

Boardman city council meeting

-Continued from PAGE ONE
greet with the public.

Boardman Councilor Cristina Cuevas said she appreciated all the community partners and residents who showed up to meet the candidates and provide input. Keefer also mentioned the good community turnout to meet the city manager candidates despite conflicting events in the city.

"We had a lot of people in the community step up and be involved in our city manager search," said Keefer. "That is Boardman coming out and saying, 'We want to be involved in our community.'"

He also noted that every person asked to be on an interview panel came. The interview panels alone consisted of 30 people. "That was a big effort," he said. "People took time off to come and be part of a panel and give their input."

Kevin Miracle of Waste Connections was present at the meeting to request the increase and give updates on what the company has been doing since Waste Connections purchased Sanitary Disposal in December of 2021.

Miracle said they have spent \$2.8 million this past year on equipment, wage increases, facility upgrades, equipment at the transfer station and improvements to the bailer. Included in that \$2.8 million is \$670,000 in roll-off boxes and rear-load containers, as well as four rear-load trucks, two roll-off trucks and three automated trucks.

"So the company has spent a lot of capital within all the cities and counties that we're in," said Miracle. He said they have also placed drive cams in the trucks, which record to the front, inside the cab, and have an alley camera.

"So there's an almost 360 view that we have that we're able to actually pull that up if a customer says, 'Hey, I think your guy bumped into my car,'" he said.

"The drive cam is also in place to make our good drivers even better," he added, "which is a great thing. We've spent quite a lot of money on training for the drivers."

Aside from normal training, he said they also bring in a trainer from the California Highway Patrol to conduct a four-hour

training focused on defensive driving.

He said proposed spending for this year is \$1.4 million, which will include two more roll-off trucks and another \$670,000 in carts, containers and roll-off boxes.

The City of Boardman's last recorded rate increase for Sanitary Waste was 9.2 percent in September of 2019, and Miracle said Waste Connections is requesting a 16.13 percent increase March 1, 2023. He said he realized that was a short window.

"We're doing what we can to improve when it comes to our employees, making sure that our wages are at a competitive rate," he said. "We had some issues when we first started where we had to increase wages in order to keep the employees."

Boardman Councilor Cristina Cuevas questioned why, if the company wanted the rate increase in March, the council was just hearing about it now.

"It's taken us a year to kind of get our feet underneath us," said Miracle, and added that it was during budget discussions in October that they decided to look at rate increases this year. "When we're looking at the residents, as a resident, I would appreciate notice," said Cuevas. "Two weeks. That time frame seems pretty short."

"That time frame is negotiable for us, as long as we know we're getting where we need to be," Miracle replied. "But the longer we push it out, the more that it could go up because of the CPI (consumer price index)."

Boardman City Manager pro tem Rick Stokoe added that costs like this are typically included in the city budget, so a rate increase now could create a budget shortfall between March and July.

"Preferably, notice at the beginning of the year is great," agreed Boardman Finance Director Marta Barajas, "because that's when I'm putting together the budget." She added that the budget committee usually meets in May.

Utility clerk Toni Connell provided a breakdown of the new rates. For residents with 90 gallon carts, the difference will be \$1.49, from \$13.22 to \$14.71.

Thirty-five gallon carts for seniors will increase \$1.26, from \$9.38 to \$10.64.

Consensus among council and city staff seemed to be that March 1 was too soon to implement a rate increase, and that it would be better to have it take affect at the beginning of the fiscal year. Stokoe and Barajas said they would need numbers by April in order to prepare a resolution for the council to approve the rate increase. That rate would go into effect July 1.

Barajas gave the December financial report, noting that the big activity in December was the budgeted interfund transfers. Those transfers, such as from the general fund reserve to the water reserve, show as an expense in one fund and revenue in the other, which made the month appear as if it had a lot of activity. The city also opened escrow accounts for the two contractors currently on the general obligation fund projects. Barajas said the city is finished with the expenses for the dog park, and that project is complete.

Rick Stoddard of Barnett & Moro was also present and gave the council the 2021-2022 financial audit report.

"When we do this, we compare what the city has recorded with supporting documents," he explained. Those supporting documents included documents from third parties, such as bank statements, invoices, etc.

Stoddard said that, aside from a couple of minor issues, there were no problems with the audit. One issue Stoddard did bring up was the absence of a 2021 single audit that should have been completed but wasn't.

"The testing that me and my team member did gave me nothing that I felt needed to be communicated here today," he concluded.

Barajas added that Barnett & Moro was a new firm the city had hired, replacing a previous firm. The previous firm was close to finishing the 2021 audit. She said one reason the city had moved to a new firm was because the previous one was no longer doing municipality audits.

"The difficulty of getting our audits completed by them was definitely a second reason," she said.

"It's been very refreshing to get the 2022 audit filed."

Stokoe said the city manager search process had "enveloped" city staff over the past few weeks, but he did report that they are working on a wastewater receiving station. Previously, wastewater trucks from around the area would come and dump at the city's lagoons, which took up a lot of staff time. "That go to be problematic," he said.

The city stopped receiving wastewater, so the only place for local companies to dump was either Pendleton or Arlington. The wastewater receiving station would be a place in Boardman that companies could access with a key card without having to call city staff.

He said the city received up to \$400,000 funding for that project from one of those companies, and engineering firm Anderson & Perry is currently in the design phase for it. The project should be completed soon, he said, and should not be a cost to the city. Companies would be charged per gallon to use the station, but that fee has to be determined.

Stokoe said he had also discussed the Columbia Ave. water and sewer upgrade at a work session with Anderson & Perry. The project will go out for bid and the city will try to get that wrapped up quickly.

"We'll see how that goes," he added. "It's a process. Nothing happens in city government overnight."

Stokoe also said city staff is in the process of obtaining easements to complete a new loop road.

Boardman Councilor Brenda Profit brought to the council's attention that the West Extension Irrigation District is burying their line out on Paul Smith Road. The city and county each have responsibility for a piece of Paul Smith.

Profit said this would be an excellent opportunity to put in some kind of walking path for residents, which had been one of the council's goals. While no plans had been put in place previously, she said she thought it would be a good time to find out what it would take in terms of planning and funding.

"At least start the conversation, possibly, with the

county and see if there's any way to work cooperatively about getting a safe walking path down Paul Smith Road," she said. "There's a possibility that we could capitalize on an opportunity."

The council heard the police report from acting Boardman Police Chief Loren Dieter. Stokoe appointed Dieter as acting chief when he himself was selected as city manager pro tem.

Dieter reported that the police department is maintaining a busy pace. He also said the BPD opened a new position recently, anticipating the retirement of school resource officer George Shimer later this year, and that he would be reviewing applicants at the end of the month. He also reported that he and officer Shane Brandon had attended an Active Shooter Level 1 train the trainer class in Idaho and can now train other Boardman police for those situations.

In other business:

-The council approved a resolution authorizing and intergovernmental agreement (IGA) for Oregon Public Works Emergency Response Cooperative Assistance. The IGA is an agreement among member governments that if the city has a disaster or natural hazard issue, then the city can use resources from other jurisdictions to help with the disaster.

-Boardman Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Torrie Griggs gave

a surprise presentation to Boardman PD Officer Loren Dieter. The chamber selected Dieter as Front Line Worker of the Year for 2022.

-Keefer recognized Karla Jimenez for her work on the Boardman Planning Commission. Jimenez was unable to attend the meeting, but Keefer displayed a framed certificate and plaque she would be receiving. "It's just one way that we're trying to recognize the individuals who are volunteering for the community." Keefer said he remembered her as a "great kid" in high school and said, "She's grown up to be a very good young woman."

-The council also appointed Edith Velasco as a budget committee member for the city and Boardman Urban Renewal. Velasco's term will end Dec. 31, 2025. The city is still looking to fill budget committee vacancies.

-Building clerk Jackie McCauley said the city had sold quite a few building permits, mostly for new townhomes at Tidewater. Twelve units are being built there. She said the city is seeing new homes come in, though not as quickly as last year. The city also broke ground on its city hall expansion.

-Keefer again welcomed visiting students from Riverside High School and encouraged them to be involved in their community.

Time to nominate your favorite teacher

InterMountain Education Service District is currently accepting nominations for InterMountain Regional Teacher of the Year. Nominations are open statewide through Feb. 28.

Anyone can nominate a teacher by visiting <https://oregonteacheroftheyear.org/nominate/>.

Nominated teachers will be notified and will submit their applications by March 31. Each Oregon education service district will select a winner from their region in May. Regional teachers of the year will be honored across the state in September 2023. Regional winners receive a cash prize of \$1,000.

In October 2023 one

of the regional teachers of the year will be named the 2023-24 Oregon Teacher of the Year and will be eligible to apply for the honor of the National Teacher of the Year.

Death Notice

Bruce D. Bergstrom—Bruce D. Bergstrom died on Feb. 10, 2023, at his home in Stanfield at the age of 69 years. He was born on May 12, 1953, in Heppner. At his request there will be no service. Please share memories of Bruce with his family at burnsmortuaryhermiston.com. Burns Mortuary of Hermiston is in charge of arrangements.

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