

## Police

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its attorneys and get back to them. But, according to Green, the county has yet to get back to them.

"There is no reason for the county court to send us terms for an agreement that were never discussed or approved publicly," Green wrote to the City Council. "It's essentially just a contract to continue patrolling John Day for this additional sum above and beyond our current property taxes."

Green writes that it is common knowledge that the county and city are discussing a proposed law enforcement service agreement.

He added that Grant County Sheriff McKinley had said on plenty of occasions that his office is in "dire need" of additional resources. "Furthermore, public safety is a core function of government," Green noted.

"There is no reason I can think of to keep this within attorney-client privileged communications," Green said, "and I am not going to spend my time trying to figure out how they came up with it."

Jack Orchard, a lawyer from Ball Janik LLP who specializes in public meetings law, said government agreements of any kind must be disclosed and publicly voted upon.

"They are available as a public record," Orchard said. "No attorney-client privilege is present."

Orchard said he did know of a reason that a public body would have to go into an executive session or other discussion closed to the public to deliberate on such an agreement.

While terms of the agreement have not been discussed in an open session of the County Court, Palmer mentioned during his commissioner's report at the Wednesday, Jan. 27, session that he had been in a meeting with Grant County Sheriff Todd McKinley and John Day resident John Rowell regarding a law enforcement agreement with John Day. Without going into specifics, Palmer told the court that information had been reviewed by the county's legal counsel and had been sent to John Day's lawyer.

Palmer said he has documentation through email that is obvious to Myers and County Commissioner Jim Hamsher that he had been asked by McKinley and John Day City Counselor Gregg Haberly to meet in a committee to hammer out a law enforcement agreement.

Palmer added that he "purposefully" wrote in those emails that he could not make any decisions without getting the court's approval.

The plan, according to Palmer, was to

work with Haberly, McKinley, and others to form a foundation for a proposal to bring to the court for discussion and approval.

"I'm not trying to hide anything from anybody," Palmer said. "We met in the courtroom, and I hope this isn't a parting shot at the community on Nick Green's behalf because they don't like him. That's not what public servants do."

Palmer, who told the Eagle last month that Green's initial offer for John Day to give the county \$300,000 for law enforcement services in exchange for an equal amount of county road funds is a non-starter, said Green's "parting shot" only hurts the citizens of the county.

Green said in an email Friday, Jan. 28, that he disagrees with Palmer that roads and policing should remain separate.

"That he can't see the connection between streets for housing and property taxes from that housing to fund basic government services like law enforcement should sound alarm bells for all county residents, regardless of where they live," Green said.

For his part, McKinley said Green's implication that the county is attempting to make a backroom deal with the city is wrongheaded.

"The public knows we're trying to get something done," McKinley said. "I think a negotiation step would be, 'Hey, this is something we've come up with, what do you think of it?'"

Myers concurred with that sentiment in a Friday, Jan. 28, phone interview. According to Myers, it would not be practical to discuss the proposal during an open session because it would be difficult — at best — to answer questions from the public while the county and the city work to come up with a foundation for the agreement.

Myers said he only discussed the proposal with Carollo and that he did not discuss the proposal with the other court members or deliberate with the commissioners behind closed doors.

He said he tries to be careful about what he disseminates when asked if the proposal should have been made public, and that he tries to maintain a balance of being judicious about what he shares, but, at the same time, open and transparent.

"It's tough to do," Myers said. "It's tough to decide what to share and what not to. We're not trying to hide anything, and we never have."

Myers said he does not know when the topic will be put on the County Court agenda.

"No one is prepared to close out a deal," he said. "And the county and the city are so far different on what they want to do with the money and what we want them to do with our money and whether or not any of it's legal."

## Cycle

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some of the host communities, and Cycle Oregon has its own grant program. Through a fund housed within the Oregon Community Foundation, the group has awarded 328 grants totaling \$2.5 million to support projects and programs around the state.

### What to expect

After spending the night of Sept. 10 in John Day, the group will pedal to Monument on the first full day of riding. From there they'll go to Fossil, then Mitchell, then Dayville and back to John Day. There will be a couple of layover days along the way, with a selection of activities planned, and each day's ride will feature at least two options to choose from.

Depending on which options they select, participants will cycle anywhere from 272 to 443 miles with about 15,000 to 35,000 feet of elevation gain.

This year's Classic is capped at 1,500 riders, but Schulz has no doubt it will reach that mark.

"There's a lot of uncertainties right now, but we feel like we'll hit that capacity," he said.

### Economic impact

As you might expect, Cycle Oregon is not cheap: The base fee for this year's Classic is \$1,250 per rider, and the cost can climb from there with add-on options such as tent set-up and porter service.

But while those fees go to Cycle Oregon, there's plenty of additional money to go around, Schulz said.

On average, he said, Cycle Oregon participants spend between \$200 and \$250 apiece during the weeklong Classic rides. In addition to the riders, there's a crew of 50 to 100 service providers (food service workers, bike mechanics, emergency medical technicians, the people who set up and take down the portable toilets and showers) who travel with the group, and they also tend to spend money along the way.

"It's a full-on operation; it's no joke," Schulz said. "There's a lot of people it takes to pull it off."

On top of that, Cycle Oregon typically reaches out to local community groups (think Boy Scout troops, high school sports teams and service clubs) to do a variety of chores, from handing out water bottles to serving food and cleaning up campsites. In exchange for their hard work, those groups get stipends. For a weeklong Classic, Schulz said, that generally works out to around \$150,000.

When possible, Cycle Oregon also makes an effort to hire local service providers and entertainers.

"We're trying to utilize as much as possible from the communities without overburdening them," Schulz said.

Altogether, he estimated, the total economic impact from the Classic would be in the range of \$400,000-\$450,000.

### Getting ready

Mayor Ron Lundbom said that event was a boon for John Day and he expects this year's ride will be as well.

"If it's half as big as the last time they were here, it's going to be great," he said.

Local officials have been in touch with Cycle Oregon about the 2022 Classic since last fall but were asked to keep the discussions under wraps until this year's ride was officially announced.

A lot of details still have to be worked out, including where the group will pitch its tents on the first night of the event. John Day City Manager Nick Green said he suggested the Hill Family Park, the Grant County Fairgrounds and the Seventh Street Sports Complex as possible campsites.

Green predicted the event will be an economic windfall for the city, with Cycle Oregon participants shopping in local stores and eating in local restaurants, not to mention the stipends to community groups.

But he also sees it as a chance to showcase John Day to people from all over the state and beyond.

"Some of them could be potential residents and business owners, people who would say, 'Hey, I like this place — I want to stay,'" he said. "They bring a lot of folks to the area, and I think it's important for us to be good hosts and show them a good time."

## Smith

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Smith said that's been frustrating for city officials.

Under the heading of unfinished business, Smith said he'd like to see the issue of funding for law enforcement services in John Day settled soon.

"It's a big challenge that I think needs to be resolved," he said.

Smith said the cost of maintaining the Police Department had become unsustainable, outstripping the city's entire general fund budget by as much as \$250,000 every year and forcing the city to borrow heavily from other funds.

After a local option levy failed in August 2021 because of low voter turnout, Smith said he wanted to try again at a general election, when there would be no double majority requirement, but the rest of the council didn't support that idea. Still, he stressed that he staunchly supported the general direction that the city has taken since he joined the council, including efforts to replace aging infrastructure, incentivize new housing and revitalize the economy.

He also noted that he's been battling a number of health issues, and that was the primary reason he decided to step down.

"It was not policy differences or personal differences with the council or the mayor," he said. "This

was a personal decision for my own health."

Nevertheless, Smith said, he had also grown tired of the constant sniping from critics of the city's policies.

"I'm battle-weary," he admitted. "I believe in the things we've been doing, but I guess you get beat down so much with all the negativity — it wears you down."

While Smith recognizes some people have concerns about the direction the city is going, he said the policy initiatives are necessary to keep the community, with its shrinking population and stagnant economy, from declining further.

"We're not trying to change John Day," he said. "We're trying to make it thrive."

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