

County tables decision on funding Cyber Mill project

Previously known as Coworks, project would provide access to technology in several cities

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant County Court members tabled a decision whether to approve an \$81,000 cash infusion for the Grant County Cyber Mill Feb. 24.

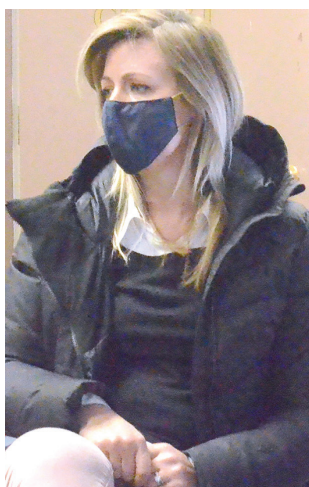
The project, previously known as Grant County Coworks, would offer access to computers, printers and broadband at locations in Seneca, John Day and Prairie City.

The Cyber Mill, according to Didgette McCracken, the Open Campus coordinator at Oregon State University Extension Office, is working under the nonprofit Grant County Digital, and the concept was presented to the court last month.

The court turned down the group's request last month but offered to look for other fund-



The Eagle/Steven Mitchell
Tory Stinnett, Grant County economic development director, addresses the Feb. 24 session of Grant County Court.



The Eagle/Steven Mitchell
Allison Field of Business Oregon listens during the Feb. 24 session of Grant County Court.

ing sources.

McCracken said during her presentation that the group is looking for funding for the Seneca and Prairie City locations. She told the court John Day had received its funding.

According to Allison Field of Business Oregon, since the last time Cyber Mill had come to the county court, the group put out a survey and

found 85% of those surveyed support funding the project.

State Rep. Mark Owens, R-Crane, submitted a letter of support for the Cyber Mill, which Tory Stinnett, Grant County's economic development director, read to the court.

On Thursday, Owens posted the following to his Facebook page:

"The Cyber Mill project is needed and will be a great benefit to the residents and communities within Grant County. It will help our employees, employers, students and families, and others who need better access to technology and functional work spaces. This is exactly the type of innovation, creative thinking and intelligent planning that will solve problems and provide solutions from inside a community."

County Judge Scott Myers said John Day had not paid to support the county's Economic Development office or its staff in "several years."

Stinnett said they were asking for funding for Seneca and Prairie City, and nothing that they were talking about had anything to do with John Day.

Field said John Day's support of the Economic Development Office or lack thereof was not what they came to the county court to discuss. Field said they were creators of the project, and John Day is but one of the project's many partners.



Eagle file photo

Blue Mountain Hospital is working to improve wait times, referrals and customer service.

Uneven patients per provider driving delays at hospital

Departures of two doctors last year left 800 patients without a primary care physician

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

Blue Mountain Hospital is working to improve wait times, referrals and customer service.

The number of patients assigned to a physician is unevenly balanced and is one of the main drivers in long wait times to see providers, lost referrals, and poor customer service at the Blue Mountain Hospital, according to Interim Clinical Director Bob Boyle.

Boyle said the hospital's established physicians are at their capacity and are "oversubscribed."

He said the departures of two doctors last year left 800 patients without a primary care physician. Boyle said the patient panels, the number of individual patients under the care of a specific provider, need to be adjusted.

He said panel capacity is between 200-250% and that the three new doctors are at the 20-25% level.

Boyle told the hospital board they are taking on new patients and reestablished patients every week. He said these are 45-minute visits, and they can only see so many patients in a day.

Boyle said, based on an analysis the hospital conducted, 43% of its patients have chronic care conditions, such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes, arthritis, Alzheimer's disease or dementia.

Action plan

Amid growing criticism from patients for lost referrals, missed callbacks and poor customer service, the Blue Mountain Hospital District board of directors, asked Boyle, whom the hospital hired in October, to develop a plan to manage referrals, patient callbacks and prescriptions refill requests.

Board member Dottie Parsons said during the board's Feb. 25 meeting that patients are still not getting callbacks, and she asked what he is doing to address the problem in both the short and long term.

One part of the plan, Boyle said, is to find a company that could provide chronic care management and Medicare well-

ness exams, routine visits with a physician to update a patient's treatment plan and check blood pressure, heart rate and other vitals.

Boyle said he would make a recommendation, based on the cost and return on investment and care for the patients. He said with chronic care and Medicare bundled together and the new doctors taking more shifts, patients will notice the change.

He said he is looking at a software application that would integrate with the hospital's electronic medical records program to avoid copying, faxing and scanning. He said referrals are a complicated process.

Along with the skewed patient panel, hospital CEO Derek Daly told the board for a "pocket of time" the department lost a couple of staff members "unexpectedly," and since then, Boyle added a second employee to the referral department.

Boyle said, when he arrived, the department had one employee. Now, the department has two full-time staff members and an employee from the surgery department who provides oversight, backup and training.

He said by March he would be ready to make a recommendation on an EMR application.

'If you can't measure it, you can't manage it'

Boyle said, with callbacks, the department is taking a team-driven approach. He said what happens with callbacks is one medical assistant gets buried while others have a "light load."

He said they are balancing out the callbacks among the group.

Boyle said the expectation is that a patient will get a same-day callback with prescription refills within 24 hours.

Boyle said Jena Knowles is working with the hospital's information technology manager to track the team's progress to report on the performance regularly. He said the goal is to reach a 99-100% completion rate.

Boyle said the critical thing is documenting and reporting. He said the team's goal is 42 callbacks each day, and now they will have a record that they made the calls.

"If you can't measure it, you can't manage it," he said, "so we're going to do that."

Bates Building to be restored to meet growing Prairie City student base

Building will house day care, preschool and student-based health center

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

The future of the Bates Building at Prairie City School looks bright.

Prairie City Superintendent Casey Hallgath said, as part of the district's five-year strategic plan, the school district will renovate the Bates Building that was built in 1970s in Bates and later moved to the Prairie City School campus.

"We want to move forward with the roof and make sure we get all the asbestos out of it, and then we can move forward with the renovation on the inside and get it all up to date," Hallgath said.



Eagle file photo

The Bates School building, located at Prairie City School, is being restored.

"We put a two-year timeline on it, and that's what we're shooting for."

Hallgath said they plan to host day care and preschool in the building as well as a student-based health center, which are all a part of their early childhood development program.

Hallgath said, when he arrived at Prairie City School and saw the abandoned 7,500-square-foot building,

he started planning with the board to restore it and bring it back to life. Hallgath and the board decided to refurbish the building because it would cost less than demolishing it.

Hallgath said they are using some of their Student Investment Account funds and are looking for grant opportunities.

With enrollment going up at Prairie City School District, Hallgath said this will help



Eagle file photo

Prairie City School District Superintendent/Principal Casey Hallgath.

"We are up by 25 kids from the beginning of the year," he said. "We need to have somewhere to house these kids. We're just trying to figure out ways, and budget-wise, on how to keep up with enrollment."

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Hello Grant County,
What beautiful Spring weather! I keep reminding myself that the snowy days between the beautiful warm days are typical of Spring in Grant County. Sunny days will be here soon!

We would like to welcome the following new members to the Chamber: Farmer's Insurance, John Day Eye Care, John Day Storage, LLC, and Earthly Home Natural Market.

The beginning of our tourist season is just around the corner. We are preparing for a year pretty much like we had last year, which means people coming here to enjoy our beautiful outdoors. Campers, hikers, bicyclists, motorcyclists and river enthusiasts will soon be heading our way! Preparations are being made for the return of some big events this year.

The Blue Mountain Hospital Foundation is raffling off \$1,000 in Gift Cards to various local businesses. Proceeds will be used to purchase a new 3D Mammography machine for the hospital's Radiology department. We appreciate the Blue Mountains Hospital's continued support of our local businesses!

The Lake Creek Youth Camp Gala Dinner and Auction is slated for April 10th at the Grant County Fairgrounds.

The Strut Stride Straddle Stroll/Hilton Half will be May 1st. The Seneca Oyster Feed is being planned for May 15th.

Planning meetings are being held for 62 Days which is scheduled for June 11th and 12th. The Thadd's Place Golf & Gala will be June 26th.

Mindy and Dusty down at the Fairgrounds are working hard to prepare for the Strawberry Mountain Knife and Gun Show April 24th and 25th, Buck'n in the Boonies July 10th and the 112th Grant County Fair August 11-14 with headliners John Michael Murphy and Laine Hardy.

Dave Driscoll is looking forward to the first Shooting Star Party at the John Day Industrial Site on August 11th and 12th.

The 2021 Quilt of Valor by the Grant County Piecemakers Quilt Guild will be held August 21st at Clyde Holliday State Park.

Be sure to check us out on Instagram! Harsh Patel, a Director here at the Chamber has us up and running. You need to follow us!

grant_county_oregon_chamber
Cycle Oregon has asked participants to save the dates - September 11-18th in hopes that they will be able to host the event which will start and end in John Day. If you know of any other events please let us know so we can get them on our calendar.

We are meeting with John Day River Territories and Eastern Oregon Visitor Center to promote Eastern Oregon! Ideas are being shared and collaboration is so important!

This month's Chamber Business meeting will be Thursday, March 18th at the Chamber office at 10:30. Stay well!

Tammy Bremner, Chamber Manager

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