

Outdated equipment adds to John Day police costs

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

Keeping the John Day Police Department will be costly.

John Day Police Chief Mike Durr and Sgt. Scott Moore talked to the city council on April 13 to detail the various costs and replacements to be addressed if operations continue at the department. The council is debating whether to ask voter approval for a local levy to fund the department, or transitioning the department over to the sheriff's office.

"I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but the John Day Police Department is underfunded," Durr said. "Our equipment is worn out, obsolete or about to be obsolete. We need to modernize, and each one of us right now buy our own handguns."

Durr listed several items such as Tasers, radios, cameras and worn down vehicles that would need to be updated or replaced moving forward in the coming years. Durr added that bills going through the state legislature also present many uncertain, additional costs to law enforcement in general.

"In the future, with the way the legislature is coming down, I can't even project what all of this is going to mean," Durr said. "I'm not going to say that it's necessarily for the bad or for the good, but it's going to change (law enforcement), and we're going to have to adapt."

In terms of vehicles, they have a Silverado Pickup with less than 10,000 miles and a Chevy Tahoe with 36,000 miles that are good for a while. However, Durr said they have two cars, one with 120,000 miles and the other with around 90,000, that are starting to have problems and will need to be looked at for maintenance soon.

Durr said some proposed bills would add costs to the department by covering the overtime expenses associated with additional training certification that would be needed.

"We have fallen behind the times," Durr said. "We are trained in CPR and first aid, but it remains on how that is going to be seen. They're saying that it's going to be DPSST training from my understanding, which means we're going to have to send our guys to Salem for that training, or hopefully they have somebody regionally come out. Anyway you cut it, it's going to cost us overtime."

Durr said another bill that would cause problems is Senate Bill 612, which requires police officers, corrections officers and parole and probation officers to complete post-secondary education. He said this could heavily impact the recruitment process.

"What it's costing us today, I'm gonna tell you, it's going to be a lot more expensive in five years," Durr said.

Moore said the department needs a minimum of at least four people to keep up with the 24/7 job. He added, sooner or later, the union is going to push for on-call time since right now they do it because they're dedicated.

"It's not a bright and rosy future to be a policeman right now, but if we're still here, we'll adapt to it and make it work because we're totally dedicated to this job," Durr said. "I don't want to paint a picture of doom and gloom, but I'm just telling you what you need to do, and it could mean a lot more money and a lot of time."

Councilor Gregg Haberly said the



John Day Police Chief Mike Durr and Sgt. Scott Moore talk about the equipment that needs to be updated on April 13.

LAKEVIEW RECENTLY TRANSITIONED ITS POLICE TO THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE

In 2019, the town of Lakeview, population 2,638, merged its police department with the Lake County Sheriff's Office.

Lakeview Assistant Town Manager Dawn Lepori said, prior to the merger, many community members were very skeptical and concerned about the coverage.

However, Lepori said Lake County Sheriff Michael Taylor did a great job in the merger and continues to do so by keeping Lakeview Town Manager Michele Parry up to date on anything she needs to know.

The increasing cost of keeping a police department and the growing difficulty in finding people to work at the department resulted in the merger.

"We needed the merge because it was a necessity," Lepori said. "The one officer that we had left took some time off, and then he came back and got hired with the sheriff's department, and he has been phenomenal."

There were several difficulties in keeping the department running, such as finding a police force, chief and keeping people on the team, according to Lepori. The city was down to one officer before the merger happened because many of their officers moved on to other counties to work.

Lepori said the agreement developed between the town council and the sheriff's department helped in making the smooth transition.

"We were able to come to an agreement, and Taylor worked really well with our council and town manager," Lepori said. "He keeps the town manager and council very well informed, and if there are any issue the town has, he is on top of it"

There were community members that doubted the transition would be great because they thought the sheriff's office would rarely be in Lakeview. However, Lepori said Taylor did a great job in managing his deputies' time to make sure somebody is in or near the town.

"When they realized how much the sheriff's department has been cracking down on crime and put a kibosh on it, the complaining about law enforcement went down since we transitioned from the police department," Lepori said.

Parry said the merger relieved stress from the city financially now that they don't need to worry about liability or insurance for vehicles and health insurance and other coverage for officers.

"It just takes away from all the extra accounting, and it takes that stress off of us and places it back into the sheriff," Parry said. "Having the department go over to the county and letting them handle it because they're able to with their bigger budget and they can spread out easier has been fine and groovy."

finances are not there to keep the department going with the growing costs.

"The writing's on the wall," he said. "It's financially not there, and he's telling us they have run down equipment. If one of the guys gets killed, that's not good."

Councilor Shannon Adair said it's important for the community to be aware of the financial problems Durr mentioned for funding a police department. She added that it's vital that a possible levy to fund the department can provide the officers with the equipment they need to be safe.

City Manager Nick Green said he talked with Grant County Sheriff Todd McKinley, and the transition plan would be to send three officers along with the equipment if the county wants it.

The cost to consolidate with the county would be \$450,000 next fiscal year, but the city would be saving \$86,000, according to

Green. He said McKinley would figure out the shifts once the transition is made.

Green said he has a draft agreement with the county. If the budget committee agrees to refer the tax to the voters, Green said he would start working on the transition agreement in parallel so it would be ready to execute if the levy does not pass.

Green said the city will need to make a decision no later than the April 27 city council meeting. The council planned to continue the conversation during the April 20 city budget committee meeting past press time.

"At the end of that (budget) meeting, we're going left or right," Green said. "I'll try to make the choices and ramifications as clear as possible, but I'm not the decision maker. There's going to be 14 people at the table that are the decision makers. We've got to leave Tuesday night next week with a decision."

Move Oregon's Border heading to a vote next month

Measure would only require commissioners to hold meetings about joining Idaho

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

A measure related to flipping Eastern Oregon's counties to Idaho will be on the ballot next month.

The measure on the May 18 ballot would require Grant County commissioners to hold meetings to discuss the county joining Idaho.

"Move Oregon's Border," also known as "Citizens for Greater Idaho," is a political action committee that advocates adjusting the current state boundaries of Idaho, California and Oregon, thereby increasing Idaho's size to encompass several rural counties in California and Oregon. Grant County is one of the 19 Oregon counties the group seeks to have moved into Idaho's jurisdiction.

On April 12, organizers from Move Oregon's Border and Citizens for Greater Idaho laid out the idea at a joint meeting of Idaho's House Environment, Energy & Technology Committee, and the Senate Resources & Environment Committee.

"There's a longtime cultural divide as big as the Grand Canyon between Northwest Oregon and rural Oregon, and it's getting large," Mike McCarter of Move Oregon's Border told the Idaho lawmakers.

Idaho's Legislature, who would have to approve the plan that would expand Idaho's southwestern border to the Pacific Ocean, seemed empathetic but skeptical about the "functionality" of such a plan.

State Sen. Michelle Stennett said the minimum wage in Oregon is \$11.25, but in Idaho it is \$7.25.

"I'm sure Oregonians don't want to be receiving \$7.25 dollars an hour," she said. Stennett asked both McCarter and former Republican Speaker of the Oregon House Mark Simmons of Elgin about Oregon's tax base, which, she guessed, was from retail pot sales.

"I mean, there's just a lot that isn't being talked about that would need to be fleshed out for this to be considered," Stennett said.

Conservative lawmaker Ben Adams, who seemed supportive, questioned why Oregon's Legislature would allow the plan to happen.

"Most states don't like to lose their resources to their neighbors," Adams said.

McCarter and Simmons both agreed that many issues would need to be worked out.

McCarter said there would be a "give and take." He told the Idaho lawmakers about a man who approached him at a Harney County rally whom he said told him he would give up his medicinal marijuana for Harney County to become a part of Oregon.

The Move Oregon's Border and Citizens for Greater Idaho met with supporters on April 9 in Mt Vernon at the city's community center.

McCarter and Grant County Move Oregon's Border representative Sandie Gilson answered questions and handed out yard signs to roughly 10 attendees.

At the April 9 rally, McCarter evoked both the Civil and Revolutionary wars.

"If you stop and think about what it was like before our country became the United States before the revolution," he said, "we have a situation of taxes without representation and unjust laws."

He said Eastern Oregon is in a "non-violent" civil war with Western Oregon.

"I would hate to see a physical thing get started," he said. "That bothers me a lot, but would I partake of it? I'm not going to answer that question. I'm going to be a politician."

He said he does not want to see a civil war, but it is heading that way.

In a Thursday phone interview, McCarter clarified that the only time he would ever resort to violence was if his family were threatened or if the government were to ever attempt to confiscate his guns.

NATIONAL Sexual Assault AWARENESS & PREVENTION MONTH



START BY BELIEVING

What to Say:

"I believe you."
"I'm sorry this happened."
"I am here for you."

BE SUPPORTIVE

What to Say:

"You can tell me as much, or as little as you want."
"It's not your fault."
"I'm glad you told me. I'm so proud of you."

ASK HOW YOU CAN HELP

What to Say:

"What can I do to support you?"
"I can stay with you tonight. Would that help?"
"Do you want me to go with you to the hospital or police station?"

AVOID "WHY QUESTIONS"

What to Say:

Even with the best of intentions "why" questions can sound accusatory and make survivors blame themselves.

Help is available for victims of sexual assault in Grant County. If you or someone you know has been a victim of sexual assault, please call:

Heart of Grant County
541-620-1342

Grant County Victim Assistance Program
541-575-4026

This project was supported by Grant No. 2019-WR-AX-0027 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Justice.

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