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Planned Stevi-area subdivision comes under scrutiny

As soon as you create lots from existing lots of record, you're creating a new subdivision. You just can't keep splitting lots one by one.

- Dan Huls, Planning Board member

JAMIE OGDEN
Staff Reporter

The Ravalli County Planning Board tabled a decision Wednesday night on a proposed four-lot subdivision between the Eastside Highway and Lee Metcalf Wildlife Refuge.

Sunnyvale Orchard No. 2 is designated as a minor subdivision - five parcels or less - and its four lots would be developed northeast of Steviaville.

But Sunnyvale is also adjacent to another four-lot subdivision approved in 1908, causing dispute over its designation as a minor subdivision.

Both are owned by developer Gary Ince. The older subdivision has never been developed, though it has been farmed.

Considered together, the eight lots would be labeled a major subdivision, making Sunnyvale subject to more stringent regulations and requirements.

The land was originally subdivided for the development of the Bitterroot Township in the early part of the century - a township that was never created.

"As soon as you create lots from existing lots of record, you're creating a new subdivision," said Dan Huls, Planning

Board member from Corvallis. "You just can't keep splitting lots one by one."

Twelve neighboring property owners attended Wednesday's meeting, including a representative from the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge.

Concern at the refuge centers on encroaching subdivision development in surrounding areas, said Cal Henry, refuge representative.

Wildlife corridor shrinkage, groundwater and stream pollution, the disturbance of migratory bird nesting sites, and an increase in dogs and cats in the area were of concern, he said.

Neighbors also expressed concerns about the proposed subdivision's impacts on traffic and safety along the Eastside Highway, as well as on wildlife and wildlife habitat.

Tom Travis, who lives next to the 1908 subdivision, said he was not made aware at the time he purchased his home from Gary Ince that the older subdivision existed. Had he known, he would have reconsidered his purchase, he said, and now he must decide whether to stay or go.

Planning Board Chairman Rocky Duloks said people often purchase property in the valley for

its open space. They see space, but a plat map of the county would quickly demonstrate that there are many undeveloped subdivisions that only currently appear as open, he said.

"The challenge is to be fair," Duloks said. "People bought the property with an expectation based on what's been historically done. I'm not saying what's been done is right or wrong."

Without a county growth policy, county officials will continue to face these conflicts, said Bitterrooters for Planning President Stewart Brandberg.

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A country kind of place



Seventy-two-year-old bass guitar player Charlene Smith and her son Larry jam at the Eagles Lodge Friday night. Forever Country is the house band at the Eagles, playing every Friday.

Mother-son duo entertain Eagles Lodge regulars

RÖD DANIEL
Staff Reporter

"Maybe the best kept musical secret in Hamilton on Friday nights is the house band at the Eagles Lodge.

"The mother-son team, Forever Country covers country and rock classics as diverse as the crowd that comes to hear the rhythms.

"As an octogenarian couple, they gracefully across the dance floor to tunes from childhood, some twenty-somethings dressed in black nervously laugh at the jiggish scene, waiting for a rock 'n' roll song that maybe they had heard on their parents' stereo.

"Larry Smith, the band's driving force, said he knows 559 songs by heart and another 600 for which he needs the words. His mom, he said, knows about half that many.

"She just learns what she likes and watches me on the rest," he said.

Since learning to play in 1984, the band's bass guitar player, 72-year-old Charlene Smith, has kept the rhythm for her son Larry's band. A former insurance saleswoman, she said she never thought she'd be doing this sort of thing.

In 1968, Charlene's son and daughter began playing together in Oregon after moving from Oklahoma. Charlene said she would often go to the clubs and watch them perform.

"I would just listen, but I didn't know how to play," she said.

Until 1979, the brother-sister team played together. Then Larry moved to Alaska where he did a



Charlene picked up the bass at age 55 and loves to play fast and complicated bass lines.

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Rocky Mountain Grange Ag Day set for Saturday

RÖD DANIEL
Staff Reporter

With over 50 exhibitors signed up for the 10th Annual Ag Day, this year's event looks to be the largest agricultural gathering of the year in Ravalli County.

The free event takes place at the Rocky Mountain Grange Hall south of Hamilton on Saturday, March 3, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

It was started in 1991 by members of the 63-year-old Rocky Mountain Grange to help promote agriculture in the Bitterroot Valley, according to grange master Lester Cooley.

This year's theme, "Ag Technology For The Millennium," was chosen to increase public awareness of the available advanced agricultural technologies, services and supplies available in our communities," Cooley said.

The free event takes place at the Rocky Mountain Grange Hall south of Hamilton on Saturday, March 3, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Cooley said the day is packed with fun activities including hay rides in a pioneer cart, draft mule wagon rides, caricature sketches by Kelly Wilson and sky diving by the Silver Tip Sky Divers.

There also will be an opportunity to guess the weight of Bob Chis's pure-bred Angus bull, with the closest guesses winning prizes provided by Lakeside Feed and Fertilizer, Harvest Scene, Hamilton Feed and Farm, and Quality Supply.

Raffle tickets are on sale now for a drawing to be held at 3 p.m. on Saturday.

The grand prize winner will take

home a half of a steer from Harold Roberts, cut and wrapped, and second and third place winners will fill their freezers with a half of a grain-fed pig, donated, cut and wrapped by Hamilton Pack.

Tickets cost \$4 each or three for \$10 and can be purchased at Ag Days up until the time of the drawing or in advance from Cooley by calling 863-3651.

More than 50 exhibitors and vendors will display products and literature relating to community service, home, agriculture, gardening and forest nurseries. The Lucky Horseshoes 4-H Club of Steviaville will serve meals at a

fund-raiser and the Boy Scouts of America will direct parking and earn credit for service projects.

Cooley said a big push this year is to get new members involved in the grange.

"We have started a membership drive to get younger members who can continue the great work that the grange has done to promote Bitterroot agriculture," he said.

This year's Ag Day will be the first one in 10 years without grange master Bob Chis, who is in Texas receiving medical treatment. Cooley said that it has been a big challenge to organize the event because Chis had always done so much of the organizing himself.

"Bob has always been the driving force behind Ag Day," Cooley said. "We want to wish him a speedy recovery and put on a great event in his honor."

Forest hopes to experiment with stewardship contracting

BUDDY SMITH
Staff Reporter

It's a little like old-fashioned bartering, Forest Service officials say, and it's a different way of doing business in the woods.

A program called land-stewardship contracting uses timber to offset the cost of other needed work, such as fixing roads, planting trees or stream improvements.

Bitterroot National Forest officials this spring hope to offer three of the 28 nationwide contracts, something of an experiment authorized only once before by Congress.

"With the legislative authority that comes with these contracts, we'll be trad-

ing - so to speak - goods for services," said Jeff Amoss, a resource specialist with the Bitterroot forest.

The Bitterroot forest has had a "service contract" that's similar to a stewardship contract.

In that job near Darby, forest officials will pay the contractor for some of the work the agency wants done and will offer salvage rights to the wood. But that contract only deals with vegetation, Amoss said.

Stewardship contracting combines timber harvesting with other goal land managers hope to achieve - improving water quality, controlling noxious weeds, planting trees, improv-

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Niemier files motion to dismiss murder charge

LISA BAUMANN
Staff Reporter

The attorney for alleged murderer Mark Edwin Niemier filed final documents to support dismissing the case this week, and a hearing set for mid-April will determine whether the case will go to trial.

Niemier, 32, is accused of deliberate homicide after allegedly beating his Hamilton-area neighbor William Thomas Tomasevich to death Aug. 21 over a dispute about Niemier's dogs.

The argument turned into an altercation that afternoon on a road in the Queens Way area off Cherry Orchard Loop northwest of Woodside Crossing.

Tomasevich, 59, allegedly

pulled out a revolver and pointed it at Niemier, who took it and threw it into a nearby yard. Niemier then physically assaulted Tomasevich with his hands and feet, resulting in Tomasevich's death, according to court documents.

The state medical examiner later found Tomasevich's cause of death to be a heart attack and not the inflicted injuries, according to Michael Sherwood, Niemier's attorney.

Sherwood filed a 20-page motion to dismiss the case Jan. 21, on the grounds that the prosecution is unable and will be unable at trial to show that the alleged acts of Niemier caused the death of the deceased.

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Good morning to...

Kimberly Lindquist of Corvallis, Goodbye to Kimberly, who is leaving the Ravalli Republic and Lee Enterprises after working for the company since December of 1987.

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Weather

High 42 Low 20 Forecast

Yesterday Mostly cloudy with a slight chance of snow showers.

High 45 Low 13

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