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Police funding proposal takes a hit

Without COPS grant, price of county coverage may be too high

By STEVEN MITCHELL
Blue Mountain Eagle

CANYON CITY — Grant County officials are preparing to take another law enforcement proposal to the city of John Day to find out what kind of law enforcement coverage the town is looking for the county to bring back to its budget committee.

The county's original proposal hinged in part on being able to transfer a \$375,000 federal Community Oriented Policing Services grant to the Grant County Sheriff's Office, but the city learned last week that the grant is not transferable.

Since the John Day Police Department was suspended in October,

enforcing the law within the city limits has fallen on the Grant County Sheriff's Office, which has four patrol deputies to cover the entire county. Sheriff Todd McKinley has repeatedly told both the City Council and the County Court that he needs additional deputies to provide adequate coverage.

Going back to mid-December,

County Commissioner Sam Palmer has met several times to discuss the issue of law enforcement funding informally with Sheriff Todd McKinley, City Councilors Gregg Haberly and Heather Rookstool, and community member John Rowell.

Now, according to Grant County Judge Scott Myers, Palmer will get together with McKinley and come up

See Police, Page A16



Steven Mitchell/Blue Mountain Eagle
Grant County Judge Scott Myers speaks during a session of the Grant County Court.

TALKING ABOUT THE TOTEM POLE

John Day's quirky downtown landmark could get a good cleaning — and a new home



By BENNETT HALL
Blue Mountain Eagle

The years have not been kind to the John Day totem pole. A quarter-century of wind and rain, sun and snow have taken a toll on the local landmark, leaving its once-bright wood darkened, weathered and cracked.

That doesn't sit well with Margot Heiniger-White, the widow of Ralph White, the Canyon City chainsaw artist who carved the pole.

"I would like that totem pole cleaned up," she said.

And she's not crazy about the location, either, tucked between a telephone pole and a two-story building just off the city's main drag.

"It's not a very good place for it because nobody can see it," she said. "It's in a bad spot."



Heiniger-White

Location, location

Truth be told, it really is an odd place for a totem pole.

Standing 50 feet tall and weighing in at 18,000 pounds, the towering tamarack spar is topped by an eagle with a 20-foot wingspan. Below the eagle are three more carved figures: a salmon, a turtle and a beaver.

It's perched atop a concrete footing at the intersection of Main and Dayton streets, at the east end of downtown John Day.

Yet despite its imposing size and central location, the totem pole is surprisingly easy to overlook.

See Totem, Page A16

Bennett Hall/Blue Mountain Eagle
The John Day totem pole is showing its age, but the city has plans to clean it up and refinish it this spring. There are also discussions about possibly moving it to a more prominent location.

TOTEM POLE SYMBOLS

The John Day totem pole is adorned with four stylized animal carvings, each with its own symbolic meaning.

Eagle: The Great Spirit

Fish: The food of life

Turtle: Eternal life

Beaver: The Great Builder



Blue Mountain Eagle, File
Ralph White, in full mountain man regalia, talks to a group of Boy Scouts in this file photo from 2004.

Emergency powers bill stalls out

Mark Owens' measure would limit what governor can do in a crisis

By BENNETT HALL
Blue Mountain Eagle

CRANE — An effort by an Eastern Oregon lawmaker to rein in the governor's emergency powers may be effectively dead, at least for now.

Rep. Mark Owens, R-Crane, said in an email

update to constituents on Friday, Feb. 18, that House Joint Resolution 206 is stalled in the House Rules Committee and that the committee chair has said it will not get a hearing before the 2022 Legislature adjourns.

"I introduced and sponsored this bill, so I'm disappointed it didn't move forward this session," Owens wrote in the email. "Until there's a change from the top down, I will continue to pursue legislation that brings accountability to our government."

According to a summary on the state legislative website, the measure was referred to the Rules Committee after

its first reading but has gone nowhere since. It has not yet had a committee hearing, and no hearings or floor votes are scheduled.

HJR 206 would amend the state Constitution to limit both the governor's ability to declare an emergency and the special powers the governor could wield under an emergency declaration.

It also would limit an emergency declaration to 30 days, with counties — not the governor — having the power to extend the declaration within their borders in 30-day increments. County governments would also have the power to reduce, but not expand, the state powers granted by the emergency declaration within

See Bill, Page A16

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