

Open house highlights projects

By JUSTIN DAVIS
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — The city of John Day hosted an open house at the Grant County Fairgrounds on April 26 to highlight and take questions about current and future projects set to be undertaken by the city.

Upcoming city projects highlighted at the open house included the proposed pool facility, Kam Wah Chung's expansion and redesign, the Pit Stop and various business developments, as well as plans for upcoming summer events.

The event also allowed the public to meet new Community Development Director Corum Ketchum, who organized the open house and will continue to answer the public's questions about ongoing and future city projects.

Ketchum says the idea for the open house came about during discussions between himself and the city manager. "Doing this kind of community outreach and storytelling is right in my wheelhouse."

The structure of the event was designed to be less of a presentation and more of an informal conversation between community members and city staff, city councilors and project partners about what's going on. "We didn't want it to feel like a structured and rigid, (like) we are the experts and here is what is happening," Ketchum said.

At least two dozen people turned out for the event, which Ketchum said was better than he expected considering the open house was his first event in the community.

"I marked one month on the job last week, so I really had no idea what turnout was going to be like," he said. "My experience with rural events

is it is really hard to get people to come out in large numbers, but we easily doubled my turnout expectations."

There is no shortage of critics within the community when it comes to projects John Day is undertaking. Ketchum said he is aware of that and hopes transparency will ease the minds of concerned citizens.

"On the highest levels the city has been wise about sourcing where we are getting the money from so that we aren't running a huge deficit on these things. Yes, these projects are expensive, and as a city we have a \$30 million budget," he said.

"A lot of that money comes from matching grants and state and federal programs. We can use our small amount of tax revenue we have here and multiply that out. We as a small community could never really cover the extent to which we need services, so we look to the federal government, who takes our tax dollars, pools them and redistributes them to communities. So really these projects are about us getting our share of the opportunity that goes around the country."

Ketchum also noted that some fraction of the grant money the city has brought in was paid by residents of John Day and Grant County. "Our tax dollars are already going into these programs. We can sleep on them and (let) our money go to the feds and have them give it to who they will, or we can be proactive and ask for what we deserve."

Ketchum says he encourages people to reach out to him if they have any questions about community development projects going on in John Day. He can be contacted at 541-620-0003 or ketchumj@grantcounty-or.gov.

Man gets 25 years in child rape case

By BENNETT HALL
Blue Mountain Eagle

CANYON CITY — A John Day man convicted of sexually abusing a child has been sentenced to serve 25 years behind bars.

Philip Joseph Rodriguez, 41, was found guilty in Grant County Circuit Court on Jan. 13 of crimes including first-degree rape and first-degree sexual abuse, both Measure 11 offenses. The jury found him not guilty of first-degree sodomy, and an additional charge of first-degree unlawful sexual penetration was thrown out early in the nine-day trial.

The crimes were committed between January and April of 2019, and the victim in the case was a girl younger than 12 who was known to Rodriguez.

On Tuesday, April 26, Rodriguez was back in court for a sentencing hearing.

Under Measure 11, both the rape and sodomy convictions carry presumptive mandatory minimum sentences of eight years and four months in prison.

In this case, however, court documents show Judge Lung Shu Hung chose to impose a



Bennett Hall

Blue Mountain Eagle, File

Philip Joseph Rodriguez, center, confers with members of his defense team in Grant County Circuit Court on Wednesday, Jan. 12, 2022.

harsher penalty, sentencing Rodriguez to 25 years in prison on the rape charge with no possibility of early release under a statute known as Jessica's Law, which applies to certain crimes against children.

The sentence allows credit for time served by Rodriguez while awaiting trial, but it also

requires him to submit to post-prison supervision for the rest of his life. Any violation of the conditions of his release can result in additional prison time, according to the sentencing judgment filed by the court.

Lesser sentences were imposed for the other charges in the case, with those prison terms to be served concurrently. Rodriguez will remain in the Grant County Jail until he is turned over to the Oregon Department of Corrections to serve the remainder of his sentence.

Prosecutors Tobias Tingleaf of the Oregon Department of Justice and Riccola Voigt of the Grant County District Attorney's Office represented the state.

Rodriguez was represented by Kathleen Erin Dunn of Strawberry Mountain Law.

Citing health issues, Haberly leaves council

By JUSTIN DAVIS
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — John Day City Council member and local business owner Gregg Haberly has resigned from the council, with the council voting to accept his resignation during its April 26 meeting.

Haberly, 58, cites stress-related health issues that he could no longer ignore as the reason for his resignation.

"I had to get some stress out of my life, and resigning from the council was the easiest way to accomplish that," he said.

"I'm very passionate about our town. I was born and raised here. I do back what we've done in the city for the most part. Whether it is you, me, or who — you never 100% agree with things. I do agree with what the city is doing and the projects coming up," Haberly added.

"There are people in this community that have been here and stirred (the pot

their whole lives, and they got involved and my blood pressure shot through the roof because they don't put back into the community, they take from it."

Haberly says the people stirring the pot have probably cost the city a significant amount of money due to project setbacks related to misinformation they relay to the public. It's important that the city make periodic investments in infrastructure and public facilities, said Haberly, who has served on the City Council since 2012.

"We need that or you get stagnant and dry up, like some of these other communities. It's like your car — it will break down if you don't put money into it to keep it running. The town is just like that."

Haberly added, "Some people get involved in the middle of it and don't understand what the big picture is. They don't understand why we might purchase something ... and not do anything with it right now. Those things may not be avail-

able down the road when we get to where we need those things."

Haberly has said he supports the construction of a new pool and hopes everyone votes for the bond on May 17, saying it isn't that much of a tax increase and that he is probably in the upper 10% of taxpayers in John Day.

"I don't want people to think I'm worried about what's going on; (my resignation) is strictly health-related. I've put it off for a few months and it is to the point now where I can't put it off. I need to get some stress out of my life. I have a lot of people that depend on me, and I can't take any chances," he said.

The City Council is accepting applications from anybody interested in replacing Haberly on the council. Applications can be picked up at City Hall, 450 E. Main St., and need to be submitted before May 24. The council will select Haberly's replacement at its May 24 meeting.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

THURSDAY, MAY 5 Prairie City School Kindergarten Roundup

• 3 p.m., Mrs. Sharp's room, Prairie City School, 740 Overholt St.

Parents can sign their child up for kindergarten. Children must turn 5 before Sept. 1 to be eligible. Bring a copy of your child's birth certificate and immunization record.

FRIDAY, MAY 6 '62 Days planning meeting

• 7 p.m., Sel's Brewery, 113 Washington St., Canyon City

Regular weekly meeting of the Whiskey Gulch Gang to plan this year's '62 Days festivities. Anyone who wants to help is welcome. For more information, call Colby Farrel at 541-620-0874.

SATURDAY, MAY 7 Jaclyn Clarry Transplant Fundraiser

• 5-8 p.m., John Day Elks Lodge, 140 NE Dayton St.

A benefit dinner of pulled pork or chicken with beans and coleslaw, plus a silent

auction, live dessert auction and raffle. Proceeds go toward medical expenses for Jaclyn Clarry of John Day, a mother of four awaiting a donor for a kidney transplant. To help with the event or donate auction items, call Bonnie Cearns at 541-571-3284 or Patty Ross at 541-620-4841.

SUNDAY, MAY 8 Sunday Slam

• 1 p.m., The Retreat, Links and Spa at Silvie's Valley Ranch, 10000 Rendezvous Lane, Seneca

The Retreat, Links and Spa at Silvie's Valley Ranch kicks off its Sunday golf specials for Grant and Harney County residents with a Mother's Day treat: bring a mom and you both play for free. Designed for local twosomes, Sunday Slams run every week from May through October, except June 5 and 19. The cost of \$50 per person includes a round of golf, cart, range balls and a hot dog lunch. Other weekly specials include couples dates (any two people play for \$50), Fourth of July (if you and your partner wear red, white and blue, you both play for \$50) and Labor Day Weekend (wear your biggest, brightest belt buckle and you and your partner play for \$50). Check-in starts at 11:30 a.m., with the first tee time at 1 p.m.

Call 800-745-8437 to sign up. Do you have a community event in Grant County you'd like to publicize? Email information to editor@bmeagle.com. The deadline is noon Friday for publication the following Wednesday.

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The John Day Chapter of Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

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We have made every effort to recognize all our donors, supporters, members and volunteers in this program. If you feel that someone has been omitted, please notify a chapter volunteer

On behalf of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, thank you for making this evening an overwhelming success!




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