



The Blue Mountain EAGLE

Grant County's newspaper since 1868



Wednesday, May 1, 2019

151st Year • No. 18 • 20 Pages • \$1.00

BlueMountainEagle.com

County approves Second Amendment protection resolution

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

The Grant County Court took a stance on protecting gun rights by unanimously approving a Second Amendment preservation resolution at their April 24 meeting.

Unlike Second Amendment measures in other Oregon counties, the Grant County measure does not create civil penalties for businesses or officials that infringe on the right to bear arms.

Commissioner Jim Hamsher said the court chose to take the step as a resolution and not an ordinance because there may be some legal issues, and he'd rather see other counties bear the brunt of defending the language in court.

Hamsher said he wants everything the court does from now on to be capable of withstanding legal challenges in court. Ordinances that cannot withstand legal challenge don't do anything for the county's residents, he said.

He said he expects to see similar Second Amendment ordinances in Oregon to be challenged. If an ordinance is successfully challenged in court, a complex repeal process must take place, he said.

Commissioner Sam Palmer said Second Amendment preservation ordinances across Oregon were likely written so that if one is challenged, they're all challenged.

The point of passing the resolution was to let the people of Grant County know that the court supports their Second Amendment rights, Hamsher said.

The four-page resolution recognizes the language of the U.S. Constitution's Second Amendment and Oregon Constitution's Article 1 Section 27, both of which recognize the right of citizens to keep and bear arms.

The resolution states that "the criminal misuse of firearms is due to criminals that do not obey laws and thus is not a reason to deny the Constitutional right to keep and bear arms by law-abiding citizens."

Furthermore, "the Grant County Court recognizes that the first and last protectors of the United States Constitution are the people of the United States."

The resolution cites U.S. Supreme Court rulings in District

See Court, Page A12

Harvey urges Grant County to follow Baker County's lead on coordination

Supporters saw progress with Forest Plan Revision withdrawal

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

Baker County and its commission chairman, Bill Harvey, made a mark in public lands management in 2015 when it established a position demanding that federal and state agencies coordinate with local

governments.

Harvey, who first learned about the coordination requirement from Idaho attorney Fred Kelly Grant, now helps other counties learn how to successfully negotiate public land management through the coordination process.

Harvey delivered this message in a sometimes emotional meeting at the Grant County Regional Airport on April 25.

According to Grant and Harvey, coordination is a congressionally authorized process requiring agen-



Bill Harvey

cies meet in a government-to-government dialogue in order to reach consistency between local and state or federal land management planning.

Harvey noted, when he first came to Baker County in the early 1970s, six timber mills operated. There are none now, he said. The county saw good forest management and had good roads and good schools back

then, he said.

What changed, he asked: Did the county run out of trees or the ability to manage forests? No, it was a change in philosophy by government, he said, and the change came from people who don't live here.

In terms of wildfire hazards, the forests get worse every year, Harvey said. It's not because of climate change, he said, but increasing fuel loading caused by forest management policies.

See Harvey, Page A12



Eagle photos/Richard Hanners

The latest addition at the Kam Wah Chung Heritage Site is a cast-iron monitor once used for hydraulic placer mining in Grant County.

Another BIG YEAR forecast for KAM WAH CHUNG

New additions, archaeological finds add to allure

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

The Kam Wah Chung State Heritage Site is on track to add 1,000 more visitors each year, with about 9,000 visitors expected this year, curator Don Merritt said.

While this might be good news for the local tourist economy, it's mixed news for the Oregon Parks & Recreation Department, which is concerned about wear and tear on the small historical general store and herbal medicine shop. Plans are being made for a new interpretive center to help deal with the burgeon-

ing visitor numbers, but its construction could depend on the results of archaeological surveys in the surrounding area that was once John Day's Chinatown.

Meanwhile, documentaries about Kam Wah Chung that will appear on the Chinese and North American versions of the Discovery Channel sometime this fall, along with promotional efforts by Prof. Zhongzhen Zhao, who stars in the Chinese production and sits on the Chinese tourism board, are expected to significantly boost tourist numbers in 2020, Merritt said.

See Forecast, Page A12



Don Merritt, curator at the Kam Wah Chung State Heritage Site in John Day, with a scrapbook containing local Chinese history. It was made by Charlie and Cecille Lewis and was recently donated to the museum.

Coalition joins Ortelco for broadband grant

Successful grants could provide broadband to every incorporated city in the county

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

A maturing public-private partnership between Oregon Telephone Corp. and the Grant County Digital Network Coalition may be the answer to acquiring the funding needed to increase broadband access in Grant County.

The coalition's board recently approved the idea of submitting a joint grant application with Ortelco as a way to strengthen its position after failing to secure a \$3 million federal grant last year.

The coalition will submit another application for a \$3 million Community Connect grant through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, but the grant area has been changed to the Seneca area, including running fiber throughout the small city.

The coalition had also planned to apply for a USDA ReConnect grant to run fiber from Seneca to John Day, while Ortelco had planned to apply for a ReConnect grant to run fiber from Mt. Vernon



The Eagle/Richard Hanners

From left, John Day City Manager Nick Green and Ortelco General Manager DeeDee Kluser listen to discussion about broadband grant applications during the Grant County Court's April 24 meeting.

to Long Creek and possibly Monument.

The plan is now to join forces for a combined ReConnect grant with the goal of obtaining \$8 million, John Day City Manager Nick Green said. If successful, that would be enough to run fiber from

Seneca to John Day and from Mt. Vernon as far as Kimberly and Spray.

If the Community Connect application is also successful, the \$11 million in total grant funding could be enough to construct two more fiber trunk lines into Grant County in addition to Ortelco's line from the east — one from the major fiber line in Burns and another from Ortelco's infrastructure in Central Oregon.

That would not only increase internet capacity and redundancy but also ensure broadband access to every incorporated city in the county.

The coalition's contribution to the required match would come from the \$1.8 million state appropriation the city of John Day received in 2017. The coalition has spent some of that funding on planning and engineering as well as for running fiber from the hub in the John Day Fire Hall to the Grant Education Service District office and from the Seneca School to the Seneca City Hall.

Ortelco would be the primary internet provider for the countywide network — running fiber to homes and businesses and handling service calls and billing.

See Grant, Page A12



7 29467 30001 9