

# John Day aims to complete street projects in 2020

By Rudy Diaz  
Blue Mountain Eagle



**John Day**  
City Manager  
**Nick Green**

John Day plans to complete road projects and provide additional parking this year.

Parking lots at city hall, the former Wright Chevrolet lot and the Seventh Street Complex, along with Charolais Heights intersection improvements and Fourth Avenue repairs, were discussed during the city council meeting Feb. 18.

“We are going to work through the design for the city hall parking and parking at the former Wright Chevrolet, and we are going to try and budget for those parking areas to be improved starting next fiscal year, some-

time after July,” John Day City Manager Nick Green said.

Through the Integrated Park System Grant, paving the Seventh Street Complex parking area will be completely funded and will be completed in the summer, Green said.

For the Charolais Heights intersection, surveyors and engineers are going to start marking, and the city will complete any acquisitions needed to start construction in the summer, he said. The improve-



Eagle file photo

**The lot next to John Day City Hall is owned by the city, which plans to pave the lot and make improvements this year.**

ments will be partially funded by the \$100,000 Small City Allotment grant from Oregon Department of Transportation.

The five requests for pro-

posals will go out later this month, and bids will be due in mid-March, according to the meeting agenda.

John Day City Councilor Elliot Sky asked what

the design was for the Charolais Heights intersection improvements.

“The Charolais Heights road will curve tighter and come across Boulder Lane so they are directly across from each other and create what would be a four-way stop, except we are removing the stop sign at Valley View,” Green said. “It would just be stops for the intersection of Charolais and Boulder, and Valley View would be a through street, and Davis Creek would curve back to create more separation between those two roads.”

Elevation will also be addressed by creating a continuous slope traveling up Valley View, Green said.

The council also discussed the timeline for Highway 395 South sidewalk improvements, for which final design acceptance is scheduled in May, Green said. Bid opening is planned for March 11, 2021, with construction starting that year.

John Day City Councilor Steve Schuette asked Green if the city still plans to install restrooms at the city hall parking area and former Wright Chevrolet lot.

“We are going to stub utilities for restrooms, but I am not going to try to squeeze that (restrooms) into the budget,” Green said. “If we can get it regraded and the parking open, that will be the first step. Then we can put the restrooms in later.”

# Growing the recreational economy in John Day

By Rudy Diaz  
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John Day is looking at developing their recreational economy after being one of 10 communities nationwide accepted for a federal planning grant.

The Environmental Protection Agency announced in October that John Day was selected for the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities planning grant. One work group call is scheduled for Feb. 19 and two work group calls are scheduled in March. April 21-22 will be a two-day workshop to discuss what recreational activities exist in the community.

“The focus of this effort is to answer the question of are we capturing enough value or are we doing enough to benefit our residents with that recreational economy?” John Day City Manager Nick Green said. “Specifically positioning John Day and Main Street as a gateway to the Malheur National Forest and the public road plans that are available to our

region.”

Green started the conversation discussing recreational opportunities with ATVs and the process necessary to get the ball rolling on that idea.

“You can buy ATVs in John Day, but you can’t rent them in John Day,” Green said. “You can’t take people on guided tours with ATVs in the Malheur National Forest unless you have a permit to do so, and in order to get there from John Day, you can’t drive on highways so there are pieces and parts that we can address through policy changes. There are specific policy things that we can recommend to promote recreation.”

Green added that this same conversation can be applied to other activities such as snowmobiles, hiking excursions, fishing and wildlife and more. Along with creating additional activities, this effort can also create small businesses that can be helped by Oregon RAIN, Green said.

A steering committee will come up with recreational activities and present them to

the city council, and the city will prioritize the ideas. Members of the steering committee will have different individual focuses that highlight the recreation economy, health and wellness, fishing and wildlife, education, arts and culture and regional opportunities.

The grant has specific focus areas for the steering committee to consider such as seasonal recreation opportunities, event hosting, startup opportunities, in-city camping and hospitality and expanding opportunities for outdoor recreation.

“This is about more than making maps and brochures,” Green said. “That by itself does not do much for the economy so we got people who are doing that, but we would take it to the next level, which would be you would have a concierge in a hotel lobby and direct people to where they can learn more on where to book a tour or rent.”

The next step is figuring out priorities for recreation. While there is no dollar value associated with the grant, Green said, they will receive help from a planning team to con-

sider challenges and opportunities for the recreational activities prioritized and develop an action plan.

The city council then discussed allowing short-term vacation rentals within the city limits to have less restrictive requirements. Associate Planner Daisy Goebel shared with the council that there have been complaints and confusion from property owners who wanted to rent out their homes.

“The problem is that our restriction on (short-term rentals) are confusing and restrictive,” Goebel said. “Currently, if you wanted to rent your house out for any amount of time, you need to apply for a conditional use permit, which is a \$500 fee. A notice would go out to your neighbors, and then you would have to come before the planning commission to state your case and have a business license.”

Goebel added that this process has not been feasible for people, and many people have decided to host short-term rentals illegally and register on Airbnb without going through

the city for a license. The council was in favor of a hybrid plan that would enforce requiring a business license, while seeing where restrictions could be lifted. Goebel also talked about the transient room tax collected from occupants staying in the county overnight.

“You have to contact the county, let them know, and then provide statements every year saying how many times you rented out,” Goebel said. “I think the county is going to pursue doing the tax through Airbnb because you can contact them and let them know what the transient room tax is, and then they will payout in the back end.”

No decision was made, but planning will continue on drafting a code amendment.

Green then discussed the possibility of adding a Community Development Director who would hold a position as a department head that would oversee the planning department, Main Street department and the community development fund.

“We have had a lot of vol-

unteers start things and not finish them because they are not resource sufficient so their ability to invest time fluctuates based on their availability and other demands in their lives,” Green said.

Councilor Shannon Adair said, as a business owner on Main Street, she has participated in discussions where many good ideas were brought up but never acted on. Adair said a leader or paid director that can dedicate time to lead meetings and create a movement on those ideas could help increase the profitability of Main Street.

While Councilor Steve Schuette agreed with the idea, he added that it might not be the right time due to finances.

“I think that we need to get some of the projects that we got on burners further along before we start spending up to \$100,000 in health insurance and all that stuff,” Schuette said. “I think we might be stretching ourselves too thin.”

The council planned to reassess the proposal during the budgeting process.

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Hello Grant County,  
Well, if you believe that groundhog, Spring is right around the corner. It sure didn't look like it with 9 inches of snow the other day! Thanks to everyone who helped move all that snow so we could get around safely!

Today, it is gorgeous outside! The weather is such a tease! Just be assured that good weather is on the way. We can look forward to many beautiful days because this is Grant County!

The Chamber is proud to announce that we have more new members: The Grant County Library Foundation, and Sage Designworks from Burns. Welcome!

Our February Business of the Month is The Grubsteak Mining Company. Be sure to stop in for a great meal and say hi to Carol and her staff!

The February Chamber business meeting and luncheon will be held on Thursday, February 20th. The business meeting starts at 10:30 at the Chamber office and the Luncheon is at noon at the Outpost. This month's speaker is Donna Lowry.

The Chamber Board and committees have been busy! The Marketing committee is working on a logo and brand for Grant County. Thank you to all of you who completed the online survey!

The Conestoga Wagon improvement is coming along. If you aren't advertising at the wagon and would like to, please let us know as soon as possible.

The High Desert League Basketball Tournament will be played at Grant Union High School February 20-22. This always brings a lot of people to town, so let's show them some Grant County hospitality. Go cheer on our local teams if you get a chance.

Have you noticed we have a couple of ad spots available around our newsletter? If you are interested in being a sponsor, please let us know. We would love to have your support! We also have some advertising spots available on our Chamber website.

Have you heard that Cycle Oregon is coming to town September 12th for Ride the Painted Hills Classic? The ride will start and end in John Day with overnight stops in Monument and Dayville. There is going to be a lot to do to get ready for this big event, so stay tuned!

Remember to Shop Local!  
Tammy Bremner  
Manager, Grant County Chamber of Commerce

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**Our Story**

Since the 1970s, Grubsteak Mining Company Bar and Grill has been the go-to destination for anyone in town looking for a delicious meal. We're serving up every dish to order so you can always count on great flavor.

Our burgers, fries and steaks are all seasoned and cooked to deliver delicious flavor in every bite. In fact, people even say we have the best burgers in the county. You'll also find a diverse beer selection with rotating options, making it easy to try new ones.

## BUSINESS OF THE MONTH Grubsteak Mining Company