

Local

Sumpter's new mayor takes the helm, Council sworn in

By Meghan Andersch

Meghan@TheBakerCountyPress.com

Among business conducted at Tuesday night's Sumpter City Council meeting was the swearing in of reelected council members, an introduction from the new mayor, and election of a new President of Council.

After leading the Pledge of Allegiance and overseeing the approval of minutes from Council meetings on December 9, 2014 and December 31, 2014, former mayor John Young stepped down for new mayor Melissa Findley.

Those in attendance offered applause for both Young in appreciation for what he has accomplished the last four years and in welcome for Findley.

LeAnne Woolf and Robert Armbruster, re-elected to City Council, were sworn in.

Mayor Findley explained she had been sworn in earlier in the month by notary, but offered to repeat the swearing-in publicly.

Mayor Findley's first order of business was overseeing approval of bills. Findley also shared that all Council meetings will be recorded.

She explained that this will make it easier to pull information for minutes. Anyone else who wishes to record the meetings is welcome to do so.

Findley made an introductory statement to explain to those in attendance what she stands for and why she accepted the offer to be a write-in candidate for mayor. She began by sharing a quote: "Don't confuse small with insignificant." She went on to say that she hopes to see Sumpter start enlarging its vision and said she is disappointed about Sumpter's reputation in the county and beyond as people who can't get along or make decision. She pledged to take her orders from the State, citizens, and City Charter.

Mayor Findley shared several ideas of things she would like to see change, including use of City equipment and time, the way flea markets are run, public improvement and maintenance projects, EMS training and the Quick Response Unit (QRU) status, marketing of Sumpter, getting a grant writer for the City, launching a City-owned website which will contain marketing information, forms, and the ability to pay bills, the process of employee evaluations and follow-through, utilization of The Water Tower communiqué that goes out with the water bill, newspaper coverage, accumulation and use of comp time, acquisition of Superintendent's House and new bathrooms at the library, and transparency of Council votes.

In return, she asked that citizens, "Show up, speak up, and not complain anonymously."

She asked that citizens feel free to let her know



Meghan Andersch / The Baker County Press

Melissa Findley (left) was introduced officially as the new mayor of Sumpter Tuesday. Findley was sworn in earlier.

their thoughts or concerns, but requested that they also respect her privacy. She offered to share her e-mail and phone, and asked that if someone absolutely must stop by, that they call first.

Julie McKinney, City Recorder, reported that tin was put on the roof of the picnic shelter. All that is left on the Park Project is to paint the shelter, which must be completed before the project is closed.

The City was granted an extension until June 30, 2015, to complete the painting. McKinney said CenturyLink is getting back to her with the proper person to talk to about renewing the franchise fee contract.

The City received a letter from Heidi Williams (DEQ) approving the \$135,000 reduction in cost for the necessary sewer system upgrade.

Later in the meeting, Mayor Findley reported that they are waiting to find out if the preliminary engineering report will satisfy the requirements of the IFA loan application or if a new report will be needed.

Utility Manager Jeff McKinney reported that December went very well, with no frozen pipes despite some harsh weather. The City plowed twice, on 12/21 and 12/28.

The water system plugged up and had to be brought back online only twice. He is continuing research into the most cost-effective ways to complete some necessary repairs and updates to the water system.

Fire Chief Kurt Clarke reported one medical call for the month. Paperwork was finished and sent on the Volunteer Fire Assistance grant for the costs of new certified turnouts, hose, and equipment for the brush truck. There have been some issues with volunteers' radios working.

Kerry Clarke used \$1,000 of his personal funds to buy two radios. One more is needed as two people, Julie Prevo and Brian Patton, joined the fire department. On the

last drill night, the QRU and QRU building were cleaned and organized.

Much discussion, including council and public input, took place regarding accepting the property known as the Superintendent's House. Mayor Findley stated she had some concerns about the costs to the City for care and upkeep as well as restoration. She suggested that a final decision not be made until the questions can be discussed and settled.

Mayor Findley explained she would like to develop a Flea Market committee outside of the Council, but utilizing their experience and input.

She would like to see the committee made up of local community members and businesses. She would also like to look at what other attractions could be brought in at the same time as the Flea Markets.

Councilperson Annie Oakley reviewed a few minor corrections to the new Employee Handbook as suggested by CIS attorney. Resolution 313 regarding adoption of the new handbook was read by Julie McKinney and voted in.

Mayor Findley explained that Sumpter has never had an employee handbook and that Oakley and the rest of the Council have been hard at work to create one.

Votes were taken for President of Council. Findley explained to attendees that the duties of this position are running the Council meeting if the mayor is not present, or stepping up in the absence of the mayor to handle any issues.

With three votes, Toni Thompson was elected as next President of Council. Resolution 312, to remove John Young and LeAnne Woolf, as outgoing mayor and President of Council, as signers on City accounts, and add Melissa Findley and Toni Thompson as signers on the accounts, was read aloud by Julie McKinney, voted on, and passed by Council. Mayor Findley proposed

the idea of bi-monthly City meetings, starting in February.

She suggested keeping the second Tuesday of the month for business and using the fourth Tuesday to "get stuff done." She stated that she believes there are some things that can be done in a more expeditious manner.

Councilperson Robert Armbruster distributed to Council a suggested form to document citizen concerns.

The form contains space to record incident date, name of the person with the concern, ordinance violation (if any), supporting evidence, and recommended fixes.

Mona Clarke, in attendance, suggested having the forms signed as well. Armbruster explained that he has a folder of complaints, many of them anonymous, and that it is frustrating to try and resolve issues when they are being reported second or third-hand.

Armbruster also suggested taking a more active role in evaluating training opportunities available through League of Oregon Cities and other approved entities.

He suggested that when an employee wants to attend such a training, that the Council members understand what the training is about, approve it, and review a participant evaluation to better understand the benefit of the training and decide if others would also benefit from the opportunity.

There was discussion, including public input, over the scope and role of duties of the mayor.

Findley asked Council if they would like to continue the precedent set by the previous mayor in having her do the day-to-day handling of the office and staff.

Council voted to approve this.

All were invited to stay afterward for coffee and cookies to welcome the new mayor and returning members of City Council.

PEO offers scholarships

Chapter AX of the P.E.O. Sisterhood will award two academic scholarships to two graduating senior girls from high schools in Baker County and North Powder in May 2015.

The Gertrude Fortner-Rose Haskell Scholarship was named for two charter members of Chapter AX who strongly believed in higher education for women.

The Mildred F. Rogers Chapter AX P.E.O. Scholarship was established in 2000 by her daughter and her grandchildren. Mrs. Rogers was a long-time member of Chapter AX, being initiated in 1951 and holding the office of president in 1952. She was a descendent of Oregon Trail pioneer grandparents and lived her entire life in Baker City. Always a loyal citizen, she gave of herself to the community of Baker City and to its people, so that future generations would have the opportunity to appreciate life as she had. She died at the age of 100.

Scholarship applications are available in the guidance office at high schools in Baker County (Baker, Pine Eagle, Burnt River and Huntington) and North Powder.

Baker High School applicants must return applications to the high school office by 8AM March 2, 2015.

Other Baker County and North Powder applicants must mail applications to arrive by 8 a.m. March 2, 2015 to Dorothy Mason, PO Box 446 Baker City, OR 97814.

All female students from Baker County or North Powder, who plan to enroll in an accredited college or university are eligible.

The scholarships are awarded on the basis of academic achievement, goals, activities, financial need and personal character.

The P.E.O. sisterhood is an international philanthropic educational organization, which was founded in 1869 at Iowa Wesleyan College in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa. P.E.O. promotes educational opportunities for women through a variety of scholarship and grant opportunities.

The P.E.O. sisterhood owns and supports Cottey College in Nevada, Missouri. Chapter AX was organized in 1932 in Baker City.

For further information about the scholarships, contact Dorothy Mason at 541-523-7642.

Cemetery grants available

The Oregon Commission on Historic Cemeteries is offering grants for qualified historic cemeteries. The annual grants fund projects that preserve historic cemeteries. Projects funded in the past include marker repair workshops, fencing, signs, interpretive panels and brochures, security lighting, access improvements, records management and more.

Awards typically range between \$1,000 and \$4,000, but have been higher. Anyone can apply for a grant. While the grant applications are online, they are simple and commission staff can provide support.

"Our goal is to preserve Oregon's historic cemeteries, so we try to make it easy for people to access funds to do that while ensuring the funds are appropriately used," notes Kuri Gill, historic cemeteries program coordinator.

Patricia McCracken with Winchester Elementary School mentioned the assistance on her grant report. "We were new to filling out grants, staff was extremely helpful when we called," she said.

There will be grant workshops on project planning and grant writing. A two-hour workshop will be Feb. 3 in Salem. A one-hour webinar will be available on Feb. 5.

State law established the seven-member commission to maintain a listing of all historic cemeteries and gravesites in Oregon; promote public education on the significance of historic cemeteries; and help obtain financial and technical assistance for restoring, improving and maintaining their appearances. To learn more about the grants or visit www.oregonheritage.org or contact Kuri Gill at Kuri.Gill@oregon.gov or 503-986-0685.

4-Hers, OHA to raffle off pistol

The Patriots 4-H club, in cooperation with the Oregon Hunters Association, is holding a raffle to raise money for its shooting sports participants.

The Patriots 4-H Club is a local club that participates in archery, shotgun, and rifle. The club has participated in a statewide contest for the past four years. The club has also sent a team to Albany to compete in Oregon State Shooting Competition.

Club members shoot in at least one of the disciplines every week. Members also do community service within the area. Some of these projects have been canned food drives and painting at the local trap club.

The item up for raffle is a Springfield Loaded Operator .45 cal. pistol.

Only 100 tickets will be sold at a price of \$20 each. Funds raised will be used to offset travel expenses for shooting sports competitions.

For information or to purchase tickets, contact Toni Myers, at 541-540-1332.

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