

# John Day ceremony honors veterans

By STEVEN MITCHELL  
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — Roughly 20 people gathered at the Seventh Street Sports Complex Thursday, Nov. 11, to honor Grant County veterans for their service.

The Veterans Day event, sponsored by the John Day Elks Lodge, included a rifle salute by the John Day American American Legion Post No. 77 and taps played by Ed Heiple.

Bob Van Voorhis, an Army veteran and active supporter of veterans in Grant County, reminded everyone that Veterans Day is not the same as Memorial Day, which is observed on the last Monday in May. While both honor military service, Van Voorhis noted that Memorial Day commemorates men and women killed in service to our country.

As the Department of

Defense notes on its website, “A lot of Americans get this confused, and we’ll be honest — it can be a little annoying to all of the living veterans out there.”

Armed Forces Day, celebrated on the third Saturday in May, honors those currently serving on active duty, Van Voorhis added.

Veterans Day, which occurs each year on Nov. 11, commemorates the armistice that signaled the end of World War I and went into effect on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918.

The holiday was initially known as Armistice Day. But Van Voorhis noted that President Dwight D. Eisenhower officially changed the name to Veterans Day in 1954 in recognition of the fact that peace was equally preserved by all veterans, not just those who fought in World War I.

Van Voorhis said the offi-



Steven Mitchell/Blue Mountain Eagle

**Bob Van Voorhis, a Vietnam veteran and active supporter of Grant County veterans, speaks during the John Day Elks Veterans Day ceremony at the Seventh Street Sports Complex in John Day on Thursday, Nov. 11.**



Steven Mitchell/Blue Mountain Eagle

**Veterans were honored Thursday, Nov. 11, at the Seventh Street Sports Complex at a ceremony sponsored by the John Day Elks Lodge.**

cial number of veterans in Grant County is 750, but he has always put the number at around 1,000.

“In a county of 7,000 people, “Van Voorhis said, “there’s a lot of us.”

Van Voorhis thanked the Grant County commissioners and the people of Grant

County for their support of veterans’ activities.

He added that Grant County is on the national registry as a Purple Heart county in honor of local residents who have been awarded the medal. The Purple Heart is a combat decoration given to military personnel who have

been wounded or killed in battle. It is the oldest military medal still awarded in the United States.

“When you come into Grant County,” Van Voorhis said, “you’ll see a Purple Heart County sign.”

Van Voorhis was awarded the Purple Heart after getting wounded in Vietnam.

Van Voorhis pointed out that 6 million veterans served during peacetime, keeping the military on the line and other countries free against totalitarian regimes.

“That makes them just as important as us who served in combat,” he said. “They’re every bit as much of veterans as any of us.”

# Prairie City water project due to start

By STEVEN MITCHELL  
Blue Mountain Eagle

PRAIRIE CITY — After upwards of two years of working out the details, Prairie City’s Faiman Springs water project will break is expected to break ground next month.

An emergency procurement due to the recent drought allowed the city to bypass a formal bid process, Prairie City Mayor Jim Hamsher told the Eagle on Wednesday, Nov. 10.

Hamsher said the project would move forward with Winegar Excavation, a Prairie City-based contractor, and other subcontractors starting

Dec. 1, adding he expects the project will be completed by late spring or early summer.

“That is my hope,” Hamsher said.

The project will tie an existing well near the Faiman Springs site into the current city water system, Hamsher said. The project includes constructing a pump station and laying between 8,000 and 9,000 feet of piping.

Prairie City has suffered from chronic water shortages for years, with drought conditions and low winter snowpacks cutting into the city’s water supply. In 2018, Hamsher declared a water emergency, implementing water

restrictions and arranging to truck supplemental water into town.

The completion of the project will provide excellent insurance for the Prairie City water supply should the region see another lower-than-average snowpack this year, Hamsher noted.

Hamsher said the project would not affect people’s water bills. The only change, he said, would be that the city would not have to restrict water use.

Prairie City received a \$550,000 grant and a 30-year, \$950,000 loan at 1.7% interest from Business Oregon to develop the Faiman Springs

well site, Hamsher said. The city was also awarded a \$1 million grant by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Rural Development program to offset the state loan and the cost of hauling water during the city’s water emergency in 2018.

The city initiated a plan to complete a water project using wells drilled by the city in 2005, using grants and loans to cover the cost. The city raised the monthly water rate by \$8 to qualify for the loans.

In a pump test, the Faiman Springs well produced roughly 460 gallons of water a minute, Hamsher said. The town needs around 350 gallons a minute at peak demand.

The city’s current wells produce only slightly more than that under optimal conditions, but when the water table drops, they can’t keep pace with demand.

For instance, Hamsher said, the No. 2 well currently produces around 65 gallons a

minute, while well No. 3 is at approximately 100 gallons a minute.

The infiltration galleries currently produce roughly 200 gallons a minute due to increasing groundwater levels, which, Hamsher noted, is a significant improvement.

This year, during Grant County’s hottest and driest summer in over a century, Prairie City saw the capacity of its water system drop to just 10 to 20 gallons a minute.

# County outlines plans to allocate \$1.1M in COVID relief funds

By STEVEN MITCHELL  
Blue Mountain Eagle

The Grant County Court recommended allocating upwards of \$1.1 million of American Rescue Plan Act funding Wednesday, Nov. 10, during the court’s regular session.

ARPA is a federal stimulus program designed to speed economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

County Judge Scott Myers said the list of recommendations the court was using followed the U.S. Treasury Department’s preliminary guidance.

Among other allocations, the court recommended a \$145,850 reimbursement for the Grant County Fairgrounds, which provided the location for the county’s vaccine clinics. Myers said the allocation

took into account revenue the fairgrounds otherwise could have collected during that time.

Additionally, the court approved reimbursing Community Counseling Solutions \$161,274.16 for direct costs for its COVID-19 response as the county’s public health entity.

In a county court document shared with the Eagle, Grant County Emergency Management Coordinator Eric Bush noted that CCS provided a spreadsheet that documents staff hours and costs related to the Health Department’s response to the pandemic.

The court approved a recommendation for a reimbursement of \$100,000 to the Grant County Sheriff’s Office that includes the sheriff’s search and rescue team. A court document lists the Sheriff’s Office as an essential govern-

ment service, with the recommended funding offsetting lost revenues due to the virus.

Likewise, the court listed Families First as another essential government service and recommended reimbursement of \$34,517.44 to offset revenue lost to the pandemic.

Under the category of water, sewer and broadband infrastructure, the court approved a \$90,000 allocation to bring high-speed internet access to the courthouse from Humbolt Elementary School.

Myers told the court the courthouse needs high-speed internet, mainly because the county’s internet provider is no longer operating.

“Broadband high-speed internet infrastructure is a qualified expense,” Myers said. “So we will reimburse that project as soon as it is completed.”

# Elks Club preparing Thanksgiving meal

JOHN DAY — Once again this year, the John Day Elks Club will be preparing a free Thanksgiving dinner for anyone in the community.

The menu will include turkey, ham, stuffing, mashed potatoes and gravy, yams, green beans, dessert and a roll.

Food will be available for

pickup or delivery, and dine-in service, which was canceled last year due to COVID-19 restrictions, will return at the Elks Lodge, 140 NE Dayton St.

Takeout meals will be available for pickup at the lodge starting at 1 p.m., and dine-in service will begin at the same time. Deliveries

will go out by noon.

For takeout or delivery, call the Elks Lodge at 541-575-1824 before Nov. 25 and leave a message with your name, address, phone number and the number of Thanksgiving diners you are requesting. Be sure to state whether you want takeout or delivery service.

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