

Wyden: Attack on Capitol an assault on democracy



EOMG file photo
Sen. Ron Wyden speaks during a virtual town hall at the East Oregonian in Pendleton on Oct. 14.

Senator vows to fight for improved broadband

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

Protestors storming the nation's Capitol was an assault on democracy, U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden said.

The Democrat from Oregon shared his thoughts at a virtual town hall Monday.

"My quick comment is that my standard is violence is always unacceptable," Wyden

told residents of Gilliam, Grant, Sherman and Wheeler counties. "That means it's unacceptable in Washington, D.C., it's unacceptable in my hometown of Portland, it's unacceptable in Salem and it's unacceptable wherever you are on the political spectrum."

Wyden said, no matter the view on an issue, there are opportunities to have peaceful discussions, even when people disagree with each other.

"The Oregon way is to have peaceful discussions, and the First Amendment is about peaceful protest," Wyden said.

In light of the events in D.C. and violent protests in Oregon, John Day resident Beth Spell asked Wyden if elected officials who stray from their oath to office, which she said pledges their allegiance to the law, should be censored or removed from office for noncompliance to their oath.

Wyden said no elected official is above the law, and a number of elected officials who thought they were have faced consequences.

He added it is vital for citizens to believe they are safe in public buildings where they

go to seek redress for their concerns.

Grant County resident Didgette McCracken, the Open Campus coordinator at Oregon State University Extension, said broadband has become more and more important, especially in rural areas.

"We're in a time where internet access isn't an amenity anymore," McCracken said. "It's a basic need."

Wyden said he wants people to know he will make sure broadband and internet connection are a part of every infrastructure debate. He said the lat-

est package includes provisions for Oregonians such as funding for broadband in rural areas, \$3.2 billion for free or low-cost broadband services for people of modest incomes. This would help provide \$50 a month to low-income families to help pay for internet services, which Wyden wrote into the package.

"That's the new money coming on affordability..." Wyden said. "And then we go to the debate coming up on infrastructure, and I'm not going to let an infrastructure package go forward without including broadband."

John Day set for construction projects in 2021

Green: Projects coming to fruition

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

A lot of construction is planned for John Day in 2021.

Projects in John Day made progress during the pandemic-dominated year of 2020, such as the completion of the first cul-de-sac in John Day and City Hall improvements, but the planning will help many projects come to fruition.

"This is the year of construction for John Day," John Day City Manager Nick Green said. "We have the Dollar General, the Meredith House, Len's Drug, the OTEC electric vehicle parking lot all currently in construction... This is the year where all of the fundraising and planning we've been doing will begin construction."

General Fund Projects

Main street revitalization: Len's Drug received its first reimbursement check for \$69,315 from the Main Street Revitalization grant they received in 2019, Green said at a Dec. 8 city council meeting. The reimbursement given was for progress made on the drug store's renovation and expansion project. There are still \$130,041 in grant funds remaining of the \$200,000 grant award Len's received. The Dec. 8 agenda states that the project is about 20% complete as of November.

"As you've seen, Len's is actively at work, and we already processed their first reimbursement request and expect another one fairly quickly," Green said.

Tyler Sheedy and his wife, Krista Qual, are in the process of refinancing the Weaver building on Main Street and paid \$55,000 in additional payments on the loan for the building. Green said they're planning to have the loan paid in a couple of months.

"That's going to add to the city's liquidity and create more opportunities for downtown and Main Street reinvestment next fiscal year," Green said.

John Day City Hall and Police Department: The City Hall and police department building improvements are complete. The agenda states that the front entry was remodeled, all flooring was replaced except the back office and walls were repainted. The new HVAC unit for the police department was ordered and installed.

Water Fund

Brownfield redevelopment project: The planning commission approved the site design package for the brownfield redevelopment project on Nov. 18. This is the land the city purchased last year from Iron Triangle located between the U.S. Forest Service office building and Valley View Assisted Living. This included the right of way between Patterson Bridge Road and Valley View Drive to create the new Government Entry Road and complete the Seventh

Street Extension.

There are 12 lots on the 14-acres bought from Iron Triangle that are planned to be sold once they receive certification. The wetland delineation is pending approval by the Department of State Lands.

Strux Engineering conducted a structural evaluation of the shop on the Iron Triangle property purchased by the city. The shop was deemed structurally sound and could be occupied in its current state. The Jan. 12 agenda has a lease agreement listed for the shop under the consent item.

The city council on Dec. 8 discussed the possibility of leasing the shop temporarily while long-term plans are in the discussions.

IT Funds

Humbolt broadband project: Oregon Telephone Corporation performed the fiber installation for broadband to Humbolt Elementary on Dec. 1. Green said on Jan. 7 that the line construction is complete. Once OTC tests and certifies the line construction, they will be operational.

EDA CARES Grant: The city submitted their final application for the EDA CARES Grant after revisions based on feedback from the EDA. The city requested \$2 million. Green said on Jan. 7 they have not received a letter of further consideration yet but are expecting one any day.

"If this one is funded, it will get fiber to the homes in John Day and fund Grant County Coworks to get into a

new space..." Green said. "It also upgrades the 911 center's emergency communications equipment."

Street Funds

Fourth Street repairs: Green said, after conferring with the city's engineers, they felt like asking the Federal Emergency Management Agency to fund the soldier pile wall design since it would be better in the long term. It would be a structurally more stable solution, and it won't be subject to erosion like the mechanically stabilized embankment design, according to Green. This would also keep the road to the airport open throughout the duration of the construction process.

In November, an engineering firm recommended two designs to address the Fourth Avenue repair project. The soldier pile wall design, which is estimated to cost \$1.3 million, or the mechanically stabilized embankment design, which is estimated to cost \$872,123.

FEMA is covering 75% of the cost and will weigh in on

the options. John Day would have to cover the 25% match of the construction cost.

The council hopes Grant County will be able to cover some of the cost of the match since it is the main road used to access the Grant County Regional Airport and the industrial park.

Integrated park system: The parking improvements at the Seventh Street Complex park are complete with the exception of the fence installation around the parking perimeter. The planning commission approved the site design plan for the Hill Family Park and bridge on Nov. 18. John Day will proceed with right-of-way acquisition and the bridge order in 2021, and construction on the next phase will resume in spring with the project scheduled for completion by early to-mid summer.


Charolais Heights intersection improvements: The final design of the Charolais Heights intersection improvements and utility relocations are proceeding. This project

will begin construction in early spring and will be completed by the fall, according to the agenda. A schedule for the project will be provided by Sisul Engineering early this year.

Sewer Fund Wastewater System Improvements: Flagline engineering and Kennedy Jenks conducted a field visit for the new wastewater treatment plant on Oct. 29.

They met with John Day staff, a local civic engineer and a surveyor to discuss the project. On Nov. 10, the survey team conducted the aerial Lidar (light detection and ranging) survey of the project site.


The staff is developing the data on flow rates for the future hotel, industrial and residential areas. The future projects will be included in the flow projection for sizing the new treatment plant along with Portland State University's updated certified population estimate for 2020, which showed an addition of 15 new residents in the past year.




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On December 31, 2020, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Nickolas Holliday retired from the United States Marine Corps after over 20 years of service. Holliday, son of Ken and Pat Holliday, was a 2000 Grant Union High School graduate and served in the infantry and intelligence fields in the Marine Corps. During his service, he completed six combat deployments and received both his Bachelor's and Master's degrees. He is retiring to New Orleans, Louisiana with his wife, Katherine, a middle school teacher.



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