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Contributed photo/U.S. Forest Service

The 2015 Canyon Creek Complex fire.

City responds to criticism over police levy proposal

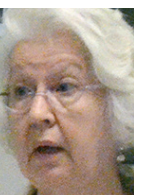
Opposition argues city should close greenhouse, lay off an officer

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

Local officials faced criticism from people who oppose a proposal for a temporary tax levy to fund the John Day Police Department in a town hall July 27 at the Grant County Fairgrounds.

The meeting, moderated by Seneca rancher Jack Southworth and attended by roughly 40 people, prioritized questions and comments surrounding the city's five-year proposed tax levy of 45-50 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value for police funding.

Along with John Day City Manager Nick Green and Mayor Ron Lundbom, City Councilors Heather Rookstool, Elliot Sky, Paul Smith and Dave Holland took questions during a wide-ranging session after ballots for the levy special election arrived in mailboxes last week.



Frances Preston

Citizens express concerns

While the decision on the levy rests only with John Day voters, members of surrounding communities also provided feedback.

"It's all about principle," Prairie City resident Frances Preston said. "Everyone in Grant County has an opinion on this."

She said the city should have made the police department a priority a long time ago. Now, she said, the city has created a scenario where they can put the blame on those who vote against the police levy as those who chose to do away with the police department.

Preston handed out flyers at the meeting that listed several concerns. Preston said Bob Pereira came up with the lion's share of the content in the flyer, but others contributed as well.

Instead of a tax, they proposed two alternatives to keep the city's police force.

The first, which they said does not fit the city's "narrative," would be to close John Day's greenhouse. The other, they say, would be to lay off one of the department's patrol officers.

Lay off a patrol officer

They argued that laying off one patrol officer would give the department a surplus.

However, John Day resident Darrin Toy asked Police Chief Mike Durr what effect laying off one patrol officer would have on the police department.

Durr said, including himself, the police department has four patrol officers. He said operating with

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Fire danger heats up

Conditions far drier than 2015, when Canyon Creek Complex destroyed over 40 homes

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

Conditions on the Malheur National Forest are vastly drier than before the Canyon Creek Complex fire of 2015 that destroyed over 40 homes.

In 2015, July rainfall was 1.35 inches, but this year it was only 0.12 inches. Average July temperatures were 10 degrees hotter than they were in 2015. Average July humidity was 23% in 2015 but only 16% this year.

Given the extreme drought conditions of historic proportions, the Malheur requested the assistance of the National Wildfire Prevention Education Team to let the public know how serious wildfire risks are in the national forest.



Craig Trulock

Malheur National Forest Supervisor Craig Trulock said 2021 is turning out to be an "extraordinary year" when it comes to wildfire risk.

With the forest in its most restrictive public use restrictions, the idea of bringing in the prevention team was to "up" their messaging and communicate to the public the tinderbox of fuels in the forest that, if ignited by a moment of carelessness, could be disastrous.

Resources are stretched thin with wildfires tearing through the west, including the Bootleg Fire in Southern Oregon, which continues to be the largest in the U.S.

Trulock told the Eagle the likelihood of closing the forest — which the Umatilla National Forest has already done — is all dependent on significant fire activity. Trulock said, if the Malheur does not see a sharp increase in fire activity, the forest has a good

2015 COMPARED TO 2021

Conditions on the Malheur National Forest were far drier in July than in 2015 when the Canyon Creek Complex destroyed over 40 homes.

July:	2015	2021
Rainfall:	1.35 inches	0.12 inches
Average temp:	77 degrees	87 degrees
Average humidity:	23%	16%
Fuel moisture:	7%	5%

chance of remaining open.

"Bringing on the prevention team is all about trying to keep us open," he said. "We want to keep people out there using the forest, but we want them to do it in a very responsible manner."

Precautions and evacuation

Evacuations in Grant County fall under Sheriff Todd McKinley. After watching Prairie City avoid a fast-moving moving fire last month, mainly due to favorable wind conditions and speedy response from fire crews, McKinley told the Eagle every resident in the county needs to have an evacuation plan.

McKinley said, in addition to preparing for evacuation, he advises people to take simple steps around their homes that too often go overlooked but can make all the difference when a fire hits.

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File photo

Clinton Shaver, with the Molalla Rural Fire District, watches as a tree goes up in flames on the Canyon Creek Complex south of John Day in 2015.

ODFW employees kill two wolf pups

Five attacks confirmed since mid-July

By Jayson Jacoby
EO Media Group

Employees from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, firing rifles from a helicopter, shot and killed two wolf pups from the Lookout Mountain pack on Sunday.

On Thursday, the agency's director authorized either ODFW employees, or a Baker County ranching couple or their designated agents, to kill up to four sub-adult wolves from that pack, which has attacked their cattle at least five times since mid-July.

ODFW biologists have confirmed the five attacks by wolves from the Lookout Mountain pack, which consists of an estimated nine wolves, but potentially as many as 11.

The attacks all happened northeast of



Contributed photo/Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

A trail cam photo from May 30 of one of the two yearling wolves in the Lookout Mountain pack.

Durkee, generally in the Manning Creek area east of Lookout Mountain.

The two wolves killed Sunday are 3 1/2-month-old pups, according to Michelle Dennehy, an ODFW spokesperson.

The agency confirmed earlier this year that the pack's breeding female and male — neither of which can be killed under the permit issued Thursday — produced a litter of seven pups this year.

During the helicopter flight on Sunday, ODFW employees saw at least five pups and the two adults, Dennehy said. They didn't see either of the two yearlings wolves, which were born in the spring of 2020.

ODFW employees and the ranchers, Deward and Kathy Thompson, also tried to find the wolves on Friday, but they saw only the two adult wolves, both of which have tracking collars.

The permit issued Thursday is valid through Aug. 21, or until up to four wolves have been killed, whichever happens first.

Dennehy said the permit is intended to stop chronic attacks by wolves on livestock "by reducing the pack's food

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