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The Eagle/Steven Mitchell

Car No. 12, driven by Josh Pierson of Klamath Falls, crashed into Car No. 29, driven by Rudy Morris of Forest Grove.

Ballots mailed for John Day police levy

Five-year tax would fund city police department

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

John Day voters will decide whether to approve a tax to keep the city police department next month as ballots go out in the mail today.

The John Day City Council April 27 chose to pursue a local option levy of 45-50 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value for five years.

A double majority — more than 50% of registered voters need to vote, with more than 50% in favor of passing the measure — will be required.

Green said, if the measure does not pass, the department will close, and the remaining three police officers' last day of employment with the city will be Aug. 31. The plan would be to consolidate the department with the Grant County Sheriff's Office.

In the meantime, Green said the city is still recruiting for a police chief and is still interviewing chief candidates to replace outgoing John Day Police Chief Mike Durr, who is retiring in September should the levy pass.

Green said the city has applied for a Community Oriented Policing Services grant through the Department of Homeland Security to fund the department \$125,000 a year for three years. He said it is three times the amount they are asking residents to pay to offset operating costs. Green said the city would not know if the grant is approved until roughly October.

Green said they will not make plans to transition anything until they know the outcome of the cops grant because that would allow the city to rehire the laid-off employees at the police department.

Arguments for the police levy

John Day City Manager Nick Green said the most salient argument for the levy would be to have additional public safety in the community and more responsiveness from law enforcement.

Grant County Sheriff Todd McKinley told the Eagle in April that the level of service currently provided in John Day would decrease.

"It would be essentially what we're doing for those other cities, which are emergent calls only," McKinley said. "There won't be anybody in the intersection changing the tire. There won't be a person showing up on the doorstep when there's a call... Your service level is going to drop significantly."

According to Green, cities that have outsourced their law enforcement tend to complain about a lack of responsiveness from law enforcement officials.

"That is what you would probably hear if you talked to residents in any of our Grant County communities," he said. "But you also hear it from places like Lakeview and other communities that have outsourced their departments."

Green said the decision tends to put the community in a position where they do not have many measures to enforce accountability other than pulling their contracts.

Green said, though it's taxpayer-funded, the police department does contribute to local employment. He said they are local jobs for residents that know the community.

Additionally, Green said the student resource officer with the John Day Police Department works directly with business owners, giving them the



The Eagle
Steven Mitchell

A sign in John Day promotes fiscal responsibility and states the city of John Day should amend its budget to maintain its police department, rather than try for a tax levy.

DEMOLISHED

Demolition derby a destructive delight

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

Two brothers from Idaho placed first and second at the Whiskey Gulch Gang's Demolition Derby Saturday in front of a packed arena at the Grant County Fairgrounds.

Roughly 1,800 turned out to watch Matt and Jake Petero take the top spots in the annual event that was on hiatus last year due to pandemic restrictions, according to Colby Farrel from the Whiskey Gulch Gang.

Matt took home \$2,000 while Jake earned \$1,000. Ed Moulton of Hines took third place and \$500.

During halftime, Luke Claughton of John Day won the barrel race on his dirt bike, performing a wheelie while exiting the arena.

Mark Williams of Homedale, Idaho, won the first heat in the wild, smashing start to the derby while Chris Folger, also of Homedale, took the second heat. Moulton took the final heat.

The Whiskey Gulch Gang thanked Ace Hardware and John Day True Value for their donations for the drivers' raffle and most aggressive driver award.

"We appreciate their support every year," they said.

They also thanked the Grant Union High School wrestling team for serving up snow cones and hamburgers. Additionally, they thanked the Grant County Road Department and Bill Sproul for a water truck and John Day-Canyon City Parks and Recreation for the bleachers.

Finally, they thanked Iron Triangle and Seth Barrieta for using his equipment and all that he does to support their events.

Results

Heat 1 winner: Mark Williams, Homedale, Idaho
Heat 2 winner: Chris Folger, Homedale, Idaho
Heat 3 winner: Ed Moulton, Hines

Main event

First: Matt Petero, Payette, Idaho
Second: Jake Petero, Payette, Idaho
Third: Ed Moulton, Hines

Most aggressive driver

Jake Petero

Hard luck driver

Rudy Morris, Forest Grove

Beauty contest winner

Josh Pierson, Klamath Falls

Half-time barrel racing winner

Luke Claughton, John Day



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Tanner Morris' car at the Whiskey Gulch Gang Demolition Derby.



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Luke Claughton of John Day pops a wheelie Saturday on his way out of the Grant County Fairgrounds arena after winning the halftime barrel race during the Whiskey Gulch Gang Demolition Derby.



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Derby fans await the start of the first heat Saturday at the Grant County Fairgrounds arena.



The Eagle/Steven Mitchell

Car No. 46, driven by derby winner Jake Petero, of Payette, Idaho, smashes into a car Saturday in the arena of the Grant County Fairgrounds during the Whiskey Gulch Gang Demolition Derby.

Farm Bureau clarifies position on predator control

Budget Committee members say they misspoke

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

Members from the Grant County Budget Committee said they misspoke when they said the Grant County Farm Bureau would help the county establish a taxing district to fund a predator control program.

In a May 19 budget session, committee member Amy Kreger and County Commissioner Jim Hamsher said the Farm Bureau would do the work to establish a taxing district if the county would make a commitment to the fund predator control program for two years, as confirmed by the Eagle's recording.

The committee decided to budget \$35,000 for the program.

In a June 15 email, Shaun Robertson, Grant County Farm Bureau president, said the Farm Bureau had not contacted the county with a proposal to create a taxing district to

support the program. He said that would require a vote from the Farm Bureau board of directors.

Hamsher said it was his mistake to say the Farm Bureau would support the taxing district.

Kreger told the Eagle that she discussed taxing with Hamsher and County Commissioner Sam Palmer in earlier budget meetings. Still, she said she thought the information had come from USDA Wildlife Services District Supervisor Shane Koyle, not the Farm Bureau.

She said her comments might have come out wrong.

"Maybe I said it wrong because I was over the meetings at that point in time," she said. "If I misspoke, I misspoke. I am going to own it."

Hamsher said it was a "big misunderstanding."

He said he confused Robertson's testimony on April 29 with his April 14 Farm Bureau testimony —



Eagle file photo

County Commissioner Jim Hamsher

both of which Robertson submitted electronically.

The Eagle obtained both emails. However, neither Kreger nor committee members Rob Stewart and Bob Quinton appear to be on either of the email threads.

Robertson emailed the Farm

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