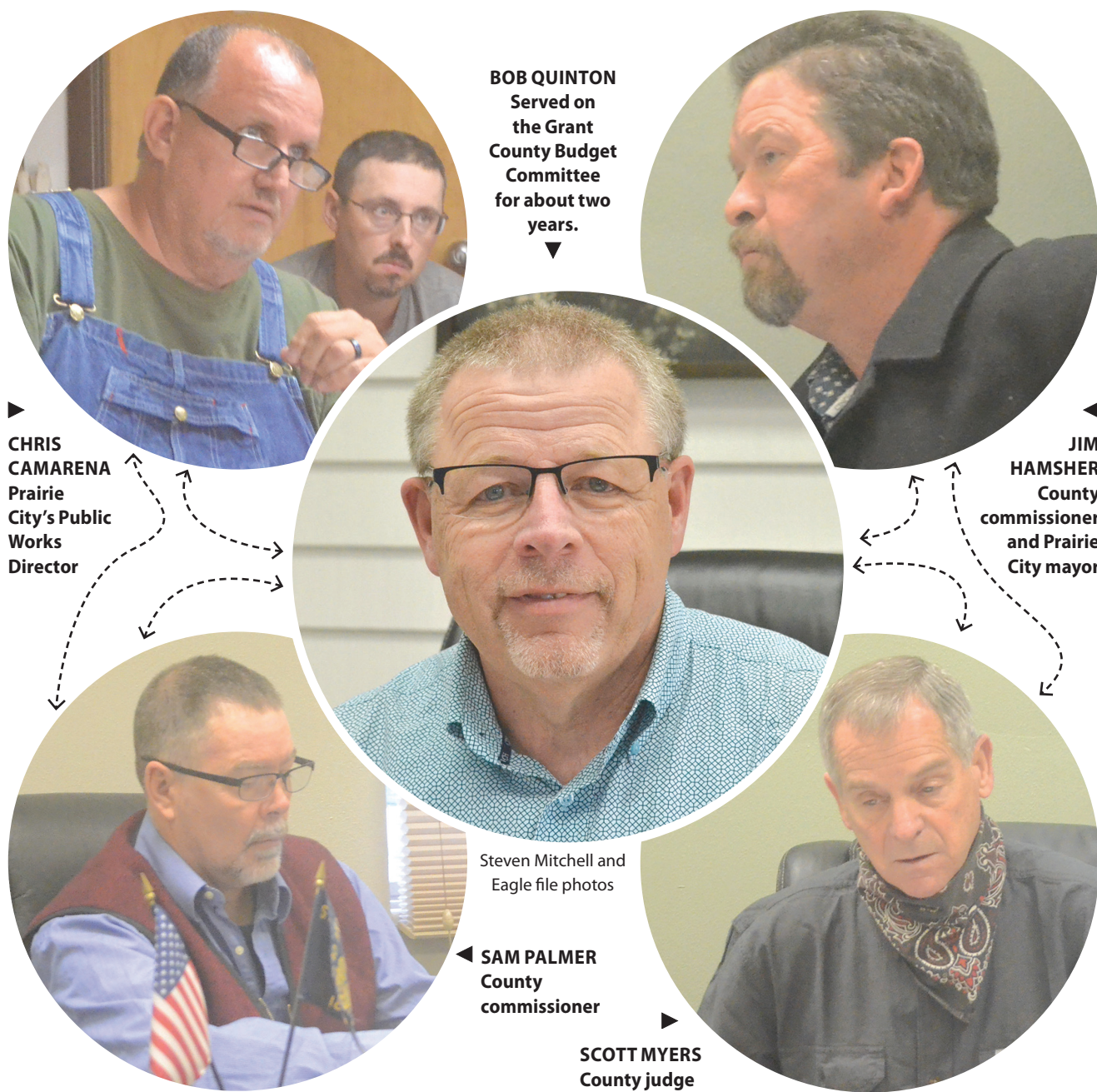




COMMITTEE CONFLICT

Budget Committee member who voted against increasing commissioner salaries last year may be replaced by commissioner's subordinate



BOB QUINTON
Served on the Grant County Budget Committee for about two years.

CHRIS CAMARENA
Prairie City's Public Works Director

JIM HAMSHER
County commissioner and Prairie City mayor

Steven Mitchell and Eagle file photos

SAM PALMER
County commissioner

SCOTT MYERS
County judge

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant County Court recently reappointed 20 incumbents to various boards and committees, but the members are considering replacing a Budget Committee member who voted against increasing county commissioner salaries last year.

County Court members asked two-year incumbent Budget Committee

member Bob Quinton to reapply for his seat as they consider another applicant, Prairie City's Public Works Director Chris Camarena.

County Judge Scott Myers said appointing Camarena to the Budget Committee could create a direct conflict of interest because County Commissioner Jim Hamsher, who is also Prairie City's mayor, is Camarena's immediate supervisor.

Quinton, vice president and commer-

cial loan officer at the Bank of Eastern Oregon, said he did not see the county publicly advertise his seat.

He said the court sent him a letter nearly two months ago asking if he would continue serving on the committee.

Quinton said he filled out the form, stating that he would "absolutely" like to continue serving on the Budget Committee.

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The Eagle/Steven Mitchell
Todd McKinley waits to be sworn in as Grant County Sheriff Monday at the county courthouse.

A new sheriff in town

McKinley, Raschio are sworn in for new positions

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

There's a new sheriff in town.

Roughly 20 people showed up at the Grant County Courthouse Jan. 4 to see a veteran lawman Todd McKinley be sworn in as the county's new sheriff, along with other elected officials.

"It was quite a journey to get here," McKinley said in a phone interview from the sheriff's office in between swearing in his deputies.

"(The job) began immediately after being sworn in," he said.

McKinley said his new deputies were "relieved" to finally have a chance to sit down and talk to him since he could not do so after November's election.

He said the conversations have been positive, and he is excited to take the helm.

He said his first conversation was with outgoing Sheriff Glenn Palmer.

"It went well," McKinley said of his conversation with Palmer. "I'm going to leave it at that."

McKinley, who defeated Palmer by about 500 votes, said he wants there to be less turmoil coming out of the sheriff's office.

"There is always some turmoil in a sheriff's office, but I don't want the office to be the cause of it," he said.

He said he wants people in the community to feel like they can reach out to their sheriff's office.

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John Day Logging company sues, halts distributions to Black Oregonians

Great Northern Resources claims COVID-19 fund is 'racial exclusionary policy'

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

A John Day-based lawsuit has halted further distributions of COVID-19 funds earmarked by the governor for Black-owned businesses and families.

The state's \$62 million relief fund for Black Oregonians will no longer issue grants, as it deposited the remaining \$8.8 million with a federal court Dec. 17 as legal challenges to its constitutionality continue.

John Day logging company Great

Northern Resources, which lists Tad Houpt and Grant County Commissioner Sam Palmer as agents, filed a lawsuit alleging race-based discrimination when its grant application was denied. The lawsuit is ongoing.

Great Northern and a Portland-based, Latino-owned coffee company and restaurant had asked U.S. Judge Karin Immergut to issue a preliminary injunction or restraining order to stop the fund distributing money based on race, according to a complaint filed in U.S. District Court Dec. 11.

Immergut denied those requests in November, according to an amended class-action lawsuit filed with the U.S. District Court Dec. 6. In those instances, the Oregon Cares Fund set aside \$200,000 for Great

Northern if they prevailed in their legal challenges, according to a legal brief filed Nov. 10. This led Immergut to find that they couldn't show the irreparable harm needed to warrant an injunction in a Nov. 20 legal opinion.

This time around, Great Northern Resources — the original plaintiffs in the case — joined with Salem electrical contractor Dynamic Service Fire and Security and sought class-action status for the suit, according to a complaint filed Dec. 6.

According to the amended class-action lawsuit, the plaintiffs applied for grants from other federal and state sources but were unsuccessful.

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EOMG file photo

Tad Houpt, part owner of Great Northern Resources, addresses a crowd in John Day in 2016.