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MAN OF THE SOIL

Ken Delano honored for his years of service to soil and water district



Steven Mitchell/Blue Mountain Eagle
ABOVE: Ken Delano, the former manager of the Grant County Soil and Water Conservation District, served in the Navy for more than 20 years before retiring and moving back to Grant County in 1981. **BELOW LEFT:** Delano shows an award he earned over his nearly 20-year career with the district.



“He just had a way of taking the ego out (of projects). (He said) ‘I don’t care who takes credit — let’s just get this project done.’”

— Pat Voigt,
 Grant County Soil and Water Conservation District Board chair

By STEVEN MITCHELL
 Blue Mountain Eagle

A Mt. Vernon man was honored on Friday, Jan. 17, for his nearly 20 years of service as the Grant County Soil and Water Conservation District’s manager.

From now on, the building at 721 S. Canyon Blvd. in John Day that houses the district’s offices will be known as the Kenneth H. Delano Agricultural Service Center.

Ken Delano brought an operational culture to the Soil and Water Conservation District that is still in place within the organization 14 years after Delano retired, according to the district’s current manager, Kyle Sullivan.

SWCD Board Chair Pat Voigt said the organization is considered a “well-oiled machine,” and those familiar with the district know that Delano was the one who designed and built that machine.

“He just had a way of taking the ego out (of projects),” Voigt said. “(He said) ‘I don’t care who takes credit — let’s just get this project done.’”

Delano was more than just a good administrator, Voigt added. He was considered a “renaissance man” by those closest to him for his ability to use engineering and computers during his workday and then head home to raise, train and drive Belgian draft horses on his 150 acres of



Steven Mitchell/Blue Mountain Eagle
Former Grant County Soil and Water Conservation District Manager Ken Delano thanks district officials for dedicating the building in his name on Friday, Jan. 14, 2022.

property near Clyde Holliday State Park.

Voigt said the SWCD also wanted to honor Delano’s service to his country.

Before joining the district, Delano served in the Navy for more than two decades.

Delano said he dropped out of high school at

17 to enlist in the Navy but ended up advancing his education in the service. By the time he retired, he had a bachelor of science degree in engineering physics from the University of Kansas and

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John Day, merchants tussle over Pit Stop

By STEVEN MITCHELL Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — City officials met with downtown business owners on Wednesday, Jan. 12, to talk about what should be done with a parcel of city-owned land on the southwest corner of Main and Canton streets, dubbed the “Pit Stop.”

In what is becoming a hot-button issue, some see the property as a space for food carts, bike lockers, and possibly a farmers market to promote tourism. Others oppose the food cart idea and want the site used as parking for oversized vehicles.

The only thing built on the parcel so far is a small restroom structure, but representatives of Walker Macy, a consulting firm hired by the city, presented conceptual drawings at the meeting that depicted the Pit Stop as a gathering place with a limited parking area and a range of amenities from outdoor seating to kitchen areas.

John Day City Councilor Shannon Adair, who also owns 1188 Brewing Co., said that as a business owner she is concerned about having an open space of pavement that does not feature anything else.

One idea the city has considered is setting up modular kitchen spaces at the site, which could be rented to food cart operators or other businesses that want to try out new products.

City Councilor Heather Rookstool said she liked the idea of having a place for people to gather where they do not have to sit in a restaurant.

Rookstool said what is sitting sour with some people in the community is the thought of the city either making a profit off food trucks or giving services free to one vendor and not giving other local businesses the same access.

Kim Randleas, a former restaurant owner, said she felt like it was a “slap in the face” to business owners.

“We (restaurant owners) spent a lot of money getting stoves and equipment,” Randleas said, “so competing with the government is impossible.”

In response to those who were concerned about a lack of parking in downtown John Day, especially for oversized vehicles, Walker Macy representatives mentioned several possible locations, including the Elks Lodge parking lot.

But Charlie Caughlin, the exalted ruler of the local lodge, said nobody from the city had approached him or other leaders of the group about making the lodge’s parking lot available for public use.

Adair and City Manager Nick Green said they had spoken to some-

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Eastern Oregon district attorneys face staff shortage

By ALEX WITTEW
 EO Media Group

LA GRANDE — Counties across Eastern Oregon have struggled over the past few years to hire attorneys to prosecute criminal charges, and officials believe a variety of factors, including uncompetitive salaries, have contributed to the vacant positions.

Wallowa County is bereft of a deputy district attorney for its already strained staff.

Morrow County has just its district attorney to handle cases, while the Grant County DA has just one part-time deputy.

Umatilla County has just five prosecutors — including the district attorney — instead of the normal 10 attorneys.

Union County seems to have fared better, but even its office is down one deputy district attorney.

Only Baker County has a fully staffed prosecution team.

Every other county in North-east Oregon has positions open for deputy attorneys. Those positions have been hard to fill, and in some cases have been left open for at least three years.

Grant County District Attorney Jim Carpenter has had an open position since 2018 — except for a brief period when a prosecutor fresh out of college worked for a short stint before leaving to become a local public defender.

“Following his departure, I had no confidence that I would be able to find a replacement,”



Richard Hanners/Blue Mountain Eagle, File
Grant County District Attorney Jim Carpenter talks to the Grant County Court on Sept. 12, 2018, about the loss of grant funding for a deputy district attorney, victim intervention specialist and special investigator.

Carpenter wrote in an email, “especially knowing that areas such as Deschutes and Mult-

nomah, which pay much better than northeastern counties can, had numerous openings

and I would not be able to compete with them for quality applicants.”

Today Carpenter has one deputy DA, but the position is less than half-time.

Likewise, Wallowa County District Attorney Rebecca Frolander has had an open position for three years.

“From 2018 up until we revamped the position in the fall of 2018, I received two applications,” Frolander said, “but before I could even get them interviewed they took jobs across the state.”

The paper chase

Data from the Oregon State Bar during the past decade

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