

Grant County reads pot tax ordinance

3% tax will go into effect 90 days after 2nd reading

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

The Grant County Court met in an emergency session Thursday to consider the county's recreational marijuana tax ordinance.

In November, county voters approved a 3% tax on marijuana products, but the county court did not consider an ordinance to officially adopt the tax until Dec. 30 and did not follow the law by reading the ordinance.

According to Oregon law, "every ordinance of a county governing body shall, before being put upon its final adoption, be read fully and distinctly in open meeting of that body on two days at least 13 days apart." The ordinance can be read by title only if no governing body member requests a complete reading of the proposed ordinance.

County Judge Scott Myers read the body of the ordinance Thursday with no objections from County Commissioners Sam Palmer or Jim Hamsher.



Eagle file photo

Jars of marijuana line the shelves of Rocky Mountain Dispensary, the county's lone retail recreational marijuana business.

Myers said the court would again read the ordinance in its entirety or by title in 13 days, which falls on the court's regularly scheduled meeting on Jan. 27.

He asked if anyone on the conference call had questions or comments about the ordinance as well. After the second reading of the

ordinance, it will be appropriately adopted and take effect in 90 days.

Haley Olson of Rocky Mountain Dispensary, the county's only marijuana retailer, said she estimates revenue for the county during the first quarter of this year would have been around \$10,000 to \$25,000.

Superintendent addresses parade's anti-mask incident

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

Prairie City School District's Superintendent responded to a concern regarding an anti-mask display on a bus entered in the Timber Truckers parade in December.

The district's entry for the Timber Truckers parade was a decorated school bus, which included a white sheet placed across the front of the bus with a red circle and a line through it.

Superintendent Casey Hallgarth sent a letter out on Jan. 8 to address the entry and said he approved the request by staff members to enter a decorated bus for the parade. However, he was unaware and did not approve of the decoration that suggested that the district is opposed to the use of masks during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I write to assure the Prairie City

and Grant County community that our school district takes the COVID-19 pandemic very seriously, and that includes enforcing state mandates and recommendations that our students and staff wear face masks to reduce transmission," Hallgarth said in his letter.



Casey Hallgarth

Hallgarth said he continues to work closely with the Grant County Health Department and follows the guidance of Oregon Department of Education to ensure the school does everything possible to protect the health and safety of students and staff.

"On behalf of the Prairie City School District, I deeply regret this," Hallgarth said. "Although confidentiality laws prevent me from commenting on specific employee disciplinary actions, rest assured that the judgment shown by the staff members involved in the decoration has already been addressed."

County Court roundup: Quinton reappointed to Budget Committee

Search and Rescue completes 46 missions in 2020

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

After consideration, Grant County officials reappointed Bob Quinton to the county's Budget Committee.

In the Dec. 30 session of County Court, after recently reappointing 20 committee members to various boards and committees, court members considered replacing Quinton.

Quinton, a two-year committee member, had voted against increasing county commissioner salaries. The court members asked Quinton to reapply for his seat as they considered another applicant, Prairie City's Works Director Chris Camarena.

During the Dec. 30 session, County Judge Scott Myers said appointing Camarena to the Budget Committee could create a conflict of interest because County Commissioner Jim Hamsher, who is also Prairie City's mayor, is Camarena's immediate supervisor.

Myers moved Jan. 13 to reappoint Quinton "in the interest of following past practice."

Hamsher said, although it's not a written policy, the de facto policy has been to reappoint members to committees who have not reached their term limit.

Hamsher said he thought the county

advertised all open positions on boards and committees to the public.

The court thanked Camarena for applying and said they would keep his letter of interest on file for any available seats on other boards and committees.

Camarena said he did not know Quinton had been on the Budget Committee and that he contacted the county because he thought the committee had an open seat.

Camarena said he was unaware of the commissioners' requested a pay increase and that he would recuse himself if it came up.

The court also moved to reappoint Steven Baldwin to the Planning Commission with a term expiring in June 2024 and to reappoint Caleb Wilson to the Library Advisory Board with a term expiring in June 2023.

Flood ordinance

The court approved the county's flood ordinance, which will go into effect on March 23.

Shannon Springer, Grant County planning director, said the flood ordinance aims to reduce damage to buildings and government infrastructure and the cost to repair the damage.

She said the flood ordinance is not new, and the county has had one dat-

ing back to the 1980s. What changed, she said, was that the Federal Emergency Management Agency remapped the county's flood zones and included properties that were previously not a part of the flood zones.

She said landowners planning on building within the flood zone would need to obtain a permit at no charge.

Springer said there were concerns from landowners surrounding ag activities and how the flood ordinance might impact them. She said the ordinance has mechanisms and variances that cover several ag activities in flood areas.

Springer said the primary reason that the county issues permits for building in a flood zone is to ensure that builders are anchoring down structures so they do not become dislodged by floodwaters. She said the ordinance does not mean someone cannot build in a flood zone. Springer said she needs to know what the project entails and then see if it fits the ordinance requirements.

Springer said the county must have the ordinance to comply with the National Flood Insurance Program.

Myers said, if the county did not pass the ordinance, many property owners would be unable to obtain insurance or it would cost more.

County Commissioner Sam Palmer said he wanted it on the record that the NFIP does not absolve a landowner from getting insurance.

Springer said participating mem-

bers of NFIP have access to emergency assistance and other programs that they otherwise would not be able to access.

Search and Rescue annual report

Deputy Sheriff and Search and Rescue Coordinator Dave Dobler presented an annual report.

Dobler said, since he has been at the helm, SAR has been on 91 missions. He said 46 of them came in 2020. He said, despite COVID-19 guidelines and mandates from the state, people still went missing. In his report, Dobler pointed out that rural counties in Oregon, Washington and Idaho saw an uptick in visitors.

"As different jurisdictions started reporting more and more COVID cases," he said in his report, "Grant and other smaller counties were seen as a refuge and a safe place to come visit."

Dobler said SAR has been on five missions so far this year and that SAR has a total of 30 volunteers. He said 12 of those volunteers are the most active.

Dobler said anyone interested in volunteering for SAR could fill out an application at the Grant County Sheriff's Office. He said the sheriff's office runs a background check on all applicants. However, he said all background checks are judged on a case-by-case basis by him and the sheriff.

Sheriff Todd McKinley said Dobler's report was thorough and

detail-oriented.

"He (Dobler) brought it (SAR) up to quite a level," McKinley said.

In other county news:

- The court approved the Road Department's request to purchase a used tractor for \$11,000. Road Department lead mechanic Joe Bennett said the engine in the tractor they have has oil in the water and has been overhauled twice. He said it would cost the county roughly \$4,000 to repair. Bennett said the old tractor would be sold at the county's surplus sale.

- The county approved Economic Development Director Tory Stinett's request to apply for the Community Connection housing loan rehabilitation program. The program, which the county has participated in in the past, allows the county to offer loans to low-income seniors to make repairs to their homes.

- The Grant County and Bear Creek shooting club purchased 21 acres of land to extend its shooting range. Bob Baggett, the club's president, said the club would bear the cost as well as the administrative costs.

- The court approved the Grant County Regional Airport's maintenance contract.

- The court approved three justice of the peace pro-tems for 2021: Vicky Clemens of Harney County, Chris Patnode of Gilliam County and Ron McDermid of Sherman County.

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

Samantha M. Jones, 34, pleaded guilty on Jan. 13 to a count of harassment—constituting domestic violence, committed on Dec. 16. She was sentenced to 12 months of bench probation and to pay a \$100 probation fee. A count of fourth-degree assault was dismissed.

Grant County Sheriff

The Grant County Sheriff's Office reported the following for the week of Jan. 13:

- Concealed handgun licenses: 5
- Average inmates: 12
- Bookings: 7
- Releases: 10
- Arrests: 2
- Citations: 2
- Fingerprints: 2
- Civil papers: 9
- Warrants processed: 9
- Assistance/Welfare check: 1

Search and Rescue: 1
Nolan Destiny, 19, of Prairie City was cited for violation of speed limit, 60/40 zone.

Cody Combs, 20, of Prairie City was cited for a marijuana violation.

Oregon State Police

Jan. 4: A state trooper investigated a noninjury single-vehicle crash against a pony on Highway 26 near milepost 146. The vehicle's airbags deployed during the crash, but it was able to be safely driven from the scene by the driver. The owner removed the deceased pony from the roadway. The driver and the owner of the pony were given copies of the Oregon police crash report.

Jan. 6: A state trooper stopped a vehicle on First Street near Johnson Street in Prairie City for a traffic violation. When the state trooper contacted the driver, Thomas E. Pfeifer, 51, of Prairie City, he recognized him and knew his driver's license was misdemeanor suspended. The state trooper arrested Pfeifer for driving while suspended. The state trooper released the vehicle to the owner who responded to the

scene. OSP transported Pfeifer to the Grant County Jail, issued him a citation for driving while suspended and lodged him.

Jan. 8: A state trooper responded to a reported non-injury, blocking single-vehicle crash at milepost 120 on State Route 19. Investigation revealed that the vehicle was heading southbound when it collided with large boulders in the roadway. The vehicle went airborne and landed sideways and began to roll several times. The vehicle came to an uncontrolled rest in the middle of the highway. The driver received minor injuries. The vehicle was towed from the scene by Frontier Towing.

Dispatch

John Day dispatch worked 127 calls during the week of Jan. 11-17, including:

- John Day Police Department**
Jan. 13: Dispatched to a report of suspicious circumstances involving a dog and truck on Canton Street.
Jan. 13: Received an identity theft call on Northwest Bridge Street.
Jan. 14: Received a report of a hit and run on East Main Street.
Jan. 16: Sean McGee, 23, of John Day was cited for driving with no license and driving uninsured on Southwest Second

Street.

- Oregon State Police**
Jan. 12: Received a report of a noninjury crash on Highway 26.
- Grant County Sheriff's Office**
Jan. 12: Received a report of theft on East Second Street.
Jan. 15: Received a report of theft of service on Highway 395 near milepost 2.
Jan. 17: Took a report on a possible stolen vehicle on South Hall Street.
- John Day ambulance**
Jan. 12: Along with Prairie City ambulance, paged for an 80-year-old woman who had taken a fall.

Jan. 13: Received a report of an 81-year-old woman who fell and hit her head on West Main Street.

- Jan. 16: Responded for a person who fell and hurt their back and knee on North Johnson Avenue.
- Jan. 16: Received a report of a noninjury motor vehicle crash on Highway 395 near milepost 31.
- Jan. 16: Received a report of an 82-year-old woman with cough and fever on North Cozart Avenue.
- Jan. 17: Along with Prairie City ambulance, paged for an 83-year-old woman on North Cozart Street.

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