

Man saved by search and rescue matches funding request

Student educational program to receive \$5,000

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant County Search and Rescue received three letters in support of a program aimed at helping school children learn about outdoors preparation.

SAR Coordinator Dave Dobler read a letter to the Grant County Court on March 27 from the family of Lucas Cavalle, who went missing on Fields Peak and was recovered Dec. 6. The family acknowledged that their son was not dressed properly or prepared for his day hike during severe winter weather.

Dobler also read a letter from the Letosky family. Joe Letosky Jr. and Joe Letosky Sr. drove their trucks into the Deer Creek area and got stuck in deep snow Feb. 21. They had some emergency gear but needed assistance from SAR personnel. Their trucks were still there, Dobler said.

He also read a letter from Ed Westervelt, whose vehicle got stuck in deep snow in the Middle Fork area. Westervelt tried to hike cross-country to his cabin and nearly froze to death.

Westervelt was fortunate his



The Eagle/Richard Hanners

Grant County Search and Rescue volunteers who came to the March 27 Grant County Court meeting include, from left, Nate Gordaniar, Sam Palmer, Pam Powell, Russ Powell, SAR Coordinator Dave Dobler, Gretchen Dobler, Steve Fletcher, Kim Kell and Carl Metler.

cellphone was able to reach 911 dispatch and had hypothermia when he was found by SAR personnel. He promised in his support letter to completely match Dobler's \$2,500 request to the court for the educational program.

The court approved the funding, which will be used to pay for whistles, glowsticks, flashlights and other items that will be handed out to children at Humbolt Elementary, Seneca and Prairie City

schools during the presentations.

In other county court news from March 27:

- The court approved a request from Roadmaster Alan Hickerson to purchase a \$36,000 used DuraPatcher machine that uses a chip sealing-type method to repair road shoulders and fix potholes.

The machine is easy to use and maintain, Hickerson said. DuraPatchers are in high demand this time of year and could be loaned out to

the local cities, he said.

- The court renewed a \$6,000 contract for the sheriff's office to provide forest patrols to the Forest Service.

- The court approved a letter to the U.S. House Appropriations Committee urging support of fully funding federal payment-in-lieu of taxes to counties with federal lands in their jurisdiction.

"PILT provides critical resources to nearly 1,900 counties

across 49 states to offset lost property tax revenue due to the presence of tax-exempt federal lands within their jurisdictions," the letter said.

The letter noted, without steady and fixed annual PILT payments, the counties face difficulties providing essential services to its residents and visitors, including law enforcement, search and rescue, education, road maintenance and public health.

- The court approved a first reading for an ordinance updating the county's building permit fees as required by the state's Accela online filing system. A second reading of the ordinance will take place April 24, and the system will go live April 29.

In news from the April 10 county court meeting:

- The court approved a resolution allowing Commissioner Jim Hamscher to sign legal documents in place of Judge Scott Myers for a federal Community Development Block Grant that will be used to pay for a new Heart of Grant County domestic abuse shelter.

- The court appointed Lance Zweygardt to the OSU Extension and 4-H Service District Advisory Council and Stephen Baldwin to the Senior Citizens Advisory Council and the Wolf Depredation Committee.

Professional pool assessment could be expensive

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

The John Day City Council learned that a professional condition assessment of the Gleason Pool could cost from \$20,000 to \$30,000. Councilors Steve Schuette and Brandon Smith were absent.

Senior Project Manager Aaron Lieuallen told the council April 9 this estimate might not include a core evaluation.

Former public works director and City Councilor Dave Holland said spending that much on the old pool would be a waste of money. City Manager Nick Green

said the money was not available in the budget.

The city's application for a Large Government Grant from the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department has passed technical review, Green said.

The \$653,453 grant would be used to pay for a new parking lot at a possible new pool site, grading a level pad for the new pool, acquiring rights-of-way for a trail connecting the new parking area to a trail network along the John Day River, building a bicycle-pedestrian bridge over the river at the new Hill Family City Park, developing trails in

the new city park and constructing ADA-compatible restrooms and a drop-off parking lot at the north end of the bridge.

The city will make a 10-15 minute presentation supporting the grant application in mid-June and learn the outcome soon after that. OPRD received 37 applications totaling \$12.2 million. About 16 applications will be funded from the \$5.2 million available, Green said.

The city also will apply for an OPRD planning grant up to \$40,000 to assist in pool planning, including funding for operation and maintenance and timing for

a capital improvement bond election.

In other city council news:

- The city, acting as the fiscal agent for the Grant County Digital Network Coalition, will submit an application for a \$3 million federal Community Connect grant to improve broadband in Grant County.

The funding will be used to run a backbone optical fiber cable from Burns to Seneca and support fiber-to-the-home connections in Seneca and cable runs to six critical community facilities.

The coalition will also apply for a federal ReConnect grant to pay for a back-

bone optical fiber cable from Seneca to the network's hub in the John Day Fire Hall.

The \$1.8 million legislative appropriation the city received in 2017 will be used as a match for the two grant applications. The 15 percent match for the Community Connect grant is \$450,000.

- A fiber optic cable installed between the Grant County Education Service District offices and the fire hall enabled the Grant County Emergency Communications Agency to move its 911 dispatch center from the city hall to the fire hall April 10.

- The John Day Urban

Renewal Agency board, which has the same members as the city council, also met that night.

As a new agency, the board appointed eight volunteers to its budget committee: Tom Olson, Vincent Maurer, Darin Toy, Robert Raschio, Katrina Randleas, Ron Hasher, Mike Miller and Beth Spell.

The same members also serve on the city budget committee. Four of them were reappointed to the city budget committee: Olson, Raschio, Miller and Hasher.

- The city council met in executive session to discuss real property transactions.

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