

# The Blue Mountain EAGLE

Grant County's newspaper since 1868



Wednesday, February 2, 2022

154th Year • No. 5 • 18 Pages • \$1.50

MyEagleNews.com



## BACK IN THE SADDLE

### After getting canceled by COVID in 2020, Cycle Oregon will roll into Grant County this fall

By BENNETT HALL  
Blue Mountain Eagle

#### An Oregon tradition

One of Oregon's premier outdoor recreation events will be coming to Grant and Wheeler counties this fall, bringing more than 1,000 visitors and significant economic impacts to the area.

The Portland-based nonprofit Cycle Oregon announced last week that it will stage its biggest ride of the year in the area this September. Dubbed "Ride the Painted Hills," the event will run Sept. 10-17, starting and finishing in John Day and taking in some of the region's most spectacular scenery.

The ride was initially supposed to happen in September 2020, but the organization called it off as it became clear that the COVID-19 pandemic was going to be around for a while. A handful of scaled-down events were held in 2021, but this year the group is ready to hit the road full force.

"We're just really excited about going out in 2022," Cycle Oregon Executive Director Steve Schulz told the Eagle.

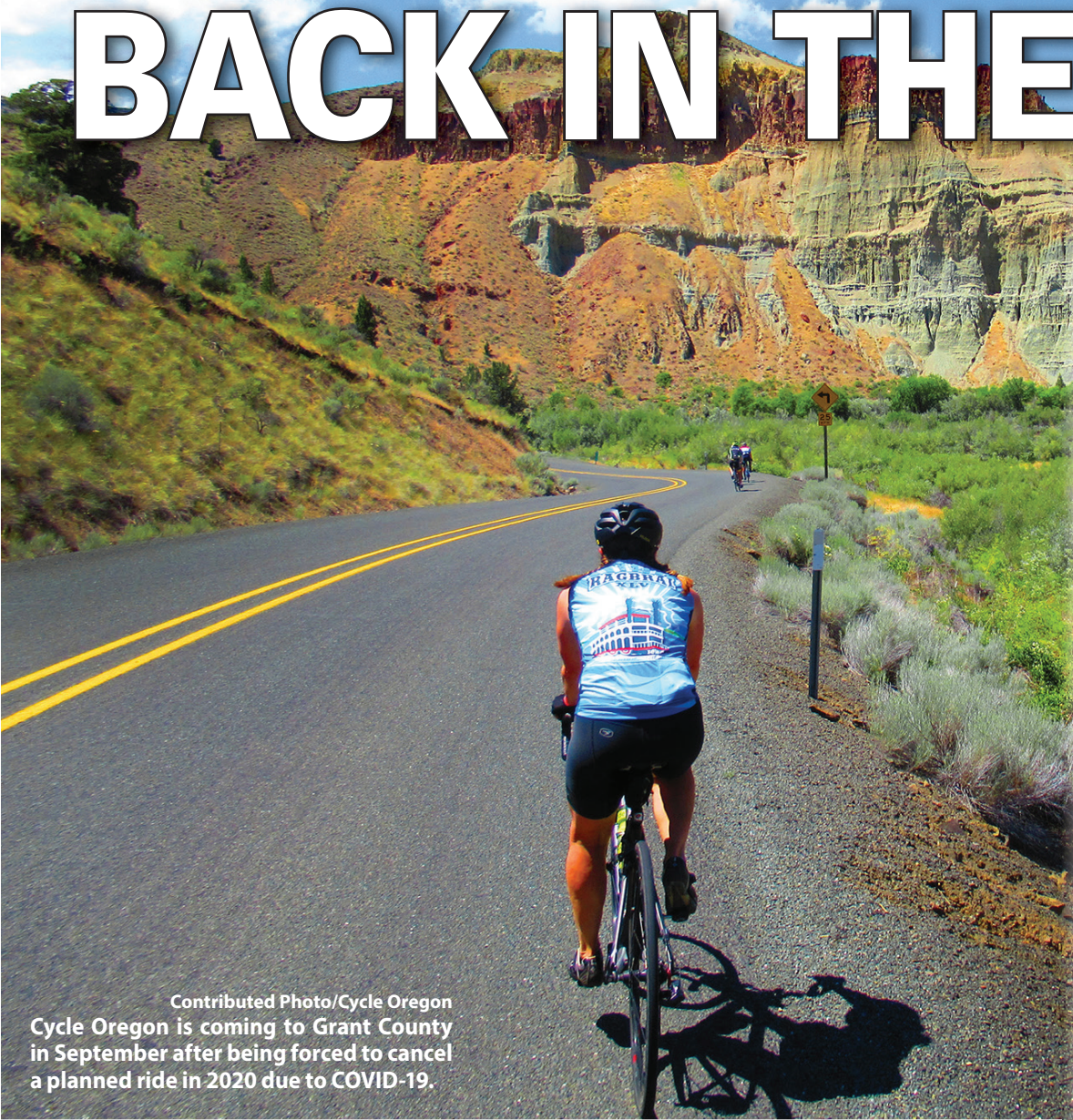
Since 1988, Cycle Oregon has brought together cycling enthusiasts once a year for group rides in various parts of the state. The first installment, which attracted around 1,000 participants, was a six-day, 350-mile jaunt from Salem to Brookings.

The idea caught on, and one annual ride has grown into a four-course menu for serious cyclists. In addition to the weeklong Classic, Cycle Oregon also offers a pair of two-day options, the Weekender and the Gravel (being held this year in Corvallis and Toledo, respectively) and the one-day Joyride, a women-only pedal in the Independence area.

All rides are supported, with meals, camping facilities, showers and restrooms provided, and there's a "sag wagon" available to pick up riders who get injured, suffer mechanical breakdowns or just run out of gas. A festive atmosphere surrounds the rides, often with live music and local beer and wine.

There's also a public service component: Classic participants are encouraged to take part in public service projects in

See Cycle, Page A18



Contributed Photo/Cycle Oregon  
Cycle Oregon is coming to Grant County in September after being forced to cancel a planned ride in 2020 due to COVID-19.

Blue Mountain Eagle, File  
Grant Union eighth-graders, including Jay Goldblatt and Eli Humbird, hand out high-fives and fist bumps to the cyclists on the home stretch of Cycle Oregon, which came through the county in September 2013.



## City goes public with county police offer

By STEVEN MITCHELL  
Blue Mountain Eagle

CANYON CITY — Grant County officials made a private counteroffer to John Day's police funding proposal last week, but the city manager made the issue public by putting it on the agenda for a special session of the City Council on Tuesday, Feb. 1.

When the council voted unanimously to suspend the city's cash-strapped police department in October, it also directed City Manager Nick Green to make a proposal to the Grant County Court: the city would hand over all its property tax revenues, \$300,000 a year, to the county for law enforcement services. In exchange, the city wanted \$300,000 a year from the county road fund for street construction to spur housing development.

County Judge Scott Myers said he wanted the county attorney to review the proposal before putting it on the agenda.

In mid-December, County Commissioner Sam Palmer and City Councilor Gregg Haberly initiated informal discussions with Sheriff Todd McKinley, whose department has assumed responsibility for law enforcement in the city limits.

To date, the matter still has not been deliberated by the county commissioners in open session.

However, on Jan. 21, the county's legal counsel emailed the city's attorney a formal proposal laying out the conditions under which the Sheriff's Office would provide law enforcement services for the city.

Rather than let the lawyers hash out the details in private, Green called for a public discussion between city

and county officials to go over the deal's particulars.

In a Thursday, Jan. 27, email copied to the Eagle, Green told John Day's city councilors that it appears the county had not discussed the proposed agreement publicly during a county court session.

Green proclaimed the proposed agreement and correspondence between the city and county's respective attorney's is now a "public document."

Dominic Carollo, the county's legal counsel, sent John Day's lawyer Jeremy Green two proposals. One assumes the city will be able to transfer a \$375,000 federal Community Oriented Policing Services grant to the county; the other assumes that doesn't happen.

According to the proposed agreement, if the COPS grant is not transferable, the cost for three deputies to patrol, the city would be an estimated \$371,000 a year. This offer, according to

Carollo, would be the minimum contribution required for that level of service.

If the COPS grant is transferable and assuming the grant pays out \$375,000 over three to four years, the city's minimum cost would be \$282,400 per year.

There is no mention of any county road funds coming to the city.

In the agenda packet for the Feb. 1 City Council meeting, the city manager complains that the County Court has "consistently declined to meet as a quorum to discuss the police transition or (Secure Rural Schools) funding for street improvements."

Last spring, the city requested a work session with the court to discuss using county road funds to spur home building in the city. At the time, County Judge Scott Myers told Green that the county would need to consult with



Steven Mitchell/Blue Mountain Eagle  
County Judge Scott Myers during the Wednesday, Jan. 27, 2022 session of county court.

See Police, Page A18

## Smith steps down from council seat

By BENNETT HALL  
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — Paul Smith has resigned from the John Day City Council after a nine-year run, citing health and personal issues.

The council will appoint a replacement to fill out the 11 months remaining on Smith's term, and his Position 7 seat will be up for election on the November ballot.

Smith submitted his letter of resignation on Jan. 13, effective immediately. His departure, and the process for filling his empty seat, was discussed at the Jan. 25 City Council meeting.

Applications for the position will be accepted until



Rudy Diaz/Blue Mountain Eagle, File  
Associate planner Daisy Goebel and John Day City Councilor Paul Smith, center, answer questions during a celebration of the completion of the Innovation Gateway area plan at the Grant County Regional Airport in this photo from February 2020.

4 p.m. Feb. 17. The remaining councilors and the mayor will review the applications and appoint someone to fill Smith's seat at their Feb. 22 meeting. Application forms

are available at City Hall, 450 E. Main. St.

Smith was appointed to the John Day City Council in February 2013.

Now 63, Smith is retired

from a career as an educator and counselor but plans to remain active in the community, including work with Thadd's Place and hospice, he told the Eagle in an interview last week.

He also talked about his time on the City Council, his reasons for resigning and his hopes for the future of John Day.

At the time he came on board, Smith said, the council's top priority was getting a new fire hall built. It was a goal Smith supported, and the council got a bond passed to construct a new building.

From the beginning, however, Smith was focused on another major infrastructure project: building a replace-

ment for the city's crumbling wastewater treatment plant, which was already more than a half-century old. In fact, he said, his grandfather — then the mayor of John Day — had helped get the current sewer plant built in the 1950s.

"I said, 'Hey, guys, we can't bury our heads in the sand. We need to address this,'" Smith recalled.

While a good deal of progress has been made on that project since then, it remains unfinished, with the city currently trading letters with the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality about potential permitting issues.

See Smith, Page A18



7 29467 30001 9