

## Monument School reopens

By Rudy Diaz  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Doors at Monument School District reopened Monday.

The district worked closely with the Grant County Health Department to determine that students could return to on-site learning after two weeks of distance learning.

“Being able to resume in-person instruction is very exciting,” said Monument Superintendent Laura Thomas. “None of us went into education to sit behind computer screens or instruct students over the phone.

We all missed the energy and excitement the students bring to the atmosphere of the school.”

Thomas said she and the Grant County Health Department looked at the case counts in the community when making the decision to reopen.

“While we wanted the students back in the school as soon as possible, we didn’t want to do it at the health risk of students, families, staff or the community,” Thomas said.

Thomas said, when the district needed to transition to distance learning, they took plans they already had, made a few adjustments and transitioned into a distance learning model the next day. She said the transition was smooth and the whole process seemed to work great for students, families and staff members alike.

“I want to thank the students, families and staff for their dedication to our students’ education,” Thomas said. “Without these three groups working together, our distance learning model would not have worked as well as it did. Without the continued partnership from families, staff, and the community, we could not do all we do for the students.”



Laura Thomas

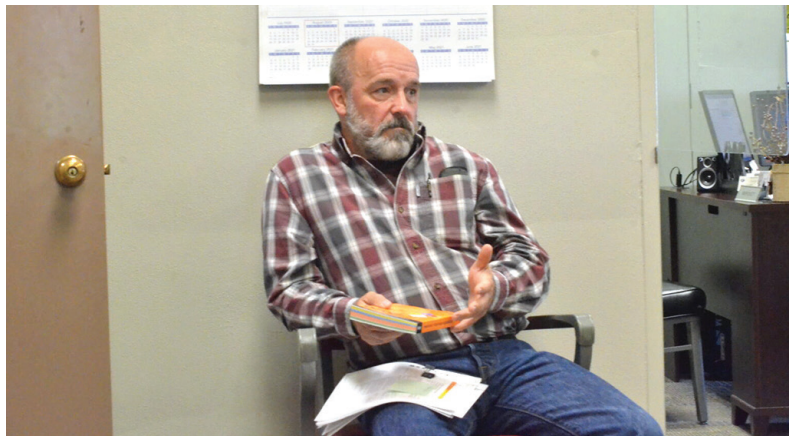
# Grant County to get repeater towers each year for the next seven years

By Steven Mitchell  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant County’s Office of Emergency Management tapped funding to erect a new radio repeater tower each year for the next seven years.

Paul Gray, the county’s emergency manager, said the funding would come from Secure Rural Schools Title III, which ensures funding for wild-fire protection, firefighting and education. Gray said additional funding would come from the state’s Homeland Security grant program. He said Homeland Security grant amounts vary in proportion to population.

Gray said Long Creek, which had a tower go down, will be the first city in the county to get one. He said the city had their tower go down a couple of



Eagle file photo

Paul Gray, Grant County emergency manager.

months ago, and they were able to get it back up and running temporarily.

He said the total cost for the

repeater in Long Creek will be roughly \$50,000.

He said the repeaters should be

operational for the next 20 to 50 years.

“Communications is a priority in public safety,” he said. “No matter if you’re in a city like Portland, or in a frontier community. I think it’s a little worse for us because you have many areas that are not necessarily publicly owned in a frontier community.”

He said the towers would be managed under Emergency Management instead of individual agencies. He said fire, law enforcement and other agencies would be using the towers, making sense to have the repeaters under one contract.

Currently, he said, the county has two law enforcement repeater towers, but six or seven sites that need one.

## John Day updates rates for the new year

By Rudy Diaz  
Blue Mountain Eagle

John Day’s water, sewer and system development charge rates were updated in the first John Day City Council meeting of the new year.

The John Day City Council passed several resolutions on Jan. 12 that raised each rate by different amounts. The base monthly water rate was increased by \$1 while the monthly sewer rate was raised \$12.

The total 2021 system development charges for new construction went up \$87. John Day City Manager Nick Green said the 2021 rates were increased by the rate of inflation, which was contemplated when the ordinance was adopted for SDC’s in 2019. The increase also con-



The Eagle/Rudy Diaz

The John Day City Council discusses sewer rates Jan. 12.

siders the additional load placed on the system by new developments.

“This increase is intended to reflect our increase in the cost of materials used to perform system expansion and reimburse estimated expenditures to our utility accounts,” states the agenda for the meeting.

Green said most residents will not pay this because this will apply for commercial developments, which tend to

be less price sensitive, and people connecting from outside the city limits to either water or sewer systems.

The sewer and water rates have both steadily increased each year by a dollar for several years, but this year, the sewer rate took a bigger leap to help the city qualify for additional financial support from the United States Department of Agriculture for the new wastewater treatment plant.

In October, Green said the increase in rates will allow the USDA to consolidate the city’s higher-interest debt, the loans from the property purchase and bridge loans for the rest of the construction into a 40-year-loan with a 1% interest rate.

“If we don’t do this, then the financing that we already negotiated would be returned and work will stop,” Green said on Jan. 12.

The increase was approved by the Budget Committee in May, but several council members on Jan. 12 expressed concerns that the increase feels sudden.

John Day Councilor Paul Smith said the conversation has been ongoing for the last 10 years as the rate slowly increased.

Mayor Ron Lundbom said

now that there is a better idea as to the dollar figure for the project, which happened last year, they know how much to raise the rates.

“We have been trying to do it slowly, and if the treatment plant process were two more years down the road, you’d be looking at half that jump right now,” Councilor Dave Holland said.

The city council also discussed a resolution to update land use, development permit and approval fees in John Day, which were last updated in 2005. The discussion will be brought back in a future council meeting.

“I don’t hear a lot of complaints about the fee structure, and we’re not proposing big increases either,” Green said. “I just want to talk through it and talk the pros and cons.”



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