

The Blue Mountain EAGLE

Grant County's newspaper since 1868



Wednesday, March 16, 2022

154th Year • No. 11 • 16 Pages • \$1.50

MyEagleNews.com



County Court race will be 3-way contest

By STEVEN MITCHELL Blue Mountain Eagle

CANYON CITY — The lineup of candidates is set for the May 17 election for the open seat on the Grant County Court.

As the March 8 deadline passed, first-term Commissioner Sam Palmer opted not to file for re-election. Palmer said he would not be running for another term as he makes a bid for the GOP nomination to mount a general election challenge to Democrat Ron Wyden in the Senate.

Instead, Palmer has thrown his support behind John Day resident John Rowell and said that if he were unsuccessful in earning the Senate nomination, he would not run as a write-in candidate to keep his spot on the County Court.

Rowell will face Scott Knepper of Prairie City and Mark Webb of Mt. Vernon in the May 17 county commissioner election. Rowell and Knepper's names will appear on the ballot; Webb missed the filing deadline and is running as a write-in candidate.

The office of Grant County commissioner is a nonpartisan position. If none of the candidates gets more than 50% of the vote, the two highest vote-getters will move on to the general election ballot in November.

County commissioners are expected to work 13½ hours a week. They are paid \$2,380 per month with full benefits, including membership in the Public Employee Retirement System.

John Rowell

Rowell, a Marine veteran who served in the Vietnam War and the First Gulf War, is retired after a career in the lumber business. Now that he is no longer working, he said he wants to be involved in countywide decisions and help find solutions to Grant County's issues.

Rowell's been helping find a solution to one of the county's most salient issues, the sometimes contentious negotiations between John Day and Grant County on how to fund policing in the county.

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Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group

Diane Miller replaces a diesel fuel pump nozzle Thursday, March 10, 2022, at a Chevron gas station in Island City. Miller paid more than \$140 to fill up half a tank.

OVER A BARREL

Gas prices soar as Russian invasion of Ukraine continues

By ALEX WITTMER EO Media Group

LA GRANDE — Gas prices are soaring to record highs amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine, sparked by fears that NATO countries may begin enacting additional sanctions against Russian crude oil.

In the United States, President Joe Biden announced a ban on Russian oil on March 8.

Crude oil prices briefly skyrocketed to more than \$130 a barrel on March 8, the highest they've been since 2008, and nearly doubling since December.

Oregon has seen gas prices rise

to more than \$4.50 a gallon, while some areas of Portland have sold gas as high as \$6 a gallon. Diesel prices have risen above \$5 a gallon.

"I just came from Arizona, and this is the highest price I've seen for diesel," said Diane Miller, a competitive barrel racer who was traveling home to Moses Lake, Washington, after a three-week trip to Arizona.

Miller paid more than \$140 to fill up half a tank of diesel at the Chevron station in Island City on March 10. She said that she's able to afford the increased costs at the pump, but she knows several people who aren't. Miller said she will have to pay more expensive diesel prices all summer

as she competes in barrel racing competitions.

"It's definitely hard on America," Miller said. "It's a bad deal, and I don't think it would be this way if (President Donald) Trump would have stayed in."

Geopolitical risk

According to the U.S. Energy Information Agency, the geopolitical risk related to Russia's invasion of Ukraine has contributed to higher and more volatile crude oil prices. But Russia's oil footprint on the U.S. market is minimal; less than 10% of the U.S. demand for oil is filled by



Justin Davis/Blue Mountain Eagle

A placard displays gas prices at Leathers Fuels in John Day on Monday, March 14, 2022.

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City rejects county policing plan

John Day council wants to see a countywide solution

By BENNETT HALL Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — The John Day City Council has rejected Grant County's fee-for-service proposal for law enforcement funding, saying it wants to see a more broad-based approach to increasing the Sheriff's Office budget and calling on the County Court to come up with a plan for doing so.

The council passed two resolutions at its March 8 meeting, both by unanimous vote:

The first resolution stated that the city intends to return a \$375,000 federal Community Oriented Policing Services grant, since the city no longer has a police department and the funds cannot be transferred to the county, and that the city will not budget for police services in the coming fiscal year but will place some funds into a contingency account for use in the event that an agreement is reached with the

county for police services.

The second resolution stated the city's willingness to work with the county toward a law enforcement agreement and the city's willingness to pay its fair share for law enforcement services but not to cover the full cost of adding additional deputies to the Sheriff's Office.

Both resolutions came after a discussion among the council members and County Commissioner Sam Palmer, who has taken the lead on the law enforcement funding issue on the Grant County Court.

Palmer has held informal talks with City Councilors Heather Rookstool and Gregg Haberly, Sheriff Todd McKinley and community member John Rowell aimed at filling the gap in law enforcement coverage created by the suspension of the John Day Police Department in October.

In the face of a shrinking population and a stagnating tax base, John Day struggled for years to fund its four-man police force,

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'No logical explanation' in cattle mutilation

By STEVEN MITCHELL Blue Mountain Eagle

BEAR VALLEY — A mutilated bull mysteriously turned up dead at a ranch in Bear Valley last month with body parts removed.

According to a Feb. 28 incident report by the Oregon State Police, a rancher called a wildlife trooper to report a bull had been killed and mutilated on his ranch with its testicles, scrotum, tongue and lips precisely removed.

Sgt. Erich Timko of the Oregon State Police Wildlife Division said the injuries to the bull were consistent with the pattern observed in similar cattle mutilation cases.

"It's just puzzling, Timko said. "The

best word to describe it is 'bizarre.'"

Mat Carter, a rancher from the Crown Cattle Co., said he reported the mutilation to the Oregon State Police after discovering the dead bull roughly a quarter-mile to half a mile from his house.

The cause of death is unknown. When Carter found the bull, it had been dead for about a day and was already decomposing. According to OSP, the 24-hour window during which a necropsy could have been performed on the carcass had passed.

Carter said it is hard to imagine anyone would have come onto his property, killed a bull and then cleanly cut off specific body parts.



Contributed Photo

A mutilated cow on a ranch in Deschutes County in 2020. A similar case occurred in Bear Valley last month.

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