

Budget

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financial support for the Grant County Economic Development Office.

The city contributes to the Grant County Emergency Communications Agency for 911 dispatch at \$10 per police or fire call and pays 12.8 percent of the operating deficit left after accounting for state phone tax revenue.

The city is also in the first year of a two-year operating agreement with Grant School District 3 to provide a school resource officer. The district pays \$45,000 and the city pays about \$55,000 for this service, which enables the city to provide a fourth police officer at about 45 percent reduced cost, Green said.

Ron Smith plans to retire as John Day fire chief this year, and the city plans to create a new position to replace him. The budget calls for a combined public works and fire chief position to keep costs affordable, Green said.

Swimming pool

One of the most talked about changes in the city is the possible sale of Gleason Pool and construction of a new pool. The city has been “very rational and deliberate” about the process, Green said, establishing a steering committee and spending more than six months assessing options.

“We recognize the pool is near and dear to the hearts of a lot of people in the community,” Green said. “This is also a very frugal area. We like to own assets far and beyond their typical lifespan but do not like to pay taxes to maintain those assets.”

The city sees the sale of the city park next to the Kam Wah Chung State Heritage Site and Gleason Pool “as a strategic opportunity and one we are going to take seriously,” Green said. The city’s responsibility is to John Day taxpayers who will end up paying for the pool’s maintenance after 2020 if it’s not replaced, he said.

Green said the city’s goal is to establish a county service district for residents within a reasonable driving distance

of the pool. The new district could issue operating levies or capital improvement bonds and spread the pool’s cost among all its users, rather than just John Day.

Revenue and debt

With the transfer of 911 dispatch service to a new independent agency, city staff was reduced by 30 percent to 12 full-time and three part-time employees, Green said. With assistance from the Local Government Personnel Institute, most staff received salary adjustments that made John Day salaries more competitive while providing staff with more room for career growth, he said.

Green said he will present ideas for new revenue sources in the coming months. One idea is to implement a transient room tax for John Day that could be used to promote recreation, tourism and economic development.

Another idea is to sell city land that is not in productive use at fair market value, including a portion of the industrial park next to the airport and a portion of the former Oregon Pine mill prop-

erty. The city will also look at building and operating a campground.

In terms of the city’s overall financial position, Green noted the city “has been operating at an incredibly fast pace in terms of fundraising.” Not every fund has been performing the way the city would like, he said, but the city’s overall financial position is improving.

“We are making smart investments, and we have been proactive in evaluating our decisions and re-evaluating them when conditions change,” he said.

Following consolidation of several loans through Washington Federal, the city now has four outstanding debt obligations: \$550,000 through 2030 in fire station bonds, \$493,000 with 27 payments remaining for the purchase of the Oregon Pine property, \$2.1 million to Washington Federal through 2022 and \$57,000 in accrued compensated absences.

Payments on the \$350,000 Business Oregon loan to build three greenhouses may not start until the next fiscal year, Green said.

ITEMS OF NOTE

Specific proposed budget items of note include:

- Electrical costs increase 10 percent across the board
- Insurance costs increase 15 percent across the board
- \$379,380 cost for police personnel
- \$73,484 cost for fire personnel
- \$20,000 cost to remodel police offices after 911 dispatch move
- Chlorine/phosphates for water system increase 10 percent
- \$115,000 set aside for water meter change-out
- \$585,000 in revenue from water sales
- Heating costs for sewer increase 10 percent
- \$570,000 in revenue for sewer service
- \$72,036 in revenue from Canyon City for sewer service
- \$83,192 cost for greenhouse personnel
- \$65,900 cost for materials and services for greenhouse
- \$14,500 cost for propane for greenhouse
- \$43,250 in revenue from sale of greenhouse greens
- \$43,250 in revenue from sale of greenhouse vine produce
- \$276,612 net working capital balance available for street fund
- \$162,000 in revenue for street fund from federal forest payment
- \$75,000 cost to improve and re-deck bridge at Oregon Pine
- \$200,000 cost to improve Charolais Heights intersection
- \$22,280 set aside for fire truck replacement
- \$100,000 carried forward for improvements to the shop at the Oregon Pine site, as the old city shop will be torn down along with the sewer treatment plant

Wolf

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Wild, Defenders of Wildlife, Cascadia Wildlands and the Center for Biological Diversity — pulled out of the talks, describing the negotiations as flawed and skewed in favor of killing wolves rather than prioritizing nonlethal forms of deterrence.

Steve Pedery, conservation director for Oregon Wild, said the group remains concerned about the draft plan, and criticized Gov. Kate Brown in a statement.

“With this wolf plan, Brown continues to ignore science and the public while keeping Oregon on an uninterrupted march to wolf hunting and trapping,” Pedery said.

According to ODFW, the plan does not call for any controlled wolf hunts, and any such proposal would require commission approval through a separate planning and hunt development process.

Derek Broman, ODFW



Contributed photo/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

A new draft state wolf management plan has been released.

carnivore and furbearer program coordinator, said wolf management is a polarizing topic that makes finding a consensus difficult.

“But regardless of people’s views on wolves, the wolf population in Oregon is growing in size, the number of packs and packs reproducing, while expanding its range,” Broman said.

Jerome Rosa, executive director of the Oregon Cattlemen’s Association, said ranchers are glad to see the draft plan is up for review, and look forward to the process.

Sristi Kamal, Oregon senior representative for Defenders of Wildlife, said the plan does not represent a consensus or compromise.

“It’s been over three years since the wolf plan was due for an update, and each iteration has gotten worse for wolves,” Kamal said. “The latest updates to the plan — which make it easier to kill wolves in response to livestock predations and declines in ungulate populations — are the predetermined outcome of a process that only furthers the agency’s agenda.”



The Eagle/Angel Carpenter

Grant Union High School drama club members and directors Kathy Sherwood, far left, and Angela Smith, far right, gather at the close of ‘The Complete Tale of the American Civil War (Abridged)’ on April 10 at the school. Front row, from left, Fallen Bolman, Athena Tipton, Sammi Buckhaults, Emilie Updegrave, Sierra Cates and Maria Kerr; back row, Sherwood, Cierra Wyllie, Ellie Justice, Erika Dickens, Katie Johnson, Alyssa Hoffman, Logan Namitz, Will Carpenter, Ashleigh Ostberg and Smith.

Play

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Sherwood said several actors took on new roles at the last minute, due to

“unforeseen circumstances” and performed with great skill.

“They worked so hard, and we are very proud,” she said.

The play was their final performance of the school year. The club also presented Shakespeare’s “Twelfth Night” in January.

Smith said the high school actors are looking forward to their annual trip

to Ashland, April 25-27, to attend three plays.

The group will see Shakespeare’s “As You Like It,” the musical “Hair-spray” and “Mother Road,” a continuation of Steinbeck’s “Grapes of Wrath.”

“We’re excited to provide our high school drama club students with the opportunity to experience exceptional theater,” Smith said.

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