

County department heads express concern over lack of clarity amid COVID-19 closure

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant County Court members confronted criticism from department heads over a lack of leadership and clarity amid the closure of the county's offices during its May 27 session.

Justice of the Peace Kathy Stinnett told the court it has seemed like the members have been hyper-focused on the county's COVID-19 response and happenings at the Emergency Operations Center since mid-March and have been ignoring other county departments.

Since mid-march, Planning Director Shannon Springer said they were not given specific guidelines about how to operate during closure of the county's offices.

"Silence is killing the morale of your county employees," Springer said.

County Judge Scott Myers said that all departments were

given the opportunity to work from home and said Springer chose to come in to the office.

County Commissioner Jim Hamsher said the county wrote a telecommuting policy and that the department heads were given autonomy on how to implement the policy.

Stinnett said other departments have been dealing with issues and problems since mid-March, and they have rarely heard from their department liaisons during the crisis.

Hamsher said, while he understood where the employees were coming from, the county has been waiting for more direction from the state and its insurance company about how to reopen.

Stinnett said she tried working from home on a "10-year-old, hand-me-down" laptop. After learning the EOC purchased new laptop computers, she said had no idea federal reimburse-

ments were available to the county.

"If I had any idea that my department could have come to the county and said its an emergency I need to have a new laptop, I would have been in here," Stinnett said. "Don't forget about these other department heads."

"I'll be the first one to admit I've been focused on a lot of different things and not so much things happening here at the courthouse," County Commissioner and EOC Public Information Officer Sam Palmer said.

The best thing the court could do, Palmer said, is learn from these things and do better in the future.

Myers asked Grant County Regional Airport Manager Haley Walker whether the EOC, which is currently housed at the airport, and the county's firefighting efforts could co-exist during a heavy firefighting season.

Walker said an increase in aviation activity and the air-

port terminal being blocked off could pose a problem during a busy fire season.

Currently the EOC rents out three offices, a conference room and storage space.

EOC Incident Commander Dave Dobler said the operations of the EOC are not hampering firefighting efforts.

Hamsher said adjustments can be made at the EOC to accommodate firefighting.

In other county court news:

- The court moved to reopen the county offices on Monday.
- The court approved \$320,000 in funding to begin the construction project of Grant County Fairground's Trowbridge Pavilion.
- The court approved \$3,000 in funding for John Day Senior Center until the senior center can find another funding stream.
- The court moved to appoint Haley Olson to a position on the Planning Commission.

Interim emergency management coordinator stepping down

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant County's interim Emergency Management Coordinator and Emergency Operations Center Incident Commander Dave Dobler has resigned from those positions, according to County Commissioner Sam Palmer.

Dobler told the Eagle he planned to stay on as search and rescue coordinator and as a deputy sheriff, and he plans to continue serving as interim emergency management coordinator until the position is filled.

County Human Resources Manager Laurie Wright said the county court told her to advertise the job in the newspaper, and she posted the opening on the county's website.

County Judge Scott Myers said May 27 that he had not seen anything regarding Dobler's resignation.

Palmer said he had two emails from Dobler regarding his resignation.

Palmer said Dobler is leaving the position to avoid losing his law enforcement certifications.

The county appointed Dobler as incident commander of the county's response to the coronavirus on March 6, during a special session of county court at the recommendation of Grant County Sheriff Glenn Palmer.

Ted Williams, the county's former emergency management coordinator, resigned after the session, and Dobler was moved into the role of interim emergency management coordinator.

Sheriff Palmer and Under-sheriff Zach Mobley were at the May 27 Grant County Court session at Commissioner Palmer's request to share their thoughts on the recruitment process of a new coordinator.

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

Caitlin E. Brooks, 35, pleaded guilty Sept. 13, 2018, to a count of first-degree burglary and two counts of third-degree theft, committed on May 13, 2018. Her judgment was amended because her diversion was revoked, and she was convicted for count one on May 21 while counts three and four remained unchanged. She was sentenced to serve 60 days in jail, 72 months of supervised probation and pay \$625 in court, probation and diversion fees. A count of first-degree burglary was dismissed.

Dennis Asher, 53, pleaded guilty on May 21 for second-degree criminal mischief and unlawful possession of methamphetamine committed on Feb. 3, a count of failure to report as a sex offender committed on Feb. 28 and a count of harassment constituting domestic violence committed on April 17. He was sentenced to serve 45 days in jail, 78 months of supervised probation and 130 of community service. A count of attempt to commit a class A misdemeanor and a count of first-degree criminal mischief were dismissed.

Grant County Sheriff

The Grant County Sheriff's Office reported the following for the week of May 27:

Concealed handgun licenses: 9

Average inmates: 8

Bookings: 6

Releases: 6

Arrests: 1

Citations: 1

Fingerprints: 1

Civil papers: 14

Warrants processed: 0

Assistance/Welfare check: 0

Search and Rescue: 0

Noella Crocetti, 20, Oregon City, was cited for violation of basic rule, 83/65 zone.

Grant County Justice Court

Violation of the basic rule: Jackie E. Smith, 50, Coburg, April 9, 74/55 zone, fined \$140; Brian P. Danahue, 61, John Day, April 6, 79/65 zone, fined \$265; Holt G. Porfily, 20, Prineville, March 13, 74/55 zone, fined \$165; Austin P. Henry, La Centre, Washington, 20, 85/55 zone, fined \$265; Alexandrea J. Smith-Peterson, 23, Minden, Nevada, 71/55 zone, fined \$165.

Exceeding speed limit: Lori A. Short, 43, Redding, California, April 15, 80/65 zone, fined \$265.

Driving while suspended: Rodney R. Cowger, 52, Kimberly, April 22, fined \$440.

Oregon State Police

May 24: OSP stopped a Toyota pickup for failure to drive within lane near milepost 174 on Highway 26. On contact with the driver, OSP saw indicators of impairment. Benjamin W. Combs, 18, of Dale admitted to drinking four beers. Combs consented to field sobriety tests where OSP saw further indicators of impairment. OSP arrested the driver for driving under the influence of intoxicants and released the pickup to a sober passenger. OSP transported the driver to the Grant County Jail. Combs submitted to a breath test, which indicated a blood

alcohol concentration result of 0.08%. OSP issued Combs citations for DUI-Alcohol and minor in possession of alcohol, and released him to a responsible person.

May 28: OSP stopped a pickup near milepost 154 on Highway 26 after learning the passenger, a 30-year-old man, had a statewide felony warrant for a parole violation. OSP had stopped the same vehicle less than 20 minutes earlier and did not learn of the warrant until after the contact was broken. Dispatch confirmed the warrant, which was entered by the Oregon State Parole Board on July 15, 2019. OSP arrested Bryan S. Eaves, 30, of Dexter and transported him to the Grant County Jail where he was lodged.

May 29: OSP responded to the report of single motor vehicle crash near milepost 6 on State Route 7. A motorcycle driven by a 23-year-old man crashed off of a steep embankment due to driver error. The driver was taken to St. Alphonsus Medical in Baker City where he was treated and released for minor injuries. The driver arranged for his own tow. A warning was issued for fail to maintain lane.

May 30: OSP contacted a

pickup on Front Street in Prairie City. The passenger, Wayne R. Presley, 53, of Idaho, had a misdemeanor warrant out of Malheur County for failure to appear. Malheur County requested Presley be cited and released on the warrant. OSP issued him a citation for failure to appear.

Dispatch

John Day dispatch worked 168 calls during the week of May 23-31, including:

- **John Day Police Department**
- May 23: Responded to a report of drug paraphernalia on Northeast Seventh Street.
- May 24: Responded to a report of a restraining order violation that was unfounded on Southwest First Avenue.
- May 24: Responded to a report of a bull loose and walking down Third Street.
- May 25: Searched for a driver who had been reported as intoxicated on South Canyon Boulevard.
- May 26: Cited Astrid J. Anaya, 22, of Parkville Missouri for speeding, 44/25 zone.
- May 26: Received a report of theft on Southwest First Avenue.
- May 28: Received a report

of theft on West Main Street.

May 29: Answered a request for contact regarding a restraining order violation on Southwest First Street.

May 30: Advised of a possible domestic dispute on Southwest Brent Drive.

May 30: Assisted with the Grant Union High School graduation.

May 30: Received a report of a possible rattlesnake at the Seventh Street Complex.

- **Oregon State Police**
- May 23: Along with Grant County Sheriff's Office, advised of a vehicle speeding on Highway 26 near milepost 157.
- **Grant County Sheriff's Office**
- May 26: Received a report of trespassing on Miller Mountain.
- May 26: Received a report of a noninjury crash at a business on Highway 26 heading toward Mt. Vernon.
- May 27: Received a report of identity theft on West Bench Road.
- May 28: Received a report of a domestic dispute on Farra Lane.
- May 29: Received a report of theft at Silvies Valley.
- **John Day ambulance**
- May 23: Dispatched for a

woman with difficulty swallowing and speaking with a high heart rate.

May 26: Responded for an 87-year-old woman who was feeling ill on Northeast Seventh.

May 26: Responded to a 72-year-old person who fell, was in pain and could not get up on Seventh Avenue.

May 27: Responded to for a 65-year-old man with chest pain on West Main Street.

May 27: Dispatched for a woman who was vomiting and weak on West Riverside.

May 27: Dispatched for a man with a possible heart attack on Green Horn.

May 29: Responded for a subject who fell and cut his head on Charolais Heights.

May 30: Responded for a 61-year-old woman with chest pains.

- **Prairie City ambulance**
- May 25: Responded to an elderly man who fell on McCallum Avenue.
- **Long Creek ambulance**
- May 29: Along with John Day ambulance, responded for a 76-year-old man with tingling in his arms and legs on West Third Street.
- **Dispatch**
- May 25: Received a report of theft in Granite.

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