The Life Of The Building

Community maximizes use of an old building in its final days.

It was a long process, but when Nathan Miller received approval from the Grants Pass Historical Buildings and Sites Sites Commission to tear down an old church building on his property at the corner of 4th and ‘J’ streets to make room for a new development, he wanted to make sure the building’s salvageable materials could be put to good use.

Miller, who now serves on the HBSC, contacted the local Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints who once had ties to the old building, as well as local historian George Kram er and the Josephine County Historical Society.

“We talked to them all before we did anything,” said Miller.

Some components of the building were saved and provided to the church. The most significant aspect of the building, its steeple-like structure, was preserved and will be incorporated into the design of the new development. Reusable materials were donated to Foundry Village, a local development to provide temporary housing for those in need.

Miller said he contacted a local Rotarian, Doug Walker, who helped organize the salvage of flooring materials, plumbing fixtures, and modern glass.

“It’s a worthwhile cause and a beneficial project that made sense. The worst place these things could end up is in the landfill,” Miller said.

Before the building came down, it also served another purpose to the benefit of the community when local firefighters spent six full days using the building as a training opportunity.

When Miller called Grants Pass Fire/Rescue and offered them the site, they seized the opportunity.

“Acquired structures are incredibly valuable for training,” Miller said.

(See “BUILDING” page 6)
By Warren Hensman

DPS Chief

A familiar term I used while growing up in Ireland to describe a busy passage of time - a week, or even longer portion of life - is: “In the blink of an eye.” The last 18 months serving as your Public Safety Chief has certainly passed in the blink of an eye!

I remain honored to serve as your Chief, proud of our public safety team, and I take the responsibility of keeping Grants Pass safe with earnest intent. Our team philosophy, coupled with the progressive and professional manner in which we deal with community challenges, will assure Grants Pass continues to be a safe and prosperous community for many years to come.

When I was appointed your Chief, I posted the following statement on our website. It is foundational and clearly messages my expectations: “Nobility in public safety is achieved when our actions are centered on service, justice and fundamental fairness; never forgetting that our actions can have an instant impact on others for a lifetime, and even a community for generations.”

Fast forward just 12 short months, and we were called upon to reassure our community that our department condemns the reprehensible actions and tactics demonstrated in Minneapolis resulting in the tragic death of George Floyd, and further reinforcing how we will continue to serve and protect our community to the very best of our ability.

Grants Pass Department of Public Safety will continue to build a strong culture of transparency and accountability in order to achieve our vision of building public trust and nurturing legitimacy. When an agency creates an environment that promotes internal procedural justice, it encourages its members to demonstrate external procedural justice. Just as employees are more likely to take direction from management when they believe and trust in the legitimacy of management’s authority, citizens are more likely to cooperate with the police when they believe in the legitimacy of the authority of the officers.

Last January, several strategic planning goals regarding public safety were presented by our city council. I would like to share just one of those goals receiving overwhelming approval.

Prevention-focused community policing to help reduce crime and build public trust.

1. Community policing requires the active building of positive relationships with members of the community.
2. People are more likely to obey the law when they believe that those who are enforcing the law have the legitimate authority to inform them of the law and provide direction. The public confers legitimacy only on those they believe are acting in procedurally just ways.
3. Facilitate informal interactions between police/fire/dispatch and residents.
4. Engagement - providing a voice to all stakeholders in the community.
5. Training - acknowledging biases, while talking about and acting on issues of different kinds of diversity (racial, generational, gender, language, and others).
6. Transparency (e.g., patrol officers, online data, listening tours).
7. Focus on victims - experience tells us that if police do not handle victims with sensitivity, they can undermine justice system legitimacy.

The men and women of the Department of Public Safety are helpers and doers, thrust into a profession greater than themselves and for one main reason - to assist others. We are not perfect, but we always strive to do our best, and be our best. Being there for our community is what makes us tick.

Social justice, police reform, and public safety accountability have captured the nation’s attention at this time, and difficult conversations must continue. Instead of waiting for our concerned community to come to us, our department has reached out to our community and started a dialogue. We have held community meetings at the Public Safety Headquarters with Black Lives Matter demonstrators and organizers, as well as several other concerned community members and organizations. We have facilitated an open and honest discussion about 21st century policing and what we do here in Grants Pass.

In conclusion, I feel it’s appropriate to share what our “normal” looks like and possibly provide a glimpse into the work ethic and drive I see daily in our department.

Just this week, our officers responded to 1,151 calls for service, made 52 arrests, transported 15 people to our Sobering Center, and conducted 267 extra patrol checks. Our firefighters responded to 88 calls, including 44 for emergency medical service and 28 reports of fire or smoke. Dispatchers handled 703 police calls, 178 Fire/EMS calls, and 1,319 calls to 911.

Records staff input 352 citizen-initiated calls for service and handled 810 non-emergent phone calls. Fire officials conducted 29 business inspections and Community Service Officers responded to 202 calls for service, including 52 reports of City Ordinance violations. Our Community Response Team (CRT) made 137 contacts throughout town, arrested 12 people, and transported four people to the Sobering Center.

That’s just a snapshot of one week of service. Our men and women comprise the hardest working team I know, always trying to take each other to the

See “CHIEF” page 10

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TYPO TALLY!
A wise old editor once said: “Typos are here for those who won’t be happy until they find one.”

Thousands of words composed of thousands of letters means we are bound to get a few out of place. Let us know when you find them!

We didn’t receive any corrections to our July issue. Perfect score two issues in a row!

Can you find any typos in this September issue? Email us to let us know, and we’ll thank you in print right here in the next issue! ssabel@grantspassoregon.gov
A True Newspaper Man

City Councilor Dennis Roler spent 40 years in journalism before public service.

During his 40-year career as a newspaper man, Grants Pass City Councilor Dennis Roler covered city governments and their elected leaders across the country from Pottsville, Pennsylvania, to Marin County, California.

“There were those where you could tell they had talked and decided things beforehand, and those that went on and on, and you were sure one guy was going to get up and punch the other guy. Then there’d be a guy spitting chewing tobacco into a cup on the dais,” said Roler.

Armored with a master’s degree in journalism from Syracuse University, Roler went from small town community newspapers to big county dailies and worked his way through the newsroom hierarchy from beat reporter to managing editor. He became the city editor of the Grants Pass Daily Courier in 1987 and was elevated to managing editor three years later in 1990, after his former boss left the paper.

“He was like most bosses. They tell you when you screw up, but they don’t tell you when you do something right,” said Roler.

Vowing to be a better kind of managing editor, Roler created a newsroom memo he called “Winners and Sinners,” he mainly used to give recognition to his employees for their excellence.

“As a newspaper man, I always figured if you’re going to say something bad about people, you owe it to them to also point out the good,” he said.

“I always told reporters to have multiple credible sources, double check your facts, corroborate statements, and save your opinion for the editorial page,” Roler said.

He retired from the paper after 23 years.

“It was a nice time,” he said.

“You didn’t know everybody in town – it wasn’t that small a town – but you knew people everywhere you went,” said Roler.

With mostly fond memories of his service to the community in his role as editor, Roler said it was a lot different than his time spent as a journalist in Pennsylvania.

“There’s a bunch of crooks back East,” Roler said.

He said he never found that kind of corruption in Grants Pass.

“We had a lot of colorful characters. Of course, we had the famous recall (in 2009), and we had one county commissioner way back when who was a problem, but nothing even close to corruption,” said Roler.

You have to have a purpose for getting up in the morning. It may not be the most glamorous thing, but it’s a public service.”

City Parklet Program Deemed A Success

According to the results of an online survey, the City of Grants Pass Dine in the District parklet program has been a success for the city’s downtown Central Business District. The nine-question survey was forwarded to more than 100 email addresses associated with businesses, restaurants, and owners of buildings in the district. The city received 38 responses, with most respondents in agreement that the program served to offset restrictions imposed by state mandates as a result of the COVID-19 illness.

“Ninety-two percent agreed that this does help with the COVID-19 restrictions,” said City Manager Aaron Cubic in a presentation delivered to the City Council at their workshop Monday, Aug. 17.

Cubic reported 84 percent of respondents agreed the program was an innovative and appropriate use of city funds to assist economic development recovery in the wake of COVID-19.

He also reported that 89 percent of respondents agreed the program has increased dining traffic at local restaurants, and 66 percent agreed the program increased customer foot traffic in the district as a whole.

More than 70 percent of respondents agreed the value of the program to the downtown district outweighed the inconvenience of lost parking spaces on the street.

“If we could devise some way to make these more attractive, I think it will be helpful,” Cubic said.

The pilot program was established for a 90-day period, which expires Sept. 17. Cubic said he would return to the Council with further details to seek their direction about the future of the program.

“If Council gives direction, we can make it better,” he said.

Today’s restaurant is theater on a grand scale.

- Marian Burros
Motoring Ahead in Fleet Services

Fleet Services Superintendent helps keep Grants Pass motors running smooth.

Grants Pass Fleet Services Superintendent Grant Cory said he knew he wanted to be a mechanic by the early age of 14. Originally from Chico, California, Cory’s first visit to Grants Pass would happen just two years after his early career declaration, and that would eventually set the wheels in motion for him to someday live in Southern Oregon.

In 1987, Cory married his wife, Debra. Six years later, Debra went to work for the Medford School District, and the Corys became Southern Oregon residents.

Grant Cory put his mechanic’s skills to use first at Les Schwab. With a degree in automotive technology, he quickly became a chassis specialist who focused on noise vibration and harshness.

“I was very good at finding the source of those little squeaks and rattles,” said Cory.

“I eventually became a chassis master,” he said.

After Les Schwab, Cory put in some time as a mechanic at a couple of major car dealerships, where he “received some great specialized training to add to my degree,” he said.

By 2006, he became a lead mechanic for the City of Medford, helping to service and maintain more than 900 pieces of equipment, including work for other agencies through intergovernmental agreements.

He spent 10 years there, during which time “the department evolved,” said Cory.

“We were able to hire some really good mechanics and assembled a great team of people,” he said.

In 2016, as a result of a Performance Audit, Visioning and Enhancement (PAVE) Committee report involving the Fleet Services Division, the City of Grants Pass created the position of fleet services superintendent.

Cory was hired to the post in November 2016.

“Probably the hardest thing to do was to leave that really good team of people (in Medford),” said Cory.

The decision to accept the job in Grants Pass was less about the title of superintendent, and more about the “challenges that Grants Pass had to offer,” he said.

“Also, you can give more personalized attention to the equipment in a smaller fleet,” Cory said. Grants Pass has 227 vehicles and pieces of equipment (see sidebar).

Cory said one of the “other draws” to come to work for Grants Pass was the opportunity to work for Public Works Director Jason Canady, whose reputation had preceded him in the field of public administration.

“He’s the hardest working boss I’ve ever had,” said Cory.

Canady assisted Cory with navigating the challenges of “mastering the budget process, which includes procurement, depreciation, and decommissioning of equipment,” he said.

That helped increase efficiency in the division.

“In four years, we have tripled production and mechanic efficiency with mechanics spending as much as 82 percent of their time working on department vehicles,” said Cory.

Prior to Cory’s appointment to the job of superintendent, the PAVE report found that fleet personnel were often spending as little as 18.6 percent of their time working on equipment, and most of their time sourcing and ordering parts, driving to pick them up, and training on how to repair new equipment.

“It was important in the new position to develop performance standards and clear expectations of staff,” said Cory.

When he first started, Cory only had one mechanic working, but not long into his tenure, increased efficiency of operations provided for a second mechanic to be hired.

“Building a strong fleet staff had been rewarding, and our Human Resources Department has been so beneficial in helping to achieve that,” Cory said.

The new hire was facilitated in part through Cory’s efforts to cut costs.

“We use a lot of oil and other fluids. We cut those costs in half by developing our storage system, changing providers, and buying in bulk. That felt so good,” said Cory.

He also instituted a new inventory system to create greater parts efficiency, even negotiating an exchange program with vendors for unused or out-of-date parts.

Most of the city’s larger trucks and pieces of equipment run on diesel fuel. Cory was instrumental in converting the city’s fuel provider and obtaining a better rate per gallon of diesel.

Those achievements have been rewarding, said Cory, who also takes pride in the fact that his division “touches every department in the city,” he said.

“Even departments that don’t have their own vehicles, occasionally rely on city motor pool vehicles,” said Cory.

During his first month on the job, Cory received a call from the city’s Water Restoration Plant regarding failed brakes on a forklift.

“Ultimately, the entire forklift was found to be unsafe and in need of replacement,” he said.

Cory decommissioned the piece of equipment, and then auctioned it off through a government surplus site to help pay for the replacement. To date, he has auctioned off 48 pieces of surplus decommissioned equipment to raise more than $113,000 toward replacements.

His current projects include assisting the Department of Public Safety with reassessing their fleet in order to extend the useful life of their vehicles.

“Each vehicle has to be assessed on a case-by-case basis,” said Cory.

DPS vehicles, especially patrol vehicles, take a lot of wear and tear from constant patrol use, engine idling, and “unwilling occupant damage,” he said.

“Unwilling occupant damage is a major part of the wear and tear, with occupants commonly damaging the interior of the vehicles,” said Cory.

Sunlight is another major culprit, causing plastic parts to degrade and crack, while fading out paint and required emergency services graphics.

A true “motorhead,” Cory said he still loves the shop.

“I absolutely enjoy getting out there and using my hands. I don’t get the chance to do that

(See “CORY” page 8)
Imagine A Day Without Water, Oct. 21

By Lisa Beutler
Special to GP Now

For many of us, 2020 will forever be hard to forget, but for the people of Newport, Oregon, July Fourth weekend, 2020, will be especially memorable.

As Newport businesses were gearing up for weekend tourists and visitors who were hungry to escape the heat and enjoy a little socially-distanced nature, Newport Mayor Dean Sawyer called the media and issued a public plea. He told those who didn’t live in Newport, to stay away from Newport.

Two weeks earlier, the water flowing through the city’s water pipes, had suddenly, for no apparent reason, been cut in half. The Newport water utility team worked day and night to find and fix the problem, but the clock was ticking, and they soon knew it would not be fixed before Independence Day. So that summer weekend, in the midst of everything else 2020 had already dealt, Newport only had enough water for its townspeople.

Millions of Americans take water service for granted every day. Just like in Grants Pass, people across the country turn on their taps and clean water flows out. They flush the toilet, and dirty water goes away. Frequent handwashing has become a part of everyone’s routine health and safety measures.

Fortunately, the people of Newport could still access their tap water, and the problem (an unlikely filtering issue) was eventually found and fixed. The shortage was not without consequence. It shut down local economic engines such as fish plant operations, which use half of the city’s water; the Rogue Brewery, and most tourism operations.

Local fireworks were discouraged, as the water needed to fight a potential fire would have overtaxed the system. Mayor Sawyer explained to reporters that halting fish plant operations was the hardest decision to make and “a punch in the gut for families working there after already being forced to close because of the pandemic.”

This October, Grants Pass is joining more than a thousand cities, counties, utilities, professional associations, and engineering and consulting firms, to Imagine a Day Without Water. The day is part of a national education campaign that brings together diverse stakeholders to highlight how water is essential, invaluable, and in need of investment. This year, the day of action will take place Oct. 21, and will include events, resolutions, student contests, social media engagement, and more, all across the country.

It’s hard to imagine a day without water in a place such as Grants Pass. The city has long benefited from the foresight of its founders to plan for sufficient infrastructure that is managed today by an outstanding water utility team. However, keeping the city’s historic water treatment plant operational requires constant maintenance, and every day the plant is at significant risk of failing during a seismic event.

The city has already started the process of replacing the aging plant, but it will take at least four more years to complete. Plans are in place should the existing treatment plant fail, but the very best-case scenario during a seismic event is to save enough of the plant to be able to provide water for health and safety purposes only.

The worst-case scenarios are catastrophic and would fundamentally alter life in Grants Pass until the replacement plant is built.

During July, the city worked with local business, health care, civic, and faith leaders to learn more about their thoughts regarding the local water situation. Most of those leaders knew there was a need to do something about the water treatment plant, even if they had different views on the best solutions.

Some of them have spent time in third-world countries serving in the military, participating in faith and humanitarian missions, or conducting international business in places where there is little or no safe, clean water. Going a day without water was not something they had to imagine, as they had personally experienced it and would not recommend it to anyone.

Each of them affirmed that without adequate water, Grants Pass would not be a viable community. Many suggested that the city should spend a great deal more time emphasizing the urgency of the situation.

For those who are informed about the city’s water situation, imagining a day or days without water isn’t difficult, but across the nation, most people don’t stop to think about the impressive infrastructure and treatment required to make sure clean water comes out when they open the tap, or safely returns water to the environment from the drain.

The truth is the entire nation’s water and wastewater systems are getting older. In some places such as Grants Pass, those systems were installed decades or even close to a century ago. Everyone should be concerned with the vulnerability of those systems.

In the western U.S., the issue is not just water treatment plants, but also drought conditions. It isn’t too hard to remember the dry days of 2015. In Portland, temperatures hovered nearly seven degrees above average and across the state, access to water for some farms was shut off.

Director Tom Byler from the Oregon Water Resources Department said that was the kind of year we might see more regularly, “and that is a big deal, because that means that water may not be available during the times of year that people have been used to it.”

Byler explained that in Oregon, “we’ve been so successful as a society, in getting water to people and meeting so many different needs; it’s seemingly abundant. I think we’re entering a period where we won’t take it for granted as much because it’s going to be less available than it has been in the past, and the cycle of water that we’ve experienced in the past is not going to be something that we can rely on in the future.”

There are two clear options for responding to these changes, one is increased conservation and the other is improving water storage capacity. Conservation allows for the best use of every available drop of water, and improved water storage greatly increases the ability to provide reliable water service.

According to Byler, storage capacity isn’t increasing across the state as needed, as Oregon may need an additional 424 billion gallons of water annually by the year 2050 in order to meet irrigation and municipal needs.

So, in answer to the question: “Could it happen here - could there be a day without water?” The answer is yes, it could, but Grants Pass is taking every step possible to prevent that.

City leaders have already anticipated the need to accommodate future growth and respond to changes in historic seasonal patterns. In addition to replacing the water treatment plant, the city team is moving forward with improving its water reservoir capacity. This one-two bold action will help secure the city’s water legacy.

Oct. 21 is the day set aside to Imagine a Day Without Water. It’s a day to pause and notice the way that water systems impact our lives and communities and commit to ensuring a sustainable water future for generations to come.

Everyone is asked: “What would your day be like if you couldn’t turn on the tap and get clean drinking water, or if you flushed the toilet and wastewater didn’t go anywhere? What would happen to restaurants, hospitals, firefighters, farms, breweries, or the hundreds of industries that depend on water supply?”

Imagine a Day Without Water

The sixth annual Imagine a Day Without Water will take place Oct. 21, when more than a thousand cities, counties, utilities, professional associations, and engineering and consulting firms will take part in a national education campaign that brings together diverse stakeholders to highlight how water is essential, invaluable, and in need of investment.

Grants Pass is taking every step to provide water for health and safety measures. This October, Grants Pass is joining more than a thousand cities, counties, utilities, professional associations, and engineering and consulting firms, to Imagine a Day Without Water. The day is part of a national education campaign that brings together diverse stakeholders to highlight how water is essential, invaluable, and in need of investment. This year, the day of action will take place Oct. 21, and will include events, resolutions, student contests, social media engagement, and more, all across the country.

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said Grants Pass firefighter Frank Bungay.

Bungay assisted in the training conducted at the site for all three Grants Pass engine companies, as well as three companies from Rural Metro Fire.

“If there’s an opportunity for our firefighters to get some extra training that can save lives; that’s a no-brainer,” said Miller.

Miller put off the demolition of the building for several weeks to facilitate the planning and execution of the training exercises. Fire/Rescue personnel discovered so many opportunities for using the building, what was planned to be a three-day series of training exercises, soon became six entire days.

“All on-duty personnel trained on the structure during the week,” said Bungay, who estimates that as many as 45 firefighters from Grants Pass and mutual-aid companies were able to take advantage of the rare opportunity.

No actual fire was used in the training, but crews worked at the site as if it was a true structure fire.

“Structure fires are one of the most high-risk events that firefighters respond to. For that reason, its paramount that we constantly maintain our skills to be ready to perform at a professional level when called upon by the citizens of Grants Pass and Josephine County as a whole through mutual-aid,” said Bungay.

The training conducted at the site maintained three areas of focus, Bungay said.

Hose deployment and movement exercises consist of firefighters practicing deployment of hose lines from engines into the building and then maneuvering the hose lines inside the building to reach the location of the fire as they would on a real structure fire.

Vertical ventilation is a tactic used by firefighters to allow pressurized heat and smoke to escape out of the roof of a building by creating ventilation holes with chainsaws.

“Crews used the unique roof configuration of this large building to practice making access using truck 7328, Grants Pass Fire/Rescue’s 100-foot aerial platform, cutting various types of holes in the roof and training on how to safely work on a rooftop that has fire burning below it,” said Bungay.

The final element of training consisted of firefighter survival tactics. Individual firefighters were placed in a room deep inside the building with their vision completely obscured to simulate the effects of thick smoke. The firefighters started the scenario with depleted air supply in their self-contained breathing apparatus tanks and needed to quickly orient themselves in an unfamiliar building to find an exit before they ran out of air.

“The environment inside of structure fires is referred to as an ‘Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health,’ and IDLH atmosphere, so training firefighters to quickly exit when they are dangerously low on air due to an emergency situation is very important,” Bungay said.

During the training, some local residents came to the site to watch the exercises. Miller brought along his son, Preston, age 11. Father and son also did some drone flying to capture aerial photos of the training.

“We were elated to be able to help out the fire department, and we received 1,000 times return on any inconvenience we may have had,” said Miller.

Bungay agrees about the return on investment of time and training. Though Grants Pass Fire/Rescue has training facilities, they are well-known to veterans of the department and not as valuable as an actual building site.

“The largest benefit is being able to deploy firefighters into a floorplan or roof configuration they have never seen before, as that is almost always the case when firefighters arrive at a real incident,” said Bungay.

Once the training was complete, the demolition began.

“We really wanted to maximize use of what was here before it was gone,” said Miller.

“The building lived a good life, and now at the end of its life, it has donated its organs and other vital parts to worthy uses,” he said.

As they started tearing down the walls, they found thousands of bottle caps used as spacers in the stuccoing of the building. They even found an old “treasure chest” in the attic that caused a bit of excitement until it was found to be empty, said Miller.

“If these walls could talk,” he said.

The planned development for the site is an all-local contractor project that will place two fourplex townhome buildings on the site. One building will be constructed in the craftsman style, while the other will be more Tudor-like, said Miller.

A courtyard in the middle will integrate the spire from the original building into its design, he said.

“Whatever we were going to do, we wanted to do it right,” said Miller.

The development will provide eight additional housing units, while also cleaning up the neighborhood, Miller said.

“There was a lot of undesirable activity in the alley near the property, which led to the purchase and plans to develop it. We’re investing in this neighborhood and this community,” said Miller.

“I’m going to live out the rest of my life here,” he said.
Please Get Your Grab-n-Go Ready

Everyone knows an emergency can happen at any time, but many people don’t know that Oregon is an all-hazard state and we can experience disaster during any season of the year.

We can also have simultaneous events such as a pandemic, fire season, and an earthquake.

There are three steps that will help you prepare for the unexpected: make a plan, develop skills, and build your emergency kits.

Each person should have a 3-Day Go-Kit in their vehicle at all times. It should contain food, water, a way to stay warm (blanket or sleeping bag), comfortable shoes for walking, and seasonal clothing for each person who is regularly in the vehicle.

Once your Go-Kit is assembled, we suggest working on your Grab-n-Go Binder and your Evac Box. These are the most critical in the event of evacuation.

Remember, kits should be customized to meet your specific needs.

For more information on kit types, supply lists, and classes offered to help you prepare, visit www.rvem.org/go-kits.html

CSOs Vital to Public Safety

Community Service Officers (CSOs) are an often overlooked, yet vital, part of the Grants Pass Department of Public Safety. There are currently three full-time and two part-time CSOs working with the Grants Pass Department of Public Safety.

These CSOs provide services to the City of Grants Pass seven days a week from early morning until late evening.

Calls for Service

CSOs are responsible for many of the day-to-day calls for service. Those calls include, but are not limited to:

- Animal problems
- General assists to the public
- Graffiti reports and abatement
- Littering offenses
- Lost and found property
- "No-suspect" criminal offenses

Parking complaints
Parking enforcement
Traffic crash reports and traffic control
Traffic incidents
Transient camps
Violations of city ordinances
If you would like to know more about the CSO program, please call the Grants Pass Department of Public Safety at 541-450-6260.

No amount of law enforcement can solve a problem that goes back to the family.
- J. Edgar Hoover

Two-County Taskforce; Strike Team Deployments

By Lloyd Lawless
Battalion Chief
Josephine and Jackson counties have fire response mutual aid agreements in place to assist each other during large incidents. What this means is that each county can reach out to the neighboring county to ask for assistance to help control fires or other emergencies in our areas.

This is set up utilizing alarm levels that are already established by fire agencies in Josephine and Jackson counties.

Once an agency with jurisdiction has exhausted their local response alarm levels, they can request a Rogue Valley Strike Team or Taskforce to assist. This will automatically get them an additional five units from the adjacent county.

In Josephine County, we are Rogue Valley 1 and in Jackson County, they are Rogue Valley 2. On occasion, the Josephine and Jackson County Agencies can put together a third strike team based on staffing levels from each department.

When a fire/emergency happens in Jackson or Josephine County and an agency goes through their alarm levels, they can request a strike team or taskforce to be alerted, standby, or respond.

These taskforces or strike teams are already pre-determined and established. The units have already been assigned and each agency knows how the system works.

The idea behind this system is to get resources to an incident as quickly as possible without stripping all the resources from one agency. Ordering up the taskforces is accomplished through the dispatch center in both counties.

This past month, Grants Pass Fire/Rescue responded with Rogue Valley 1 Wildland Task Force to the Worthington Fire in Jackson County. As part of the make-up of RV-1, Grants Pass Fire/Rescue sent unit #7367, a type-6 engine, along with a Strike Team Leader.

The Worthington Fire was approximately 600 acres in size and was threatening structures. The incident commander on the fire had evacuations in place on Worthington Road. Grants Pass Fire/Rescue provided structure protections and structure triage.

They obtain valuable information on homes in the area of the moving fire to assist the incident commander with appropriate decisions to best utilize the resources responding to the fire.

The taskforce leader (TFL) is responsible for five resources from Josephine County and works directly for a division group supervisor assigned to the fire.

These taskforce responsibilities are reciprocal based on the county in which the incident happens. These systems have been created utilizing best practices and working towards a global community protection.

Each agency is dependent upon outside agencies during these larger events and over the years the system has been refined to what it is today.

Grants Pass
Public Safety Stations:
Parkway Public Safety Center
800 East Park Street
Hillcrest Public Safety Station
199 NW Hillcrest Drive
Redwood Public Safety Station
3071 Leonard Road

An aerial view of Grants Pass Fire/Rescue training demonstrates how firefighters cut holes in the roof of a building for ventilation during a structure fire.
Unidirectional Pipe Flushing Continues On Schedule

City of Grants Pass Water Distribution staff began the process of unidirectional water flushing Monday, June 8. Unidirectional flushing opens specific pipes in the city’s water distribution system to flush water through the pipes in a single direction in order to clean the insides of the pipes.

The process continues as city staff moves from section to section of the city to complete the work along 188 miles of piping. Staff opens specific pipes to flush the water in one direction. This increases the speed and force of the water which helps scrub the pipes. The water is tested during the flush until it meets clear water standards, releasing thousands of gallons of water into the surrounding streets.

Flushing in each neighborhood can take between 10 minutes and more than four hours, depending on the area and number of fire hydrants located there. Some hydrants may get flushed twice, so staff may leave an area and come back later to flush them again.

During the flushing, residents in the area will experience lowered water pressure. Water may become discolored for a temporary length of time, and city staff recommends residents use bottled water or other liquids during the flushing. Residents are also cautioned to avoid running tap water, or appliances such as washing machines, dishwashers, and automatic ice machines until the flushing process is completed.

Residents should also avoid driving through the water being flushed if possible and slow down for safety. Water can be deeper than it appears and is not safe to drive through at full speed.

After flushing has been completed in an area, residents should turn on cold water faucets and spigots until the water runs clear. In order to avoid drawing any sediment into their hot water heaters, residents should not use their hot water tap until their water is running clear.

Information about which neighborhoods have been completed and which neighborhoods are scheduled for flushing is available through the city’s website at: www.grantspasoregon.gov/1366/2020-Water-Main-Flushing.

Backflow Testing

The required testing of single-family residential backflow assemblies for 2020 continues. All backflow assemblies are required to be tested annually to verify that they are functioning properly.

Backflow assemblies protect both the city’s water system and the homeowner from potential and actual hazards under backflow conditions.

City contractors completed testing assemblies in the Northwest part of town in July and Northeast portion in August. Contractors continue throughout the city based on the following schedule:

- Southeast – September
- Southwest – October & November

Additional information: (541)450-6115, or visit the city’s website.

Cory... (from page 4)

very often,” he said.

When he does, he said he goes to lead mechanic David McAuliffe to ask him how he can help.

“Dave calls the shots on the floor,” said Cory.

Usually McAuliffe puts Cory to work upfitting a new piece of equipment or decommissioning an old piece, he said.

McAuliffe has multiple certifications, including a highly coveted certification as a master emergency vehicle technician.

“From a small gas engine on a lawn mower or paint stripper, to a million-dollar fire apparatus, and everything in between, he can fix anything that is broken or worn out,” said Cory.

Eliseo Salas is Fleet Services’ newest mechanic. A former mechanic for the US Marine Corps, with a bachelor’s degree in diesel technology, Salas “is the future of fleet,” Cory said.

Donna Anderson, a former administration employee who transferred to Fleet Services last year, completes the division.

“Together, we have 94 years of combined experience,” said Cory.

“My biggest success has been in building that staff,” he said.

City of Grants Pass Fleet Vehicles

There are 135 vehicles assigned to different departments:

- Public Safety Police: 51; Public Safety Fire: 18; Parks: 10;
- Streets: 12; Stormwater: 2; Collections: 5;
- Water Restoration: 5; Water Treatment: 3; Distribution: 9;
- Property Management: 8; Engineering: 3; Building Safety: 2;
- Information Technology: 1; Motor Pool: 6

There are also 92 pieces of equipment, including mowers, tractors, backhoes, trailers, and standby generators.
Second Quarter Saw Strategic Plan Progress

The second quarter of 2020 saw major progress in accomplishing Strategic Plan goals set at the beginning of the year by the Grants Pass City Council, said City Manager Aaron Cubic at the council’s Monday workshop session Aug. 10. Cubic outlined several accomplishments related to council goals and updated the council on the progress of other items.

Among the details, Cubic provided a report on the council’s objective to enhance a safe and secure environment through increasing proficiency and proactive time at the patrol level in the Department of Public Safety.

To that end, online police reporting went live with the Police Division initially offering a small number of reporting options while the program is developed, said Cubic.

Further improvements to the city’s online systems include the council’s adoption of Resolution 20-6917, to enter into a contract with Selectron Technologies for Interactive Voice and Web Response services to implement a new online city utility customer service platform and communication system.

“Implementation is currently under way,” Cubic said.

Keeping citizens safe was a top priority identified by the council during this year’s strategic planning sessions. Among the actions given top priority by the council is the passing of a new Public Safety Levy in November.

The council conducted numerous workshops on the topic and agreed to a proposed levy rate of $1.89 per $1,000 of assessed value to be sent to the voters.

The council also directed DPS to implement additional prevention-focused community policing to help reduce crime and build public trust. Chief Warren Hensman and top public safety officials met with organizers and community activists to assist with managing peaceful demonstrations regarding equality.

“That was a great leadership role that the chief took, and I think it really paid dividends in the long run because we had a very clean and violence-free protest that was very respectful to everyone involved. That should be attributed to the chief and his leadership on that,” said Cubic.

The DPS also implemented a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) project with the Grants Pass Warming Shelter.

Cubic said the council will soon receive a final presentation regarding the completion of a comprehensive Geographic Information System needs assessment to ensure community and department GIS expectations are met.

“GIS is extremely important in this community,” said Cubic.

Cubic presented a separate presentation updating the council on the completed removal of blighted buildings located at the corner of 6th and ‘A’ streets. The council has asked for a City Hall parking needs assessment to be completed prior to making a decision on the future of the property.

Enhancement of the city’s Central Business District continues with the installation of ornamental streetlights, said Cubic. Additional security cameras have been ordered for installation in city parks, multiple park playgrounds have been repaired and/or replaced, and the Major Site Plan for Beacon Hill Park has been approved, he said.

Several projects have been delayed due to COVID-19 issues and restrictions, Cubic said. Among those areas most affected are alley activation and beautification, landscape amendments, development of a parking/restroom management plan, and decisions regarding the future of Caveman Pool, he said.

Further updates included details about the council’s objective of encouraging an environment which provides for the growth of affordable housing opportunities, including the consideration of various potential incentives for developing multi-family units, development of template plans for auxiliary units, the creation of a pilot housing project for city-owned surplus property, and ongoing housing needs analysis.

The city’s Housing Advisory Committee has resumed regular meetings and continues to work on these important facets of the council’s strategic plan, said Cubic.

Additional details regarding the 2020 City of Grants Pass Strategic Plan are available at the city’s website: https://www.grantspassoregon.gov/DocumentCenter/View/3852/City-of-Grants-Pass-Work-Plan-2020-PDF

City Seeks Land Acquisition Specialist

Join the City of Grants Pass administration team as a land acquisition specialist. This will be a part-time, 24-hour-per-week position.

The position performs a variety of administrative, technical and facilitation duties designed to purchase, sell and manage records of property for the city. Key performance areas of the position include the purchase of right of way, purchase of land for city needs, supervising the sale of city-owned property, presenting to council, managing property records and providing data concerning city-owned properties.

Minimum Qualifications:

A bachelor’s degree in business administration, finance management, law or a related field, and three years of experience in real estate or law, including contract negotiation/mediation experience are required; or an equivalent combination of education and experience sufficient to successfully perform the essential duties of the job.

The land acquisition specialist is a Programs Stand Alone class. Incumbents are responsible for negotiating the sale and purchase of properties to benefit the citizens of Grants Pass.

Incumbents are responsible for full oversight of the purchasing of right of way and land parcels, following state laws related to the purchase and sale of land, and providing technical advice to departments.

Previous experience with public entities and right of way purchases is preferred.

Application materials must be completed online and submitted by the closing date in order to be considered for this position.

Any application that is missing a cover letter, resume, or answers to the supplemental questionnaire will not be considered. No late, incomplete or faxed applications will be accepted.

The required materials to be attached to your application for this recruitment are:

1. City Application
2. Supplemental Questionnaire
3. Resume
4. Cover Letter

The city will consider contracting land acquisition services with a qualified firm or contractor.

If interested, please contact the City of Grants Pass Administration Office at (541)450-6000 to discuss opportunities for collaboration with City Manager Aaron Cubic.

The Dollar Value of Water

Imagine A Day Without Water will occur Oct. 21. Consider the value of water in comparison to the average cost of other household services.

The average Grants Pass Utilities bill is $76.

Water unit charges account for approximately $26 of each monthly bill.

The average monthly trash collection bill in Grants Pass is $35 per month.

The average monthly electric bill is $99 per month.

The average household spends $110 per month for cell phone charges, and cable TV/Internet charges average $144 per month.
Join The Housing Advisory Committee

Applications are being accepted for two positions on the Housing Advisory Committee due to expiring terms. These are 3-year appointments.

The Housing Advisory Committee explores opportunities to facilitate provision of housing for all income levels, and it makes recommendations to the City Council.

It also promotes public awareness of housing resources, and promotes public participation in identifying and addressing housing issues and needs.

The City Council may authorize the Housing Advisory Committee to conduct those public hearings specified in the City’s CDBG citizen participation plan, which are not reserved to the City Council for decision-making.

The special qualifications for these two positions:

One must be a representative from an organization that develops and/or operates housing, transitional housing, short-term housing, or shelter for special needs.

One must be a representative who is a residential developer.

Applications are available at the City Administration Office, 101 N.W. A Street, or online at www.grantspassoregon.gov/committee-application. Applications must be received no later than 5 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 15. Applications will be reviewed by the committee Friday, Sept. 18. Appointments will be made by the Council at the City of Grants Pass council meeting Wednesday, Oct. 7.

Council Community Connection

Local residents are invited to join members of the Grants Pass City Council for discussion and conversation at city parks and facilities during Community Connection events 10 to 11 a.m. every second and fourth Friday of each month.

Each Council Community Connection session will be held at a different City of Grants Pass park or facility featuring two city councilors who will be available to answer questions, receive comments, and exchange ideas with members of the public. Refreshments will be served.

For additional information, visit: https://bit.ly/2C8NRWh.

Roler... (from page 3)

not worry about someone jumping down your throat for some editorial you’d written the day before. If they wanted to come talk to me in the office, they could do that,” said Roler.

That open accessibility helped people respect that when he was off the clock, he was off the clock, he said.

Roler said he often would have lunch with city councilors to discuss important issues facing the community.

“They’d tell me how hard the job is, and they were right,” he said.

After he retired, Roler said there was one managing editor who served in between him and the current editor of the Courier. The current editor “used to be a good design guy” when he first worked for the Courier back in the ’90s, said Roler.

“It became harder and harder to recruit and find good reporters,” he said.

“If I was starting out today, I wouldn’t go into newspapers. You’d never get 40 years out of it like I did,” Roler said.

After retiring in 2012, Roler decided to run and was elected to city council in 2014.

“I thought, ‘I know a lot about city government because I had to stay up with city government.’ It was one of the areas where I knew I had expertise,” Roler said.

In 2018, he was reelected to a second term.

“I have to have some kind of routine. You have to have a purpose for getting up in the morning. It may not be the most glamorous thing, but it’s a public service,” he said.

Roler said his immediate goals as a councilor revolved around updating the city’s sewer and water utilities.

“We didn’t have any utilities updated and our Master Plans were out of date,” he said.

The city completed upgrades to the Water Restoration Plant and wastewater collection systems in 2019. Plans for the construction of a new Water Treatment Plant are now moving forward.

“Along the way, I picked up a new one. I wanted to make sure our Department of Public Safety had a new home,” said Roler.

The road to a new Public Safety Headquarters hasn’t been an easy one, and the council has received its fair share of criticism over the project, he said.

“We got beat up for it a lot, but we needed that building. Now you don’t have to worry about your 911 being gone in a catastrophe,” Roler said.

“Two out of three are done now,” said Roler.

The challenges of completing major projects are many, he said.

“We’re dealing with things where the can got kicked down the road a long way,” Roler said.

Previous councils delayed making decisions on major issues “or they didn’t get serious about them,” he said.

He said additional delays are caused by changing personalities on the council.

“The trouble with council is it switches membership every couple of years. You get new people in the door who don’t know where you’ve been and where you’re going,” said Roler.

In 2018, he was re-elected to a second term.

Chief... (from page 2)

next level of service to our community.

But don’t take my word for it. You are more than welcome to stop by and visit Public Safety Headquarters, or even sign up to take a ride-along with one of our officers.

Yours in Service,
Chief Warren Hensman

City Hall
Administration:
(541)450-6000
Utility Billing:
(541)450-6035
Comm. Development:
(541)450-6060
Parks:
(541)450-6060

Roler estimates he spends upwards of 40 hours per month attending meetings and focusing on city council business. Reviewing lengthy agenda packets and fielding calls from constituents regarding everything from the proposed bus hub to monthly utility bills, adds to the hours, he said.

Getting “beating up” on the dais during public comment is another challenge of serving, Roler said.

“Sometimes you show up and it’s packed with the public, and you look at the agenda and think, ‘why?’ You never know what people are going to show up and want to comment about,” he said.

A council decision to sell the city’s River Road property was one such issue where the council took a lot of attacks, he said.

“To me, it came down to users. How many city residents really got use out of the property in the 14 years we owned it? I wanted to see that money put to use for as many residents as possible,” said Roler.

“For me, it felt good to vote to sell it,” he said.

“You have to determine who is the public and who is not the public after a while. Who is the public? The same few people who show up week after week to shout at us; or the thousands who don’t show up? We represent everyone,” Roler said.

With two years remaining in his current term, Roler said he hopes to see further progress towards the third of his goals for serving on the council - the construction of a new Water Treatment Plant.

“I’ll settle for just acquiring the site. I’m not serving on council until it’s done,” he said.

In the meantime, he’ll keep representing the community as a whole, while “trying to get everything done and keep it as low cost as possible,” said Roler.
A Memorial For Mollie & Rudy

The City of Grants Pass Memorial Tree Program is designed to continue to revitalize the city’s parks and by-ways by planting trees in honor of individuals whose families wish to honor them with the planting of a memorial tree.

Like many Grants Pass residents, Betty and Claudell King always viewed their cherished pets as members of their family, and when it came time to lay their trusted dogs Mollie and Rudy to rest, the Kings contacted city Urban Forester Tony Mecum to see if the city’s Memorial Tree Program was available to memorialize pets as well as loved ones.

“As there is no pet cemetery here in the Grants Pass area, we wanted a special place for Mollie and Rudy. I was aware of the ability to purchase a memorial tree in honor of a friend or relative to be at one of our city parks. I contacted the city to inquire if doggie ashes could be with a memorial tree,” said Betty King.

“No one had ever requested that service before, but upon verification, it is certainly permitted,” she said.

The Kings have always loved animals, “especially dogs,” and they have had a variety of breeds during the years. Mollie and Rudy were with them for quite some time.

“We wanted another Basset to join our family and by searching the internet, a family in Wilsonville had a litter available. We adopted our beautiful Mollie when she was just six weeks old. She was a tri-colored Basset and enjoyed many adventures during her lifetime,” said Betty.

Mollie loved going on trips and long walks, but she wasn’t a fan of the beach and ocean waves, Betty said.

“During her lifetime, she served as maid of honor at a doggie wedding fund-raiser for the Humane Society, as well as self-appointed maid of honor at our 25th renewal of vows,” said Betty.

When Mollie was 5 years old, the Kings adopted Rudy, a small Pekingese.

“He was such a happy little fellow - never walked, always just bounced,” said Betty.

Mollie lived to be 16 years old before going to “Doggie Heaven,” Betty said.

This past spring, Rudy went to join her.

“He was only 14 years old, so losing him at this age was a bit of a shock,” said Betty.

Both Mollie and Rudy were cremated, and the Kings worked special place to lay their ashes to rest.

“Mollie and Rudy enjoyed all our city parks and were especially fond of Reinhart Volunteer Park, also known as the All Sports Park. That was the location that we chose,” said Betty.

The Kings have always been fond of flowering cherry trees. They have planted one at each of the homes they have lived in here in Grants Pass. Flowering cherry trees are on the list of approved Memorial Trees, so that was the tree they selected for Mollie and Rudy.

On a sunny day last March, the Kings and some of their immediate family gathered at the park and conducted a small memorial service while Mecum planted the tree.

“As my husband sprinkled the ashes with the new tree, we all stood there a bit teary eyed,” said Betty.

The Kings said the Memorial Tree Program “is a great program offered by the city to remember our special ‘fur babies.’”

“We were able to choose the type of tree, plus location, while Tony (Mecum) did the hard work, picking up the tree and preparing the site for planting. Such a perfect way to honor our pets, plus provide additional trees for the beautiful parks that we have here in Grants Pass,” Betty said.

“We still enjoy our walks through the park and visiting our special tree,” she said.

Running Out Of Trees: Deadline 9/25

The Fall 2020 application for the Tree Canopy Program is now available. The city has 50 trees for home/landowners at a cost of $50 per tree. The fee includes tree and planting of the tree by city staff. Trees can be planted in front yards or in the public right of way in front of properties.

The city’s Urban Forester will visit each location to assist with selecting the proper species and placement for each location. Trees will be planted in October and November.

Grants Pass recently received the renowned title of Oregon Tree City of the Year. Such an honor would not have been possible without the help of the community.

For years, citizens here have participated in the city’s tree programs, including the Memorial Tree Program and Tree Canopy Program. Both programs increase the canopy coverage of the city, which brings an impressive array of benefits for everyone to enjoy.

The city’s tree canopy can serve to increase property values, reduce energy consumption, improve physical and mental health, reduce crime, purify particulates and noxious gases from the air, intercept stormwater surges from entering the Rogue River, extend the lifespan of paved surfaces under their shade, reduce street noise, calm traffic, enhance tourism, increase retail revenue, improve beauty, sequester carbon dioxide, and many other benefits.

Whereas the Memorial Tree Program increases the tree canopy of city parks, the Tree Canopy Program increases the canopy of neighborhoods, bringing tree benefits to all areas of Grants Pass.

Home/landowners who take advantage of the Tree Canopy Program will be responsible for watering their trees during the warm growing seasons (typically from May to October), or whenever temperatures are high, and precipitation is low. After three years of watering, most trees will be established and can obtain water on their own. The city will replace a tree if it dies within the first year, so long as water was provided.

Due to limited supply, some tree species are already gone, and few trees remain, so residents are encouraged to apply now. Applications and payment are due by Sept. 25. Payment may be made by check, cash, or credit card. Completed applications and payment (to City of Grants Pass) may be mailed to: Tree Canopy Program, 101 NW A Street, Grants Pass, OR, 97526.

Cash payments may be made at City Hall, 2nd floor, Community Development Department. Credit cards can be accepted in person at City Hall or by phone: Community Development Department at (541)450-6060. There is a small processing fee for credit cards.

Applications are available online at: www.grantspassoregon.gov/tree. For additional information email Urban Forester Tony Mecum at tmecum@grantspassoregon.gov, or call (541)450-6162.

“To exist as a nation, to prosper as a state, to live as a people, we must have trees.”

— Theodore Roosevelt
Southern Oregon Tourism is Beating the National Decline Caused by COVID-19

Due to COVID-19 restrictions throughout the country, tourism and hotel occupancy rates have declined by 50 percent on average nationwide.

In many parts of metropolitan Oregon, those numbers ring true, but not in rural Southern Oregon, where counties are stemming the tide by attracting visitors to outdoor attractions and activities that provide good social distancing opportunities.

According to a recent report from STR, Inc., a division of CoStar Group that provides market data to the hotel industry worldwide, Southern Oregon hotel occupancy numbers tell a different story from what is being recorded across the nation.

In a report dated Aug. 23, STR reported that occupancy rates for hotels reporting from Josephine County over a 28-day period from July 26 through Aug. 22 were only down by 2 percent from 2019 totals over the same period.

During the week of Aug. 16 through Aug. 22, Josephine County hotel occupancy rates actually increased by 6.5 percent over the same week’s totals from last year.

Surrounding Southern Oregon counties are not faring quite as well as Josephine County, but are still beating the national average decline with occupancy numbers in Jackson, Douglas, and Klamath counties down an average of 12.8 percent from last year.

Currently, Klamath County is suffering the steepest decline among counties in the four-county region, with numbers off by 16.9 percent over the past 28 days.

In an effort to draw visitors to their properties, Josephine County hoteliers have reduced their average room rates by as much as 10 percent, resulting in a similar decline in overall revenue, but the lower rates appear to be working to bring visitors to the area.

A similar report issued by STR for the month of July demonstrated that Josephine County occupancy numbers were down 11.7 percent this year over last year. The Aug. 23 report suggests an upward trend for August leading into September and Labor Day weekend.


The 10 reporting properties represent 771 of the total 1,201 available hotel rooms at properties listed in Josephine County, approximately 64 percent of all available hotel lodging in the county.

Some smaller specialty properties in the county, such as the Weasku Inn Grants Pass, and Morrison’s Rogue River Lodge in Merlin, have fewer than 20 rooms available per property.

The Chateau at the Oregon Caves, representing 22 rooms, has been closed since Oct. 2018.

The image below is a depiction of a new poster for a kiosk welcoming visitors to downtown Grants Pass. The kiosk is located behind the downtown Welcome Center.