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Gov. Otter Tackles Assorted Issues

By TOM BURNETT
Of The Star

SPIRIT LAKE – From uncovered pickup trucks spewing trash to public shooting ranges to unwanted mosquito invasions, Gov. Butch Otter and members of his cabinet addressed issue after issue during his Capital for a Day in Spirit Lake last Wednesday.

Opening the session promptly at 9 a.m. in the Community Center, the governor explained the daylong session as “your chance to address us.” Most state commissions, boards and/or panels were represented, either at the front table or in the audience of some 55.

“We’re aware it’s not sometimes that easy for you to get to Boise with your concerns, your issues, your problems – so we bring the capital to you!”

Otter, dressed in his trademark dark blue sports coat, blue jeans, natty tie and fancy western boots, listened intently as a Hayden Lake man spoke about “that trash on our highways. It’s the stuff flying out of the back of pickups.

“I got a neighbor,” he said, “who takes great pride in telling how he puts his stuff in the back of his truck, uncovered, and by the time it gets to Coeur d’Alene it’s all blown out.

“Can’t we fine these guys – or something?”

Otter noted there is a state fine for littering...

“Don’t know offhand what it is; never been caught!” he said to a round of giggles.

From the audience, an Idaho State policeman: “...a \$350 fine.”

The governor suggested having a convicted offender “exercise some responsibility for what he’s caused. Like picking up so much roadside trash...”

From a Blanchard resident, the governor was asked why more public shooting ranges were not available as target shooting is often considered “a family sport.”

The recent court decision to continue the closure of the range at Farragut State Park “means one less range available to the public.”

Virgil Moore of the state Fish and Game Commission explained how “bullet escapement” was a major concern with outdoor shooting ranges. Safety and noise also are prime concerns, followed by lead contamination of the soil.

“We are disappointed in the Farragut decision; after spending nearly a quarter-million dollars on bringing that site into compliance,” Moore said. “We did what we were told to do and now...,” he said, adding his department is waiting for a directive from the attorney general’s office on whether to appeal the decision.

“Heck, that was a World War II rifle training site!”

And, from Franklin James of the Treeport area: “We’re having quite a problem with mosquitoes. Can something be done?”

“Your local health department is probably your best bet!” he was told.

With that, the session broke for lunch, only to encounter a steady, mood dampening drizzle in the Big Park.

Throughout both morning and afternoon question-answer sessions, the governor had an answer – sometimes tongue-in-cheek – to every question, every issue. Periodically, the state’s highest elected official referred an issue to a team member.

For instance, why school districts do not recognize special treatment for young students suffering from dyslexia or why Blanchard does not have a cell phone tower. The governor was asked to intercede in a former air traffic controller’s legal problems with the FAA as well as a regional dispute over which emergency medical service provider would best serve the northern reaches of Spirit Lake, Blanchard and, across the

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Gov. Butch Otter listens to a citizen's issue.

Holmes, Councilmembers Seek Reelection; Spirit Lake Incumbents Yet Undecided

As of last Friday afternoon with another week to go, candidate filings for Rathdrum Mayor and City Council have included incumbents Mayor Vic Holmes and Council members Debbie Holmes and Fred Meckel.



MAYOR VIC

Paula Laws and Mark Worthen each have two years remaining in their terms.

In Spirit Lake, none of the three council incumbents have submitted reelection petitions – Gary Ventress, Diane Berg and Kim Hill. Mayor Todd Clary and Councilman Jimmy Brown are in the middle of four-year terms.

Candidates have until 5 p.m. Friday (Sept. 9) to file a petition for election. Filings take place at city hall.

In a prepared statement outlining his accomplish-

ments, achievements and goals, Holmes listed guiding the city through a damaging recession, while initiating development of its 12-acre Majestic Park and keeping the budget under control as major accomplishments.

Also, Pinegrove Cemetery, with its new irrigation system, fence and attractive

flags, “and hard work by city crews and volunteers has made a huge difference in the appearance of the area,” he wrote.

The mayor also noted his position with the Kootenai Metropolitan Planning Organization has been instrumental in funneling 2.9 million in federal monies to Rathdrum

to rebuild the decaying bridge over the BNSF tracks on Highway 41. A four-lane span with pedestrian walkways on either side is scheduled for construction next year.

The city’s water and sewer system are, in his
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‘Keep Moving, Never Give Up...’

Every once in awhile, something or someone comes forward with a different kind of story... one that tugs at your heartstrings – makes you want to help.

Here’s Matthew Evarts, a 30-year-old John Brown Elementary, Lakeland Junior and senior High School graduate, looking for a little help.

Not for himself, but to help others who have cancer themselves or who are living with a cancer survivor.

Evarts suffers from astrocytoma, a rare cancer that centers around the brain. In Matt’s instance, his softball-sized tumor has attached to the left frontal lobe of his brain, affecting his memory, motor functions, behavior and speech.

He’s undergone chemotherapy, radiation and takes “a medicine cabinet full” of drugs, anti-seizure medications, blood thinners and “I don’t know what all.” He faces an unknown future – perhaps surgery, more chemo...or worse.

A cure?... “I think I’d have better luck winning the lottery. Enough of that, let’s move on!”

His goal – ride his bicycle 1,000 miles “just to prove both to myself it can be done

and for others as an inspiration to never, never give up, keep moving, be an inspiration to others.”

About his upcoming “adventure,” Matt, first of all, is looking for a bicycle worthy of the trip.

“I’ve got my backpack, a couple changes of clothes and my little one-man tent.” Those necessities and “hopefully a cell phone” and he’s ready to embark on his trip, planned to start later this month.

“I’ll probably go south, at roughly 100 miles a day. If, at the 1,000-mile mark, I feel pretty good, I plan to keep going. Where, I really don’t know!”

Back to his medical misfortune, Evarts, who described himself as “healthy as a horse before the diagnosis,” recalled driving from his home in Rathdrum to Hayden and waking up in an ambulance.

“I simply don’t remember anything of the drive. I was told I had suffered a seizure, which, as it turns out, was the first of many. I was flown to Harborview in Seattle where doctors discovered this astrocytoma.

“Headaches? No. Pain? No. Any discomfort? Nothing”

“All I knew is I had this

astrocytoma; probably the rarest form of cancer a guy can get.

“That’s when I decided to do what I could, not for myself, but for others. Any money I can generate with my upcoming ride goes to cancer research – hopefully to someday help someone else.

“I’ll keep you informed of my travels...”

For those wishing to help Matt and his “travels,” he has established an account at the Rathdrum branch of Panhandle State Bank.

Market Finished for the Season

The Rathdrum Famers Market has canceled the remainder of its 2011 open market season at City Park with a pledge to make the 2012 season “the best ever!”

Market managers decided after last Saturday’s lack of fresh produce vendors – and a sparse collection of customers – that “this season just is not going the way we had hoped.

“A late growing season coupled with a dismal crop of fresh produce week after week have proven to us that to continue this year would amount to a disservice both to our vendors and to our customers,” reported one co-manager.



John Brown Elementary School teacher Fonda Stewart prepares her fourth grade classroom for the return of her young charges. Fonda, who is entering her 20th year as a teacher, says she “looks forward to teaching each year. It’s always exciting when the kids come into class on that first day of school.”