

National Night Out: One hot day aimed at public safety

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STAYTON MAIL

Mt. Angel Mayor Andrew Otte greeted community members with a little slice of insight at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 1.

Otte told mid-town gatherers that there were two things you can count on in Oregon: It's going to rain during the Rose Festival, and National Night Out is going to be the hottest day of the year. The mayor recanted a bit, acknowledging that the following day may prove more scorching.

In light of that, dozens of town folks lined up in the intersection by the Glockenspiel for tasty hot dogs, pasta and green salads, melons bites and cupcake treats, taking part in the National Night Out mingling.

The Mt. Angel scene was replicated throughout the east Willamette Valley, and nationally, as neighbors gathered to eat and greet as part of the traditional first-Tuesday in August festivity aimed at providing people an opportunity to convene and connect.

NNO's overarching aim is to enhance public safety; face-to-face familiarity is a key ingredient to neighborhood cohesiveness.

Drawing a 30-mile beeline south out of Mt. Angel, gatherings were taking place all along Cascade Highway corridor – Silverton, Sublimity, Scio

and at multiple parks in Stayton.

Peripheral to the Cascade Highway route, communities such as Scotts Mills, Lyons, Mill City, Aumsville and Turner all held their own neighborhood versions of NNO, 100-degree weather aside.

Each event had its own unique character: Sublimity traditionally fuses NNO with its summertime First Tuesday, drawing one of the largest gatherings in the area; Stayton fires up grills in neighborhood parks around town, such as the popular Pioneer Park where Sgt. Michael Meeks and Peer Court Coordinator Sharon Goodman reportedly served up more than 100 burgers inside an hour.

On the north edge of town Sgt. Danielle Wetzel and city Records Clerk Michelle Ash plied the grill to feed the Santiam Park diners.

Stayton Mayor Hank Porter and the city council split up to meet with residents at various parks. Police Chief Rich Sebens said the day's heat appeared to whittle the turnout down from previous years, but Stayton still saw several hundred collectively taking part.

After a hiatus from last year, Scio proved that its community knows how to put on an event as scores of community members filtered into the Lamb & Wool Festival grounds to enjoy not only burgers



Many east Willamette Valley residents turned out for a bite and a visit as part of National Night Out Tuesday, Aug. 1.

PHOTOS BY JUSTIN MUCH | STATESMAN JOURNAL

and chips but slices of sweet watermelon and pad-buttered corn on the cob.

Logger boosters and Friends of the Scio Library were among the hosting contingent as summer-themed background music lilted over the scene. Scio Fire Chief Doug Branch estimated about 125 turned out.

"Were the most popular show here," said Scio Fire Lt. Randall Boyer, who was helping to hoist game youngsters into one of the massive fire rigs on site. "These are future firefighters right here."

That, too, would play into the public-safety objective of National Night Out.



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Property

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liking because of its size and central location. Other sites recently considered include the 3.1-acre former Square Deal Lumber property at North Water and Brown streets, the .96-acre "Potter's Block" area, and 7.8 acres of undeveloped land behind the Senior Center on Westfield Street.

"The Eugene Field location is very good," Fossholm said. "If officers were inside a facility there, no matter which direction you go, you're at the center of town. You've got great access north, south, east and west."

There would also be plenty of room for parking and a sally port, a gated area where officers could load and unload anyone in custody. Currently, prisoners must be walked through an open parking lot past the general public.

The police department's most pressing needs include a seismically sound structure, separate holding areas for juvenile and adult prisoners, and a main entrance that doesn't come through the holding area, Fossholm said.

The cramped quarters at City Hall make it impossible to separate adults and juveniles by both "sight and sound," as

required by state law, and the holding area arrangement puts officers and their weapons within arm's reach of prisoners being fingerprinted, transported or breath-tested, Fossholm said. He invited anyone interested in the facility's shortfalls to take a tour.

Constructing a new police station is one of the council's five-year goals, while adding space for all other municipal services is a 10-year goal. At meetings, councilors have repeatedly stressed a desire to build without increasing taxes for residents.

Money to purchase the Eugene Field property will come from Silverton's Civic Building Project Fund, the balance of which stands at just over \$1 million and will rise to \$1.5 million when this year's scheduled transfer from the general fund occurs, Wurster said.

Public response to the city's plans has been favorable, with the audience at the July 17 meeting actually breaking into applause after the vote.

"We have a fine police department, and it's time to give them the respect and the breathing room to do their professional jobs," said Greg Sheesley. "I hope we will take the bull by both horns, not just an ear, and look at putting both facilities there, doing it in a seamless manner so it's not spread over 25 years because of the sobering amount of

money it would entail."

Sheesley asked councilors to save the 14 large trees on the Eugene Field property, a request echoing previous suggestions of a plaza, park or green space. Other proposals include adding affordable housing and a commercial component, Wurster said. The property is zoned for "commercial fringe" development.

"It's a unique piece of property that far worse could happen to than what we have planned for it," said Mayor Kyle Palmer, noting that all 11 letters submitted to the council last month were "very supportive of this process."

Rick Bittner told councilors he's delighted City Hall may be sited on the Eugene Field property because it will help keep Silverton's downtown core alive.

"If we start locating a police station outside the downtown circle, I'm afraid we're going to end up with something like Stayton, where the downtown will die," he said.

In his opinion, Eugene Field's prime location handily trumps the only two strikes against it: the hazardous materials cleanup and the fact that it lies within Silverton's "inundation zone," the part of town expected to flood if the dam at the reservoir were to fail. Incidentally, much of the city – everything low-lying from the reservoir down

to Pine and Schlador streets – lies within that zone.

"If the city moves forward with acquisition of the Eugene Field property, all of this information will be taken into consideration as we design future improvements on the site," Wurster said.

Eugene Field School is located at 410 N. Water St.

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