

Access

Continued from Page A1

In June 2021, county commissioners, citing a state law that deals with the designation of public roads, passed a resolution “declaring the necessity for the legalization of Pine Creek Lane.”

McCarty challenged the county, and on July 29, 2021, Senior Judge Stephen P. Forte granted McCarty a temporary restraining order that prohibited the county from continuing its effort to “legalize” the road through McCarty’s property and secure access to the public.

The county contested that ruling, and on Nov. 5, 2021, Senior Judge Russell B. West dissolved the restraining order. West also ruled that the county can survey

the portions of McCarty’s property that the Pine Creek Road crosses.

The county had the road surveyed last fall.

Residents urge access

The April 19 public hearing was the next step in the county’s effort to declare the road a public right-of-way.

Many of the people who spoke during the hearing live in the Pine Creek area, about 10 miles northwest of Baker City, and all told commissioners that they and their families have enjoyed spending time in the canyon.

Tom Lager, who with his wife, Betty, owns 11 parcels in the area, as well as the Timber Tiger Lodge rental cabin, called Pine Creek “the most beautiful canyon in Baker Valley.”

The Lagers own property that is accessed by the road

behind the gate that McCarty installed, including the Timber Tiger Lodge.

“We love it — it’s our backyard,” Tom Lager said. “We enjoyed that country so much that we have purchased those parcels.”

Lager said the gate has limited his family’s ability to reach their own property.

He also said that since McCarty bought the 1,560 acres, Lager was unable, for the first time in 13 years, to bring to Pine Creek a young hunter who has a terminal illness for a guided hunt through the Hunt of a Lifetime program.

Lager accused McCarty of “greed” and of trying “to take it away from the public.”

“They don’t own the road,” Lager said. “They own the 1,560 (acres) they purchased.”

Lager said that although the road also passes through some

of his property, he has never prevented or even discouraged people from using the road.

Carmen Nelson, who with her husband, Jeff, lives on Pine Creek Lane, said she tries to hike to Pine Creek Reservoir at least once every summer to enjoy the views.

“Everything you see is gorgeous,” Carmen Nelson said. “Wildflowers, colors.”

Nelson said she has visited Pine Creek since she was a child, including many trips with her father in a Willys Jeep.

She said the family used to camp at the reservoir, and no one ever questioned whether the road was public.

“I could believe it,” she told commissioners. “How could this happen?”

Jeff Nelson, who said he had his first hunting trip in the Pine Creek canyon, said he believes

the road should remain open to the public.

“One person should not justify the damage they’re doing to this community by putting up a gate,” he said.

Robert Seymour, who owns the Baisley-Elkhorn Mine, which is near the North Fork of Pine Creek and accessed by the Pine Creek Road, told commissioners he believes “that road should be a county road.”

Seymour said he believes the road predates the creation of the U.S. Forest Service in 1905, citing historical documents that reference the developments at the Baisley-Elkhorn Mine years before 1905. That date can be a factor in determining whether a road qualifies as a public right-of-way under a 19th century federal law, RS 2477, that was superseded in the 1970s but is sometimes still cited for roads

that predate the creation of the Forest Service or other significant federal actions.

Several speakers said they’re disappointed by the effects of logging that McCarty has done since buying his property.

Mike Thompson, who said he first visited the Pine Creek canyon in 1963, when he was 13, mentioned the logging.

Thompson also said that the county had made repairs to a section of the road after it washed out several years ago.

“It’s a real shame that someone comes in and says, ‘I own this, and to heck with the rest of the country,’” Thompson said. “That’s not right. We need to do something to keep it open for everybody.”

“You’re shutting off recreation and enjoyment to many people in this town. We have a tendency to resent it.”

Forum

Continued from Page A1

Office could not police John Day and the rest of the county.

“I think we need to put the ball back in John Day’s court,” Knepper said. “They’re the ones that defunded the police, primarily by putting the ballot measure as a special ballot measure on the ballot and not a general election.”

The special election ballot measure last August, Knepper noted, had to pass with a double majority for the John Day Police Department to stay in existence.

As soon as possible, Knepper said, John Day officials need to put a policing measure back on the ballot and take responsibility for funding the city’s police force.

John Rowell, a Marine veteran who served in the Vietnam War and the First Gulf War and later retired after a career in the lumber business, said he has been “intimately involved” in helping to find a solution on how to fund policing in the county.

Along with current Grant

County Commissioner Sam Palmer, Rowell has met to discuss the issue informally with McKinley and John Day City Councilors Gregg Haberly and Heather Rookstool.

Rowell said he agreed with some of Webb’s ideas and that when he was in Long Creek, he had heard the same concerns regarding speeding. He said he did not know the real answer to policing but said the county would have to look at what it can do concerning finances and bringing on additional patrol deputies. He said whether it’s arranging policing agreements with various cities — something the county does not currently have with any municipality — or other options, the county has to do something.

“There’s no doubt that the county right now is understaffed to provide necessary services without wearing out the current officers,” he said.

County commissioner pay

The two current county commissioners, Palmer and Jim Hamsher, have said in the past that commissioners work more than the 13½ hours a week they

are paid for. Hamsher said at the county’s April 13 budget committee meeting that the job is at least half-time and the commissioners should be paid for 20 hours a week.

Hall asked the candidates how many hours they would expect to put into the job if elected and what their position was on Hamsher’s proposal.

Knepper said he thought the position is “naturally” a 20-hour-per-week job and that getting paid for those hours would be appropriate.

Rowell said he is retired and did not care one way or the other. However, he pointed out he did not get paid when he served on the Grant School Board for eight years. For that reason, he said, it is “great” that commissioners get paid at all.

Nonetheless, Rowell said he did not have an opinion on the matter one way or the other and said he would work more hours if he needed to for the county’s citizens.

Webb, a county judge from 2007 to 2013, said that while he is not sure what the current commissioners’ workload is, he recalled that the county com-

missioners worked less and were paid a little less while he was in office.

The expectation, he said, was that the commissioners put in the time that was needed to do the job. Additionally, he said, the understanding was that the job would not be a regular salaried position.

Webb added that, during his term, the county transitioned mental health and addiction services — public health services that the county is supposed to provide — to an outside entity. Essentially, he said, the county’s government has since shrunk.

“There appears to me to be less work than what there was in the past,” he said.

While he said that assessment might not be fair to the current situation, he wanted to suggest that it could be the case that commissioners are doing more than they need to.

Essentially, he said that when he was in office a significant amount of work the court did — providing for public health — was absorbed by another organization.

“It’s a real question of

whether there is still one and half (full-time employees’ worth) of work,” Webb said. “There may be, though we need to have that conversation.”

City-county relations

Hall asked the candidates what — if anything — they would do to reduce the tensions between the county and the city of John Day.

Rowell said one of the reasons why he is running is because he feels there needs to be more respect in public meetings.

“(John Day) is not removed from Grant County, and Grant County can’t get rid of the city,” Rowell said. “We need to come up with plans that work for both entities. We both are in this county together.”

While both sides have become more polarized, the reality is that for the most part both want the same thing, he added. Citizens of John Day and residents of the county want “reasonable services” and “reasonable government.”

“That doesn’t mean that we’re always right,” Rowell said. “But the one thing is we

can sure be civil. It doesn’t cost anything.”

Knepper said that while he did not have much experience on this topic, he believes the city and the county need to cooperate on matters of mutual interest. Currently, he said, the biggest bone of contention is the police funding debate.

Webb said he agreed with Rowell about the need for respect and civility at public meetings. Indeed, he acknowledged he has lost his temper in the past. Nonetheless, he said, what “mature adults” elected to office or hired in public-facing positions need to do is go beyond their own personalities and rise above the insults that come their way.

At the heart of the issue, Webb said, is the city’s request for county road dollars that legally cannot be spent in the way the city would like to spend them, although he added that the law might have changed since he served as county judge. It would be nice, Webb said, to have a legal review and an honest conversation about whether it is realistic or not to spend the road dollars that way.

Budget

Continued from Page A1

well as a \$112,143 million budget for the John Day Urban Renewal Agency, which required a separate vote. The Urban Renewal Agency has applied for a \$1.85 million loan from Business Oregon to pay for street and infrastructure improve-

ments to three new subdivisions.

The budget committee is comprised of the seven City Council members and seven citizen members. Three of the committee’s seven citizen positions are currently vacant.

John Day has 14 full time employees, down from 24 in 2016.

The \$30.3 million budget for the upcoming fiscal

year is up from the \$22.5 million budget the city approved for fiscal year 2021-22 due to increased grant funding. City manager Nick Green said a city John Day’s size typically has a budget of around \$5 million a year. “We’re at six times that with capital improvements that are largely grant-funded,” Green added.

The budget contains \$10.8 million in grant funding for projects

that are scheduled to break ground this coming fiscal year: fiber optic buildout throughout the city limits, the new wastewater treatment plant, a new community pool (if approved by voters on May 17), and site improvements related to the Kam Wah Chung interpretive center.

Included in the Urban Renewal Agency budget are improvements to the Charolais Heights east end

extension and Holstrom Road, Phase 1 of infrastructure improvements to the Ridge and Phase 2 of improvements to Ironwood Estates. Improvements to the three sites will create 31 new residential lots within the city. The budget will now head to the City Council, where it needs to be approved before being adopted. The new budget goes into effect on July 1.



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He will bathe in an **ADVERTISED TUB**, shave with an **ADVERTISED RAZOR**, have a breakfast of **ADVERTISED JUICE**, cereal and toast, toasted in an **ADVERTISED TOASTER**, put on **ADVERTISED CLOTHES** and glance at his **ADVERTISED WATCH**. He'll ride to work in his **ADVERTISED CAR**, sit at an **ADVERTISED DESK** and write with an **ADVERTISED PEN**. Yet this person hesitates to advertise, saying that advertising doesn't pay. Finally, when his non-advertised business is going under, **HE'LL ADVERTISE IT FOR SALE.**
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Grants

Continued from Page A1

Walker said the main goal is to reduce wildfire hazards on the Malheur.

“(The funding) is really helping us accelerate our restoration out here in the (Malheur) National Forest,” Walker said.

The Northern Blues Forest Collaborative received \$3 million for a 10.4 million-acre project in the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest to reduce wildfire risk and prepare the landscape to manage fire safely.

Nils Christoffersen, the executive director of Wallowa Resources, a member of the Northern Blues Restoration Partnership, said there had been a significant loss of capacity to manage

forests on both the public and private sides since the 1990s. These funds, he said, help offset that disinvestment.

Most people, he said, concerned about the landscapes and communities of Eastern Oregon have been arguing for a long time that these forests need additional money and staff to respond to the challenges they face.

Christoffersen said the No. 1 thing in people’s minds is wildfire. But the funding, he said, is not limited to fire prevention.

“We’re looking at how we can improve the forest’s overall condition,” he said.

Christoffersen said that includes making sure the watersheds are operating correctly to ensure clean water, maintaining and improving wildlife habitat, and putting people back to work in the woods and the mills.

AT A GLANCE

Northern Blues Forest Restoration — \$3 million: A 10.4-million-acre project to reduce wildfire risk and prepare the landscape to safely manage fire.

Southern Blues Restoration Coalition — \$3 million: A project to restore 1 million acres that suffer from drastically changing wildfire patterns, species composition, and forest stand densities that threaten to destroy key habitat, old growth, important aquatic resources and private property due to uncharacteristic wildfires and effects of a changing

climate.

Rogue Basin Landscape Restoration Project — \$3 million: A 4.6 million-acre project intended to accelerate restoration treatments to meet goals of wildfire risk reduction, landscape resiliency, improved wildlife habitat, watershed protection, adaptation, and social and economic resilience.

Lakeview Stewardship — \$2 million: An 859,000-acre project to create a healthy, resilient and functional forest landscape maintained with fire to mitigate the threat of high-severity wildfires.

Reelect David Baum Oregon Trail Electric Board, Position 8

STATEMENT TO VOTERS: The electric utility industry is seeing significant changes due to increased demand, new technologies, government mandates, high prices of natural gas and oil, and weather renewables (solar and wind). Weather renewables work only when the Sun is shining and the Wind is blowing.

Currently OTEC purchases 100% of its electrical power from Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and some of the lowest electrical rates in the country. But BPA is being challenged with increasing costs, reduced revenue, and threat of the removal of the four lower Snake River dams. As the board member involved with the Wildfire Mitigation Plan, we have aggressively pushed forward with the drafting and finalization of a Wildfire Plan.

As we negotiate a new contract with Bonneville (BPA), my legal experience is a valuable evaluation tool. My focus will be to continue to work diligently in areas of Power Supply, Transmission and Distribution. I will strive to keep your electrical rates low.

Our CEO, Les Penning and staff with board support will not be raising your electrical rates for 2022.

It's been a pleasure and a privilege to serve as your representative on the board of Directors. I have gained a significant knowledge and experience about cooperatives during this time. I will continue to work hard at keeping electric rates low while providing safe and reliable electricity to our members along with excellent customer service. I have knowledge, experience, energy and time to serve.

I ask for YOUR VOTE and look forward to our future challenges.

Paid For By David Baum / The Committee to Reelect David Baum



2022

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