

Local

City Budget Board holds first meeting for fiscal year



Gina K. Swartz / The Baker County Press

The City's Budget Board met for its first meeting of the new fiscal year at City Hall this week.

By Gina K. Swartz

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Tuesday evening saw the first meeting of the Budget Board for the 2015-2016 fiscal year.

The budget committee is made up of City Council and an equal number of community members appointed to the board. The appointed members are Gail Duman, Randy Daughtery, Aletha Bonebrake, Beverly Calder, Bruce Nichols, Rustin Smith and Dan McQuisten.

The City operates by fiscal year, beginning July 1 and ending June 30.

A budget must be decided upon and adopted before the end of each fiscal year per ORS 294 and is considered a legal document that is regulated by law. Getting to an adopted budget involves several meetings by the Board, including public hearings and input. This year a work session aimed at preparing the proposed budget is set for May 8 with a Budget Committee meeting scheduled for May 18.

If needed, tentative plans to meet May 19, 20 and 21 have been scheduled also. A budget hearing is set for June 23 with the City Council at which time the budget the committee has agreed on will be presented, adopted and any appropriations made.

This initial meeting of the Board was informational aimed at bringing them up to speed on the status of the current budget, clarifying what a budget is and how it is structured and allowing an opportunity for any questions to be answered or concerns to be addressed.

The meeting was facilitated by Jeanie Dexter, Finance Director for the City, and Mike Kee, City Manager, who also serves as the City Budget Officer. Dexter apprised those in attendance that the State Department of Revenue does hold yearly classes and workshops that could help those understand the process better and if anyone would like information regarding those classes and or workshops she would be happy to provide that information.

Dexter also advised that the Department of Revenue also has booklets and other information online that might be useful in understanding the process. Dexter began the meeting with a power point presentation explaining the process and highlighting different funds that money is budgeted into, the biggest being the General Fund which accounts for 32% of the total budget followed by the Street Fund at 16% and Water Fund at 12%.

The City Auditor Bob

Seymour was at the meeting to address the committee on the latest audit report saying "it was a clean report and the city had no debt."

Audits are required by the Secretary of State and as Seymour explained, "A test to see how well you did."

Audits also look for fraud or mistakes and provide risk assessments. Seymour also put into perspective the importance of not exceeding a budget stating that technically the City Council is responsible if the budget is exceeded and could be held liable legally, stressing the importance of adopting a budget that is going to work. Committee members were given the City's annual financial report as prepared by Bob Seymour.

Randy Daughtery questioned, regarding the document, "On page 34, what are allowances for uncollectables? That seems to be up 44% from 2013."

Dexter responded "Mostly, those are for ambulance services."

Medicare sets a standard across the board rate that they can be billed for these services. The rate Baker City charges for this service is more, therefore the difference has to be written off as it is uncollectable.

Daughtery also questioned a deficit in the

Central Stores Fund that was explained by Dexter as old plumbing fixtures that were in storage that contained lead.

The City has been allowed to continue to use those fixtures until recently when they had to be disposed of and replaced. It was explained that the city has to keep a supply on hand for when emergency situations requiring those parts happen.

"Those issues need fixed immediately, there is not an option of waiting a day or two for a part. You've got to maintain inventory," said Seymour.

Also brought up was money that the golf course owed the city that has yet to be repaid and money that is set aside to pay employees what is owed to them upon separation for whatever reason.

City Manager Kee also gave some updates on continuing budget item projects such as the Mt. Hope Cemetery Veterans headstone repair, ramp replacement at City Hall, window replacement for City Hall in which some of the allotted money is being given to HBC, the heating system upgrade needed at Sam-O-Swim Center and the Fire Department radio upgrade.

The meeting then adjourned.

Sheriff position

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Hoopes's letter of intent states, "My name is John Hoopes and I am submitting this letter to notify you of my interest in the position of interim Sheriff of Baker County, Oregon.

"For nearly 15 years, I have proudly served and protected the residents of Baker County, as well as the countless visitors who come to this area, as a Sheriff's Deputy for the Baker County Sheriff's Office. I started my career with the Baker County Sheriff's Office in the Reserve Deputy Program under Sheriff Terry Speelman in 2000. During my time as a Reserve, I attended Eastern Oregon University and worked as a temporary parole officer, prior to being hired in 2001 as a Jail Deputy for the Baker County Jail. In 2002, I was hired as a Patrol Deputy and certified through the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST) as a police officer. To date, I have earned my basic, intermediate and advanced police officer certifications.

"In addition to my duties as a Patrol Deputy, I am union president of the Baker County Law Enforcement Association. As a volunteer for the Association, I have represented and guided our Sheriff's Office employees in a leadership role as president and vice president for nearly 5 years.

"I proudly served my country as a United States Marine between the years of 1986 and 1991. I completed two tours of duty in Okinawa, Japan, as part of my training as a Marine Corps infantryman and held a secret clearance status for 3 1/2 years. I was honorably discharged in 1991, and in 1996, I returned home to successfully raise my own children as a single parent and to assist my father with the automotive repair business my grandfather started in the 1950's. In 2002, my wife Lauri and I were married—together we raised five children and are now the proud grandparents of 7 grandchildren. As a sixth generation resident of this county, I take pride in knowing my family has called this area home for over 100 years.

"I am eternally grateful to Baker County for providing me the opportunity to be a law enforcement officer. I take great pride in the uniform I wear, protecting the people I serve, and working with the employees I consider family. It is my hope and desire to be selected for this appointment—it would be a sincere honor to serve our community as Sheriff."

Hoopes and Ash will meet with County Commissioners March 11 during a special session at 9:30 a.m. at the Courthouse. The public is invited to attend and ask questions.

A decision between the two candidates is expected March 18.

Republicans add more guests to annual banquet

The Baker County Republican Party will hold its annual banquet on Saturday, March 21 at the Baker Elks Lodge. Special guest Congressman Greg Walden will be the keynote speaker.

Other guests include, State Representatives Greg Barreto and Cliff Bentz. State Senator Ted Ferrioli will also be in attendance. Bill Currier, newly elected Oregon Republican Party (ORP) state Chairman, and Chris Barreto, returning ORP Secretary, have also both announced their attendance, as has Oregon's National Committeeman, Solomon Yue. The group may also have some special surprise guests.

Silent auction items will be available to bid on, as well as a couple of items auctioned off by Congressman Walden. Door prizes will be awarded throughout the night. The party will also have a presidential straw poll for all attendees to participate in.

Tickets are on sale now for the prime rib dinner at \$35 each. Tickets are on sale at Dunn & Associates at the corner of Main and Broadway, or call Suzan Ellis Jones at 541-519-5035. All precinct committee people in the county are also selling tickets.

Deadline to purchase tickets is March 18th.

Congressman Walden is appearing at this event only as a featured speaker. Congressman Walden is not asking for funds or donations.

North Powder man found dead after walking away from vehicle

According to the Wal-lowa County Sheriff's office, William Lee Fox of North Powder was found

dead after his vehicle became stuck in the snow near the Imnaha River Road Sunday.

Fox, who had several health conditions, including chronic lung disease, had attempted to walk

out and is thought to have passed away of natural causes on the way.

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Free smoking cessation class offered

Saint Alphonsus - Baker City is excited to offer Baker County residents a free tobacco cessation program. This is a four day course Monday March 9th – Thursday March 12th from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Classes will be held at Saint Alphonsus Medical Center – Baker City in the Powder River Conference Room. To register call today 541-524-9023. Space is limited so register now.

Nancy Caspersen is a Registered Nurse, Tobacco Cessation Specialist and ex-smoker. She has been studying tobacco and educating tobacco users for over 20 years. Nancy has helped and educated over 10,000 smokers and tobacco chewers in her live class. Her new DVD program has been getting rave reviews from the medical profession as well as smokers and chewers who have been given the knowledge and the inspiration they need to quit.

When participants complete the live four-evening program they will receive the Quit with Nancy DVD program for free! This DVD program sells for \$350 on Amazon.