offering sug-

gestions, drafting a five-year action plan, and supporting the city when it hosts the Regional Economic Development Summit in John Day next spring.

- The city awarded a \$74,924 contract to Alpine Abatement Assoc. of Bend for removing asbestos and lead from the city-owned Weaver Building on Main Street.

Most of the funding will come from a \$65,300 DEQ brownfield grant. The 30-day renovation project was scheduled to start Dec. 10. The ground floor retail tenants can remain in the building during the renovation, Green said.

- The council also approved a series of budget changes that included funding for the Grant County Emergency Communication Agency. The city will provide \$150,000 to the new intergovernmental agency to pay 911 dispatchers through the end of the current fiscal year. The city will also pay dispatchers \$60,000 in accrued leave as they transition to the new agency.

- Coming up, the Grant County Digital Network Coalition will hold a town hall meeting on Dec. 18, and an open house for the Innovation Gateway project will be held Jan. 8.

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

One case filed against Gildardo T. Aguiere was dismissed and an arrest warrant was recalled Nov. 25 in the best interests of justice following the district attorney's motion. He was charged with a secret indictment on Aug. 12, 2009.

Grant County Sheriff

The Grant County Sheriff's Office reported the following for the week of Dec. 5:

Concealed handgun licenses: 8
Average inmates: 16
Bookings: 5
Releases: 9
Arrests: 2
Citations: 1
Fingerprints: 2
Civil papers: 12
Warrants processed: 2
Asst./welfare check: 1
Search and rescue: 1
Dec. 3: Matthew May-

field, 37, Boise, Idaho, was cited for violation of the basic rule, 65/55 zone.

Oregon State Police

Dec. 5: Responded to a pond near Highway 26 west of John Day for a horse that had fallen through the ice. Only the head was above water. With assistance from John Day police, passing motorists and the landowner, a rope was placed around the horse's neck to keep it from totally submerging. A backhoe broke up the ice, and the horse was brought to the shore. It was treated for hypothermia.

Dec. 8: Following a traffic stop on Highway 26 near Clyde Holliday State Park, a 17-year-old from Parma, Idaho, allegedly admitted to smoking marijuana earlier. He was arrested and charged with driving under the influence of intoxicants and being a minor in possession of marijuana.

Dispatch

John Day dispatch worked 165 calls during the week of Dec. 3-9, including:

- **John Day Police Department**

Dec. 3: Received a call about a possible theft on Southwest Brent Drive in John Day.

Dec. 3: Investigated a report of suspicious circumstances at a health department office on Main Street in John Day.

Dec. 3: Following a traffic stop on Main Street in west John Day, Charles C. Briet of Vantage, Washington, was cited for driving uninsured.

Dec. 4: Responded to a restaurant on Main Street in John Day for a report of suspicious activity.

Dec. 5: Received a report of sexual abuse at Grant Union High School.

Dec. 5: Advised of fraud on Northeast Elm Street in John Day.

Dec. 5: Responded to a mobile home park on West Main Street in John Day for a report of unwanted persons.

Dec. 6: Following a traffic stop on West Main Street in John Day, Tylor Gifford, 24, John Day, was cited for driving with a suspended license, no insurance and switched license plates.

Dec. 6: Advised of a

suspicious person on East Third Avenue in John Day.

Dec. 6: Attempted to stop a vehicle on West Main Street in John Day but terminated the resulting pursuit for safety reasons.

Dec. 6: Following a traffic stop on South Canyon Boulevard, Nathan M. Elledge, 27, Bend, was arrested and charged with eluding and reckless driving.

Dec. 7: Responded to a grocery store in John Day for a shoplifting report.

Dec. 8: Dispatched to West Bench Road in John Day for a report of credit card fraud.

Dec. 8: Responded to a report of shots fired above the police department in John Day.

Oregon State Police

Dec. 3: Responded to a noninjury crash on Highway 7 near Austin Junction.

Dec. 4: Dispatched to Highway 26 near Indian Creek Road for a report of horses on the highway.

Dec. 5: State police and sheriff's deputies were advised of suspicious activity on Highway 26 east of Dayville.

Grant County Sheriff's Office

Dec. 5: Advised of a burglary on Highway 26 in Mt. Vernon.

Dec. 6: Received a theft report from Front Street and Main Street in Prairie City.

Dec. 8: Advised of a fraud case in Seneca.

Dec. 8: Received a report of a domestic dispute on South McCallum Street in Prairie City.

Dec. 9: Advised of criminal mischief on Ingle Street in Mt. Vernon.

Dec. 9: Received a report of a dispute on Harpers Creek Road in Mt. Vernon.

John Day ambulance

Dec. 3: Responded to a ranch east of John Day for a man in his 70s.

Dec. 3: Dispatched to North Scenic Drive in Canyon City for a 74-year-old man who had fallen.

Dec. 3: Responded to a senior home in Prairie City for a 50-year-old woman with abdominal pain and difficulty breathing.

Dec. 4: Dispatched to East Fifth Street in John Day for a 79-year-old woman who had fallen.

Dec. 5: Responded to a

senior home in John Day for a 75-year-old woman.

Dec. 5: Dispatched to Northeast Seventh Street in John Day for an 85-year-old woman.

Dec. 6: Dispatched to C Avenue in Seneca.

Dec. 6: Responded to Northeast Seventh Street in John Day for an 85-year-old woman.

Dec. 6: Dispatched with Seneca ambulance to Park Avenue in Seneca for a 6-year-old boy.

Dec. 6: Received a 911 call from North Humbolt Street in Canyon City.

Dec. 7: Responded to a mobile home park on West Main Street in John Day for a 58-year-old woman.

Dec. 7: Dispatched to South Canyon Boulevard.

Dec. 7: Received a 911 call from Courtrock Road in Monument.

John Day fire

Dec. 3: Responded to a request about heaters on Northwest Third Street in John Day.

Prairie City fire

Dec. 4: Responded to West Sixth Street in Prairie City for a possible flue fire.

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VETERANS A DAY

+1 ACTIVE DUTY SOLDIER
LOST EVERY DAY
to suicide

ITS YOUR CALL
1-800-273-8255
PRESS 1

Confidential chat at
VeteransCrisisLine.net
or text to **838255**
24/7 confidential Support

Buddy Check
22
Are you ok?

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

CENTRAL OREGON MOBILE VET CENTER

WHEN/WHERE

John Day-Elks Lodge-
December 19th

WHO ARE WE?
CENTRAL OREGON VET CENTER
1645 NE FORBES RD, SUITE 105
BEND, OR 97702
541-749-2112

MISSION STATEMENT:
To welcome home and honor those who served, those still serving, and their families by reaching out to them, engaging their communities, and providing them with quality readjustment counseling and timely referral.

READJUSTMENT COUNSELING
Citizens...they just don't get it!
Come down and let's talk...Veteran to Veteran.

BENEFITS
Find out about what is available that you may have earned.

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For more information contact
Grant County Veterans 541 620-8057