

Nelson holds Heppner town hall meeting

Senator says more water from Columbia River his number one priority

By David Sykes
Oregon Senator David Nelson told attendees at a Heppner town hall meeting last week that his number one priority to help

Eastern Oregon get back on its feet is to get more water out of the Columbia River.

"My bill, SB 190, would have authorized 30 million more acre feet of water be drawn out of the Columbia River," Nelson told a crowd of around 30. "We need to get Eastern Oregon's natural resource base back on its feet, and this would help do this."

Nelson lamented, however the political grip Multnomah County, and the environmentalists that live there, has on the state legislature and political agenda.

"It is very hard to get our agenda passed without the support of the cities," Nelson said.

He went on to say that environmental groups control a large section of the legislature.

"If we don't have family farms, we don't have kids in schools," he said of the need to support the agriculture industry. He also said we need to get back in our forests and start harvesting trees again to get the wood products industry moving but, once again, he said that all those efforts are blocked by legislators from the metro area.

On other issues, Nelson, who lives in Pendleton and grew up on a farm, said he was "not a big supporter of wind farms."

"When we get done there will be a billion dollars in subsidies from the state to the wind farms. I know it will be good for individual farmers, but I am not so sure it will be good for the state," he added, especially regarding education, which needs the tax revenue.

Nelson did say, however, that in the beginning he voted in favor of



(L-R) Andrew Bara, Bryce Fowler and Wayne Rollis talk to Oregon Senator David Nelson about state issues following a town hall meeting last Tuesday in Heppner. —Photo by David Sykes

the Business Energy Tax Credit, or BETC as it is commonly called, which granted Oregon state tax credits to the wind farms and other renewable energy businesses in the first place.

"There is no reason the coal plant (in Boardman) should be shut down," Nelson said. "You never hear complaints from Eastern Oregon [only from those in Portland]. Oregon is at \$1 billion in tax breaks to alternative energy and that is a huge waste of money."

Nelson said his district is very dependent on government services for jobs, citing the Umatilla Indian Tribes and the prisons as two examples.

"Government jobs are paying good wages and benefits," he said, but added that government spending is going to have to be cut back because the state just doesn't have the money. He said that the number one job of the next legislature will be dealing with the budget.

"Don't expect any big laws coming out of the next session," he said.

On the issue of giving in-state college tuition to illegal immigrants, Nelson defended his "yes" vote on the bill that allowed this, commenting that it would not be used as much as we think.

"Illegals are illegals, and you were supporting illegal activity when you voted for this," Sam Hornbeck of Heppner told Nelson. "We are paying for those schools through our taxes."

Nelson said that the Oregon universities' business model relies on out-of-state and out-of-country tuition to survive, and that only five percent of the money to operate comes from taxes; the rest comes from tuition. Nelson also said that illegal aliens going to state universities will have to have attended the same high school for three years in a row and graduated from that high school.

"Very few students will qualify for this," Nelson said as he explained why, in the last legislative session, he voted in favor of the in-state tuition for illegals.

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"Starting to look a lot like Christmas" in Heppner



The Heppner Chamber of Commerce got some much-needed assistance as it prepared the downtown area for Christmas last week. CenturyLink employees offered their services and a company boom truck to help remove old lights from the tree by the post office and put up new colored lights. The tree will come alive with the lights on Thursday, December 1, when it will also display homemade ornaments made and hung by the Heppner Day Care and some Heppner Elementary students. —Photo by Megan Futter

Cause of plane crash remains uncertain

By Andrea Di Salvo

Investigation is ongoing in the case of the plane that crashed near the Lexington airport on October 26.

According to the Nov. 9 preliminary report by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), the pilot, identified as 65-year-old Stephen Lunceford of Driggs, ID, had flown from Lexington to Pasco to pick up his son-in-law, 37-year-old Jeffrey Smock of San Francisco. The pair departed Pasco for Lexington around 5 p.m. the evening of October 26. No flight plan had been filed.

After leaving Pasco, the NTSB report states that Smock tilted his seat back to rest and then sat up again when Lunceford announced they were approaching the airport and were on a five-mile base for landing at Lexington. Smock said they could see the runway lights; he felt a violent reaction as the plane

hit the ground. The time of the crash was approximately 5:30 p.m. Smock heard no warning comments from Lunceford.

Lunceford sustained fatal injuries in the crash, and died before help reached the site. Smock had several serious injuries, including injuries to his feet. He began crawling, and reached the home of Bill and Cindy Greenup—two miles away—nearly four hours later.

A friend of the pilot reported that the plane was two hours overdue. Officers verified that Lunceford's car was still at the airport and began a search. When the emergency call came in after Smock reached the Greenup residence, searchers were able to use his description to locate the crash site. The NTSB investigator-in-charge, a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) inspector and accident investigators from the airframe and engine

manufacturer examined the wreckage on site.

"The accident site was high on a ridge in the middle of a wheat field," states the NTSB report. "The First Identified Point of Contact (FIPC) was a ground scar. The main wreckage consisted of the fuselage, empennage [tail assembly], and wings; the wings had folded onto each other, and the airplane had rolled about 135 degrees onto its left side. The cabin area sustained upward crush damage on the bottom, and inboard crush damage on the left side. The main wreckage came to rest about 236 feet from the FIPC; the engine separated, and was about 386 feet from the FIPC."

The NTSB will publish a final report on the conclusion of the investigation.

The Gazette-Times was unable to get an update on Smock's condition.

Boardman hires new police chief

During the November 15 city council meeting, Boardman City Manager Karen Pettigrew announced she had hired Richard Stokoe of Nyssa, OR to be Boardman's new chief of police. Chief Stokoe has more than 21 years of law enforcement experience and is currently the police chief for the city of Nyssa. He moved to Nyssa in 2009 from the Caribou County, ID, Sheriff's Office, where he served as undersheriff for three years and deputy sheriff for 12 years. Early in his career, Chief Stokoe was also with the city of Wendell, ID, police department; the city of Council, ID, police department and the Adams County, ID, sheriff's office.

In April, the city of Boardman retained Prothman, a consulting firm from Seattle, to recruit candidates for the chief of

police position. Prothman received 26 applications and, in October, the city interviewed four of those applicants. The interview panels were made up of community members and others who work in law enforcement, as well as the city manager and the city's consultants.

The Boardman community had an opportunity to meet the four candidates for the chief's position at a reception held in October. Many from the community attended and they were asked to fill out comment cards for the city manager to review.

Lieutenant Loren Dieter has been serving as Interim Police Chief since March of this year. He will be working closely with Stokoe in the coming weeks

to prepare for the transition. Stokoe said he feels Boardman is moving forward and he is excited to be part of the Boardman team.

"We as a police department are not going to solve any one problem by ourselves," he said. "We have to have, as a philosophy, the community as our partner as we attempt to serve and solve crime."

Stokoe said he is looking forward to working with the entire community to address any problems or concerns.

"I will be open to the community. I want to find out from the community how we can better serve them," said Stokoe.

Stokoe will begin his duties in Boardman on December 1.



Richard Stokoe

Closed for Thanksgiving

The Heppner Gazette-Times will be closed in observance of the Thanksgiving Day holiday Thursday, November 24 and Friday, November 25. Normal business hours will resume Monday, November 28.

Happy Thanksgiving!

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