

McKinley

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county’s citizens. However, he also understands there will be people who disagree with him no matter what he does or says.

“I have no illusion that I need to do something to win them over,” he said. “But what I am going to do is do the job, the best I see fit and try to bring some pride back to this county.”

He said a McKinley sheriff’s office will be strive to be transparent.

“I saw too much swept under the rug, too much stuff hidden,” he said. “I don’t want to see that. It isn’t like it’s their own club. It’s a public office, and I want to see it get back to that.”

As policing faces heavy scrutiny on both the local and national level, McKinley said some of it, as in the case with Palmer’s office, is warranted. He said both sides cannot expect perfection, though.

“I don’t expect anybody to be perfect,” he said. “Don’t expect me to be perfect either.”

McKinley said, if he prevails next month, he will expect his staff to conduct themselves with “integrity and honor the office.”

“I feel that that has not been occurring, to an extent,” McKinley said. “Trust me, there are some good employees in that facility. I feel sorry that they’ve been put in a position where they have, and I am proud of them for bearing it out. I was there. I feel for them. I know what it was like.”

McKinley began his policing career as a reserve in the Grant County Sheriff’s Office under Palmer’s predecessor, Fred Reusser, in 1998 and got hired on as a full-time deputy in 2001, working alongside Palmer until 2015, and also serving as undersheriff for a time.

Over the years, the relationship soured, and McKinley took the helm at the probation department in 2015.

“I departed because I didn’t like seeing where (the sheriff’s office) was going, and I could not consciously be a part of his

administration,” McKinley said.

McKinley said the most significant problem the county faces criminally is methamphetamine. He said people addicted to meth drive the criminal factors.

“Your thefts, your burglaries, break-ins can be routed back to someone who needs money, and they commit the crime to get the money,” he said.

Asked if he thinks law enforcement could do more to address the issue, McKinley said he did not want to judge that side of it.

“Do I think we could do more? Yes. Do

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—Todd McKinley, candidate for Grant County Sheriff

I think our focus could be in different areas like actually going out and dealing with the criminal aspects instead of just wanting to be political about everything? I want to see myself, if I get in that office, deal with the criminal issues that are going on in the county and not worry so much about what everybody thinks of my political stance,” he said. “I want to be truly a bipartisan sheriff that’s serving the people. That’s what it’s there for and not to be pushing some agenda.”

He said his agenda would be: “Don’t come here to commit a crime, and clean up the act because we’re going to be coming for you.”

Asked if he thinks the county is doing enough to help people get clean and sober, he said he gets frustrated that people get bogged down in the system. He said there are several entities involved when someone goes through the criminal justice system.

“From my aspect (in the probation office), most of us work together with my office reasonably well, and when we reach out, we get answers if we see a problem,” he said.

McKinley said he wants the sheriff’s office to work together more effectively with other law enforcement agencies in getting meth off the streets.

He said “portions” of the staff work well with other agencies and that coordinating with other agencies will never be perfect.

“Anytime you get different entities working together, they still have their way they have to do it policy-wise, and they don’t mix, so it has to get a little creative to make it work,” he said. “But I think it could be better. There could be a better flow of communication, park some egos and get a job done.”

McKinley said search and rescue, which he headed up before leaving the sheriff’s office, is “dear to his heart,” and he wants to see it at the forefront.

“I don’t think people realize in this county how many search and rescues occur in a given month,” he said.

“They’ve saved many lives, and there is a bunch of them, and I’ve been on many over the years, and it’s something that is highly needed. It’s highly technical. It requires good support.”

Another improvement McKinley said he would bring to the sheriff’s office is getting the jail to make more money for the county.

He said the county designed the current 45-bed facility so it could rent out beds to other entities. McKinley said the county used to rent to the many federal agencies and made a lot of money that way, but the county lost those contracts over the years.

“It’s a business, and it needs to be run as a business and get back to where it helps fiscally support the sheriff’s office,” he said.

McKinley said he wants the community to know that he has a “heart for the county.”

“My roots are here. My family’s here. We enjoy this county. I want to see this county be able to hold its head up,” he said. “I want to be able to be a part of bringing that back, bringing some pride back to this county.”

County

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work we did while there.”

Cook said she had not seen the original nor the updated versions of the cost summary but said it was a mistake. She said Grant County Treasurer Julie Ellison provided the county court payroll information the EOC used to submit the reimbursement request.

Ellison said the only thing she provided was monthly payroll figures so the EOC’s finance team could use it to calculate a dollar amount to submit for reimbursement. She told the Eagle last week the figures submitted for county court reimbursement didn’t make sense.

“You’ve probably tried to add it up, and it doesn’t,” she said. “If we get audited, then somehow they’re going to have to substantiate that \$35,000.”

On Tuesday, Ellison said she determined that three months of the two county commissioners and the county judge’s gross wages would equal the \$35,268 requested for reimbursement.

While Hamsher and County Commissioner Sam Palmer, each regularly paid for 13.3 hours per week, said they spent all of their county-paid hours on COVID-19 and volunteered extra time, County Judge Scott Myers said he tracked his COVID-19 time by the hour and only accrued 46.5 hours over the 11-week period.

“If I were sitting in on conference calls with the health department or somebody like that, I would add that to my daily log,” Myers said. “I would just mark ‘COVID-19, two hours’ or ‘COVID-19, an hour and a half,’ or whatever. When they asked me for that, I went back and looked, and I totaled them all up on a handwritten sheet with each day written on a single page.”

Another change between the original and updated “Summary of Costs” is a

line item under materials and equipment, which changed from “Grant County EOC PPE” to “Grant County Sheriff’s Office.” The total changed from \$5,076 to \$4,926.

Hamsher said he has reached out to Witt O’Brien’s for more information.

Palmer, the EOC public information officer, said he would need to go to the courthouse and look at Witt O’Brien’s financial summary with Ellison.

“I haven’t dealt with any of the financial side of this stuff,” Palmer told the Eagle on Friday. “I pretty much stayed in the health side of it and turned my hours in when they asked me to turn my hours in.”

Ellison said the county received the entire \$335,199 requested for reimbursement in June, but she has only distributed funds from that reimbursement to expenditures with documentation. She said she has copies of every invoice for the funds she has distributed.

Ellison said she could not independently send the money back to the state unless the county court directs her to do so.

Myers said he does not know what the county is going to do.

“We don’t know if all of a sudden the CARES Act is going to contact us and say, ‘We have some inconsistency. Please return such and such,’ and then we take that as it comes,” he said. “We deal with that, give them everything that we possibly can. If we still fall short, we fall short.”

He said there is a “large sum” of the original \$335,000 reimbursement that the county has not dispersed.

Myers said the county would “balance it all out somehow.” He said the county court is “ultimately accountable” for the discrepancy.

“The county court passed those documents, approved those documents and I signed those documents,” he said.

Cancer

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crying in the back, I watch as a patient is concerned for the health of others because he has a common cold, and I experience the most wonderful,

beautiful bald lady as she jokes with everyone, bringing such a light into that small room.

I would determine that this was indeed not an ordinary doctor’s waiting room! I then spent 6 1/2 weeks traveling back and forth to Bend, feeling blessed to have a son to

live with during the week and a job that worked around my treatments.

To sum up that six-month period, I would say that it was a time filled with so much faith, love and kindness that, while I never want to do all that again, I feel blessed beyond measure for

that dance with cancer for those very reasons.

Fast forward 10 years — one in 39 women die of breast cancer! I love that I am not a part of that statistic and that I will be celebrating 10 years of survivorship this year. Surviving and thriving are great in my world!

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