



# The Blue Mountain EAGLE

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## Meredith House breaks ground



The Eagle/Rudy Diaz  
From left, leaders prepare to break ground on the Heart of Grant County's new domestic violence trauma center, including Stacey Bailey, board member, Kirk Borgerding from CB Construction Inc., Derek Howard from CB Construction Inc., Briana Manfrass from Pinnacle Architecture, Nancy Nickel, the chair of the Heart of Grant County board, Grant County Judge Scott Myers, Rick Minster, board member, Beth Simonsen, the director, and Sandy Murray, a board member.

## New domestic violence trauma center will have improved privacy, capability to house 2-3 families

By Rudy Diaz  
Blue Mountain Eagle

**S**hoe on the shovel and dirt in the air marked the groundbreaking of the new facility for the Heart of Grant County's domestic violence trauma service center in John Day.

The new center, the Meredith House, will feature improved privacy to talk to victims, a conference room to have more group activities in a private settings and the capability to house up to two to three families. Previously, they could only house up to one person.

"There is a need here, and I know a lot of people don't want to recognize it, but some of the stuff that goes on here, the domestic violence, the sexual assault and the human trafficking is all here," said Heart of Grant County Director Beth Simonsen.

A goal of the organization is to educate people about abuse and build healthier relationships to prevent it.



The Eagle/Rudy Diaz  
Nancy Nickel, the chair of the Heart of Grant County board, breaks ground on the nonprofit's future domestic trauma center as Beth Simonsen, the director, smiles behind.

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## Committee declines to open investigation into sheriff

By Sean Hart  
Blue Mountain Eagle

A theft complaint against Grant County Sheriff Glenn Palmer has been dismissed.

The Police Policy Committee of the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training, which licenses police officers in Oregon, unanimously voted Thursday to administratively close a complaint submitted by Gordon Larson that Palmer knowingly possessed, or knew the whereabouts of, an engraved fishing pole Larson lost and "failed to take the ethical and lawful appropriate action of retrieving and returning the pole."



Grant County Sheriff Glenn Palmer

The complaint was submitted in 2019, and Palmer said at the time the allegations were false and he intended to fight them. When asked for comment about the dismissal, Palmer said he had reached out to his attorney for advice and had not heard back.

The Police Policy Committee reviewed the complaint at its February meeting and requested DPSST staff to request further information from the Grant County District Attorney's Office, the Oregon Department of Justice and the Oregon State Police. The committee did not review the case at its last meeting in September because it lacked a quorum.

At the meeting Aug. 20, DPSST staff reported that the DOJ declined to investigate the missing fishing pole, and OSP conducted an investigation and prepared an incident report but did not uncover the location of the fishing pole.

DPSST staff said Grant County District Attorney Jim Carpenter indicated "there were no concerns at his office with the veracity of Sheriff Palmer."

Committee Chair John Teague from the Oregon Association of Chiefs of Police said the outstanding allegation of dishonesty is why the committee asked DPSST staff for more information, but the district attorney "met and refuted" that allegation.

"The district attorney came back and said he never said that and does not question Palmer's honesty," Teague said. "I don't think we have enough here to investigate."

Teague added that the DOJ "saw no merit" in the fishing pole complaint.

Larson, who retired from the Oregon State Police in 2014, said in the complaint the pole was a retirement gift worth \$500 without the reel. He said he lost it in the John Day River and later heard Palmer had it.

Larson said Palmer told him he did not have the pole but it was in the possession of a friend from Spray. Larson asked OSP to investigate.

Larson told the Eagle there were several parts of his complaint that were unanswered. He declined to comment further until a complaint he filed with the Oregon state bar against Carpenter is resolved.

Palmer, who had announced his pending resignation in 2019, withdrew his plans to retire after the complaint was filed, stating he would continue through the end of his term and continue to seek reelection "as long as this behavior continues." He is running for reelection in November against Todd McKinley, the head of Grant County Community Corrections.

## Pandemic slows progress on forest planning

Blues Intergovernmental Council continues to move forward on forest plan

By Steven Mitchell  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Despite the global pandemic, the Blues Intergovernmental Council, a collective of state, tribal, federal and county representatives formed to resolve long-standing conflicts over the Umatilla, Wallowa-Whitman, and Malheur national forests,

have been meeting over the last year.

BIC, formed in 2019 after the Forest Service scrapped its Blue Mountains Forest Plan revision in March, has been meeting monthly in subcommittee meetings that deal with four different forest management areas, including wildfire management, access, socioeconomic assessment and grazing, according to Forest Service Deputy Regional Forester Lisa Northrop.

"Our first step as a subcommittee is to define and agree on our desired conditions," Northrop said. "These are complex issues, but we are committed to working together to meet our goals."

Northrop said BIC had just determined the focus of the subcommittees before the pandemic hit.



Eagle file photo  
A view of the Strawberry Mountains from Keeney Fork Road on the Malheur National Forest in Grant County.

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## BIC access subcommittee off to 'rocky' start

Group determining why certain access roads were closed to motorized vehicles and by what authority they were closed

By Steven Mitchell  
Blue Mountain Eagle

With the Blues Intergovernmental Council breaking out into subcommittees to drill down on the issues that led to the Forest Service's Blue Mountains Forest Plan demise, the access group is working on identifying



Rep. Mark Owens, R-Crane

which public roads are open or closed and by which authority public roads were closed.

Subcommittee member Rep. Mark Owens, R-Crane, said access, one of the most controversial subjects on the previous forest plan, will probably remain a hot-button area as they move forward.

"The access meetings have been a little bit rocky,"

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