

City of John Day Newsletter



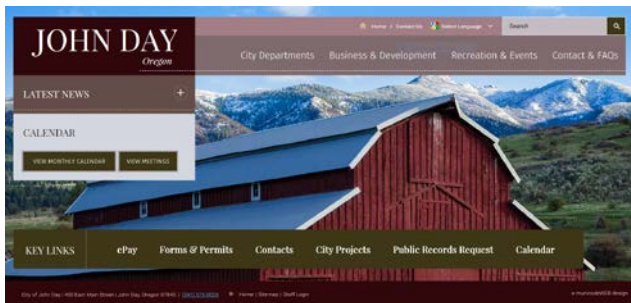
December 2016

Season's Greetings

Dear Residents – From all of us at City Hall we'd like to wish you joy this holiday season.

As we approach the New Year, we are excited about the possibilities that 2017 will bring. Our community will host thousands of visitors for the August 21st Solar Eclipse. We are planning to make several street improvements and other updates to our infrastructure in anticipation of this event. We will also be making significant changes to our budgeting process in order to create an investment fund for new community development projects to enhance our community. Several of these projects are featured in this newsletter.

We want your feedback! Budgeting should be a collaborative process that reflects the priorities of our community. Share your feedback with us so your views are reflected in our planning. Contact us via the new website feedback form or email us at cityofjohnday@grantcounty-or.gov.



New City Website

The new city website will go live January 1st. The site includes a "latest news" link from the home page allowing you to see our most current events. We will also have public safety alerts scroll across the homepage from time to time. The site also features an email distribution list providing you with periodic updates on specific projects, meetings and events.

Digital Marketing Campaign

In conjunction with the new website we will be launching a digital marketing campaign to help create awareness of our community. John Day has experienced two decades of steady population decline. If this trend continues, we are projected in the next ten years to reach our lowest population level since 1950. This has significant impacts on our tax base and the level of services we can provide. Our goal is to begin recovering our population by targeting two key demographics: young, working families (specifically digital commuters) and active retirees. These demographics have a choice about where they live and we want them to choose John Day! Our marketing campaign will feature articles, events and amenities that are attractive to these prospective residents and will encourage them to consider making our community their home.

Community Development Fund

During the December City Council meeting we discussed the possibility of creating a community development fund to allow us to begin investing in our own economy. If the city had a dedicated fund for community projects with a reliable revenue stream, we could use the revenue to attract outside investment through grants, loans and private equity. At present the city spends 0.04 percent of its annual property tax on community development and the remainder on public safety. As a result, we enjoy one of the safest communities in Oregon and one of the most economically distressed.

Restoring our population and recovering economically will require us to restore balance to our budget. These are hard decisions to face and they begin through public awareness. We will be reaching out next year through a deliberate process to get your feedback on our spending priorities and to help identify projects that should be our top focus for investment.



Wastewater Treatment Plant Update

The new city website will feature city projects. One of the pages you'll be able to subscribe to for updates is the new wastewater treatment plant. We have applied for two grants to fund a feasibility study during the 2017-18 fiscal year. The focus of this study will be on the economics of the three options the council is considering: 1) a hydroponics system that uses plants to reclaim up to 100% of our wastewater for beneficial reuse; 2) a land application system for irrigation; 3) a traditional mechanical plant similar to the current system.

Among the reuse options being considered is controlled environment agriculture. We currently treat about 80 million gallons of wastewater each year. This water is a valuable asset that could be monetized through vertical farming and industrial applications. The feasibility study will evaluate all of the potential options for reusing our water and provide us with a cost-benefit analysis to make data-driven decisions about the best option for the new treatment plant.

Our team for the feasibility study includes three primary partners: Sustainable Water, a leading provider of commercial-scale water reclamation and reuse solutions across the United States; Anderson Perry, a full-service civil engineering, surveying and natural resources firm that designed the original treatment plant; and Trout Unlimited, an non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of freshwater streams, rivers, and associated upland habitats for trout, salmon, and other aquatic species. The city will also be engaging with academic partners and student consulting teams to focus specifically on the economics of agricultural science and technology and options for creating an agricultural experiment station in conjunction with the hydroponics facility.

The total cost of the study is \$120,000, with 85 percent of the cost covered by grants and in-kind contributions.

To learn more, visit the new website and click on "City Projects." You can also subscribe to the "City Projects" email distribution list to receive periodic news updates.



Sale of Old Fire Station

The City will solicit offers for the old fire hall in January 2017. We will post information for prospective buyers on the new website including the terms of sale and specific information on the property. Buyers will have two weeks to inspect the building and ask questions. Sealed offers will be due to City Hall by close of business on Friday, January 20th. Offer letters will be opened during the January 24th City Council meeting where the council will select the winner. If interested in making an offer, please contact City Hall at (541) 575-0028 or email us at cityofjohnday@grantcounty-or.gov.

Internet Task Force

Broadband infrastructure investments are among the community development projects we are considering for capital improvements. The Oregon Broadband Advisory Council, which advises the state legislature on broadband issues, recently released a report titled *2016 Rural Broadband Strategies*. The report identified Grant County as having the second poorest outcomes in the state on the "Digital Divide" index, which ranks both infrastructure adoption and socio-economic characteristics. The digital divide is the gap that separates areas that have access equal to or greater than the latest FCC broadband standard (currently 25 Mbps down and 3 Mbps up) from those that do not. These "average" speeds are approximately three times higher than what our residents currently receive.

In 2017 we will launch a regional Internet Task Force to begin addressing these deficiencies and help make our community more competitive in broadband coverage, access, scalability and reliability of service. We have applied for the USDA "Cool and Connected" grant for technical planning assistance, and identified long-term financing options through the State's Infrastructure Finance Authority to allow us to begin making improvements in our residential broadband rates.



7th Street Bike Park

The Grant County Economic Council has made a proposal to create a new bike park at the 7th Street Complex. The park would feature gravity trails (flow tracks) that propel riders based on the natural contours of the terrain, and pump tracks that require riders to pedal through a series of jumps, curves and obstacles. The proposed park will have features for riders of all skill levels. Funding for the project may be available from the Ford Family Foundation, Oregon State Parks and Recreation, and other funding sources.

The School Board and Parks and Recreation District who own the property have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Grant County Economic Council to conduct a feasibility study and generate a concept plan for the new park. Designer Chris Bernhardt from Sentieros Consulting, a world renowned trail design firm, will perform the study. If the project is approved, construction will begin in early 2017 with a grand opening scheduled for the weekend prior to the Eclipse. More information is available on the city website.



Public Safety Annual Report

The city will release its first comprehensive public safety report in January 2017. The report will provide residents with an overview of our public safety departments, staffing, training and certifications. It will also provide detailed information on our crime rates, statistics on offenses and arrests, 911 call volume and expenditures.

John Day spends more on public safety than any other city in Oregon. Our public safety spending as a percentage of our property tax base is over four times higher than the average city. Given this level of spending, residents need to be informed about both the quality and quantity of the services they receive. Our public safety report will be produced annually to help keep you informed. We will also have a public-safety focused City Council meeting early in 2017 with briefings from our Chief of Police and 911 Emergency Communications Supervisor on the current status of our public safety departments and future initiatives.

Our dedicated law enforcement officers and emergency communications dispatchers work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to ensure our safety and well-being. Their work is often performed behind the scenes and with little public recognition. At times they work in extreme circumstances, taking calls and responding to incidents on the worst days of our residents' lives. Our annual report will highlight the departments' successes and accomplishments and provide greater awareness on the public safety services we provide.

City Council & Commission Updates

Councilmember Dave Holland was elected to the John Day City Council and will take office in January. Councilmember Holland served for 35 years as a member of the John Day Public Works department, including eight years as the Public Works Director. He replaces Councilor Louis Provencher who retired from office in 2016. We'd like to thank Councilor Provencher for his dedicated service and commitment to our community. Councilor Steve Schuette and Councilor Donn Willey were re-elected to serve for four-year terms.

In December the City Council appointed Mr. Neale Ledgerwood to serve on the John Day Planning Commission. Mr. Ledgerwood is a lifelong resident of John Day and will be a valued member of the Commission. We are still seeking candidates to serve on the Planning Commission and the fiscal year 2017-2018 Budget Committee. If you are interested in serving, please contact City Hall.

Sincerely,

Nick Green, John Day City Manager