

## ‘Doing something’ about housing is complicated

By Sue Stafford  
Correspondent

In a recent forum on houselessness in Sisters, Community Development Director Patrick Davenport provided an overview of the multiple issues at play for the City regarding affordable housing. He said people often ask, “Why can’t the City do something about affordable housing?”

The City Council has identified for the last three years as one of their exploring ways to encourage the construction of more affordable housing in Sisters. The term affordable housing means different things to different people, depending on their income, other financial resources, and any programs for which one may qualify.

People earning 60 percent of the adjusted median income (AMI) for Deschutes County are eligible for housing that has monthly housing costs that don’t exceed 30 percent of their monthly income, but there are many more applicants than available housing. For others, an affordable house might mean a home priced at under \$300,000 or \$200,000 or whatever amount for which they can qualify for a mortgage. At various times so far this year, the word on the street has been there is nothing for sale under \$300,000 in Sisters.

Davenport pointed out the City has a small staff and budget with which to work. The \$300,000 provided last year to Housing Works to help build the 48-unit low-income apartments currently under construction was a monumental commitment for the City, and not likely repeatable.

Council is currently considering adopting a construction excise tax on all new construction to help create a fund to encourage

affordable housing projects and to offer purchasing or rental programs to citizens. Builders and realtors are generally against the tax, stating it will eat into their bottom line.

Davenport explained that land-use and zoning laws govern where and what type of housing can be built or occupied. He said tension could arise among neighbors when people share living quarters, with two or three families in one residence.

The number of long-term rentals is dwindling as property owners convert their houses and condos into short-term rentals, leaving permanent Sisters renters unable to find replacement housing when they have to move.

Small businesses in a small town have difficulty paying wages that enable employees to purchase a home or pay the high rents being charged on the few rentals that are available.

The cost of land and cost of housing continues to rise throughout Central Oregon as the region attracts more people. The increased land costs get passed on to the homebuyer. The new tariffs being imposed by the federal government could impact the cost of building materials, which could result in higher home prices.

Davenport cautioned the stakeholders at last week’s meeting that any plans to build a year-round shelter in Sisters would run into numerous zoning and land-use issues as well as neighbors or businesses who may be hesitant to have a shelter near them.



## Food preservation hotline opens for the season

By Kym Pokorny  
Correspondent

CORVALLIS – As canning season gets underway, the food preservation hotline from Oregon State University Extension Service starts taking calls July 16.

The toll-free hotline at 800-354-7319 runs until October 12 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. When the hotline is closed, callers can leave a message. The hotline is staffed by certified Master Food Preserver volunteers in Lane and Douglas counties, but it’s available statewide.

Thousands of callers use the hotline each year and approximately half the questions are about food safety. That’s a good thing, said Jeanne Brandt, Master Food Preserver program coordinator.

“There is a tremendous amount of misinformation on the Internet, so it’s hard to figure out what is reliable and what is unsafe,” she said. “That’s partly why the hotline is so important. Our volunteers know we have reliable, research-based information and they can guide people to success.”

While food preservation continues to be popular, it is less of a family tradition than it used to be, Brandt said.

“We aren’t learning from our family and friends much anymore and we don’t have them to call for directions and advice,” she said. “That’s where the hotline comes in. We step in for the information that used to be distributed – correctly or not – among canners.”

Most commonly, people ask about preserving salsa, tomatoes and tuna. OSU

Extension offers publications on each: Salsa Recipes for Canning, Canning Seafood, Canning Tomatoes and Tomato Products and Safely Canning Foods: Pressure Canners, Pressure Cookers and Electric Pressure Cookers. Search the catalog for “Food Preservation” and you’ll find more publications, including some in Spanish.

Extension’s Ask an Expert, an online question-and-answer service, is another way to get information. Post a question and an expert will get back to you within 48 hours. They can offer information about anything related to food preservation from safety concerns to recipes.

There’s also an app – Canning Timer & Checklist – for more experienced canners that provides reminders of essential steps in the canning process.

Additionally, many Extension offices offer free pressure-gauge testing.

## Region a hot spot for Colorado tick fever

BEND (AP) — Central Oregon has seen at least four confirmed cases and one suspected case of Colorado tick fever in just more than a month.

*The Bend Bulletin* reports the Oregon Health Authority says eight of the 11 confirmed cases of the viral disease statewide since 2011 have been Deschutes County residents.

Four of the recent cases involved Deschutes County residents, while the fifth was a resident of Jefferson County.

Colorado tick fever is a sometimes painful but rarely fatal tick-borne virus usually diagnosed in only one or two Oregonians per year.

In rare cases, the infection has led to viral meningitis or encephalitis, and pregnant women can be at risk for spontaneous abortions or birth defects.



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