

Local

Sumpter meeting has varied agenda

• EMOTIONS RUN HIGH AT MEETING

BY MEGHAN ANDERSCH
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Sumpter City Council's second monthly meeting on April 28th was marked by moments of levity and spots of tension, especially in regard to discussion of what is and is not appropriate regarding comments outside meetings.

A group of about 25 attendees and two special guests filled City Hall for the evening's meeting.

Mayor Melissa Findley reported on her attendance at the "tourism kickoff" for the Baker County Chamber of Commerce on Saturday, stating there was not much of a turnout but it was a good try. Findley also met with Greg Smith of the Economic Development Council and discussed with him some things the Council would like Sumpter to do regarding the Oregon State Fair. Findley will make a presentation at the next meeting.

On April 16th, Sumpter hosted a Region 8 League of Oregon Cities luncheon. Much of the discussion was about budgeting.

Engineers and DEQ and IFA representatives were in attendance, along with representatives of Halfway, John Day, Huntington, Seneca, and Sumpter. Julie McKinney, City Recorder, reported she is working on cleaning up files and still getting lots of calls about the flea market.

Jeff McKinney, Utility Manager, reported a few sewer problems dealt with recently. City water is coming in fine. The sewer will be irrigated in the near future. The Park is getting cleaned up for the season. McKinney also stated his wish to publically recognize several citizens—Lee German, Dale Demaris, and Marsha Demaris—for their assistance to an elderly area resident.

Kurt Clarke, Fire Chief, reported that personnel records were moved into the main office. One new

member joined the Department this month. Fire hydrants are being tested and clean up in the bay is ongoing. The Firefighter 1 class being taught by John Young is going well. ODFW approved putting a new draft area in Cracker Creek, and work on that will begin in the next few weeks.

There have been a few medical calls and Jim Sheller put together an address book for the Quick Response Unit, which clearly shows all addresses.

Clarke stated his wish to test the big fire alarm on City Hall, and was allowed to do so during the meeting. Clarke asked about having the alarm sound when there is a fire. Clarke also asked about approval to purchase a water tender and said they run in about the \$10,000 price range. Clarke requested having until June 1 to review and submit a business plan. Findley asked Clarke to also review changed verbiage on job descriptions, decide with his team what they think is the best language to use, and let her know which descriptions still need to be written.

Findley read a list of things in the Fire Department brought up to standard and compliance, including replacing batteries in and testing of self-contained breathing apparatus. Clarke responded that the Department pays a company to do annual testing of the units, which they did on April 23. There was some back and forth on what paperwork, if any, there is to show what work was done. Clarke stated the only evidence he is aware of is the bill, which would come to the office. Findley asked that Clarke review and approve the bill before it's paid, to ensure someone is signing off that the work is done. Clarke stated he will find out from CS Western what other paperwork they provide.

Attendee Marlene Bork and Head of Council Toni Thompson stated their appreciation for Clarke and all Fire Department Volun-

teers, a sentiment echoed by Councilperson Robert Armbruster.

City bookkeeper Kathi Vinson gave attendees a "budget crash course," including information on how the city's six funds (general fund, water fund, sewer fund, street fund, State revenue sharing, and water bonded debt) are funded and what the money goes to support. She also touched on items figured into the annual budget, such as funds for water line extensions.

Findley then introduced Travis Ash, Baker County's new interim sheriff as of May 1. Ash shared he would like to get out at least once a month to each city. He stated he is generally always available by phone for those with any concerns. He responded to a few queries about ATV laws and coverage of the flea markets.

Bryan Vegter with the Baker City Cycling Classic was the next guest and he shared information on the new stage this year that will start and end in Sumpter. The 88-mile route begins at the Sumpter Museum/Library, goes out to Prairie City and returns to Sumpter. The race begins June 26th at 12:30 p.m. Vegter described the race as a "fast-moving cattle drive," stating the racers will take up one lane and then be gone, returning about four hours later. When asked about safety and provision for vehicles to get around the racers, Vegter explained that there will be a caravan with every field and a sweep with the slowest rider to pick up signs and trash, etc. Caravan drivers should only wave vehicles to go ahead when they are 100% certain the road is clear of oncoming traffic.

Finishing up old business, Findley clarified that the Groundskeeper position is actually called Parks Manager. The position was offered to and accepted by Anna Stafford who will hopefully give an update at the next Council meeting.

Findley and Thompson

met with Carey Clark, head of the Planning Commission, to discuss roles, responsibilities, and goals. Unless certain issues come up for discussion, the commission is focusing on the comprehensive plan, evacuation plan, and defensible space plan.

Findley stated they will be checking on what other Oregon cities have written for Planning Commission roles and responsibilities and hope to borrow from others' written procedures. They are also working to set up some workshops. Findley inquired if League of Oregon Cities has any training available at this time, and they do not.

However, other cities have also asked, so there may be something in the future.

Findley then shared a derogatory comment made to her when she ran into an individual at the Post Office, stating the comment was unnecessary and unacceptable. There ensued back and forth between Findley and the individual over the matter. The meeting quickly, though briefly, descended into bickering between various parties as to what is acceptable and unacceptable, what is to be expected and comes with the job, why the issue was brought up in the Council meeting in the first place, and comments made by others to different individuals in the past. A citizen in attendance asked if the individual could be removed, as there was a representative of the Sheriff's Department present.

Ash did stand and explain to the assembled that as an officer of the law, no laws were being violated and it was not his place to get involved. Ash stated that personally, he would encourage everyone to work together whether they like each other or not and said, "You're not going to accomplish anything with this back and forth."

The originally mentioned individual offered an apology and, aside from another individual exiting the meeting vehemently, the meeting concluded uneventfully.

Findley tabled until the next meeting discussion on a quote on purchasing the cell tower and possibility of selling 27 acres owned by City.

Councilperson Annie Oakley shared some concerns including that the citizen feedback form seems to have gone by the wayside, an employee complaint is still awaiting resolution over 10 days out, and official correspondence from government agencies is not getting to Council members. She also asked about progress on resolving a citizen complaint and asked about speaking to citizens to get background information before calling up government agencies.

Councilperson LeAnn Wolf mentioned a couple of policies not yet voted on by Council, including that all purchases must be approved by the Mayor and restrictions on the Utility Manager hiring part-time help. Findley responded that these are not policies but temporary procedures due to budget constraints. She agreed to rewrite the temporary procedure on approval of purchases to specify a dollar amount and clarify that it is temporary.

WWII veteran celebrates 90th



Carmelita Holland / The Baker County Press

Walter Saunders celebrated his 90th birthday last weekend in Richland.

BY CARMELITA HOLLAND
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World War II Veteran, Walter Saunders Jr. holds one of many birthday cakes it took to serve a crowded room full of guests numbering over one hundred thirty, gathered at the Eagle Valley Grange Community Hall in Richland, April 18th, to help him celebrate his 90th birthday, which actually took place April 14th. With Walter were his three children, Peggy Webster of Las Vegas, Jan Bonn of Richland and Wade Saunders of Baker City. Jan and Wade are both grandparents, each representing a fourth generation of the family.

"I can't believe how many people came from so far to spend the day with me," said Walter. "I had friends and relatives come from all over. "People that came from Washington were Sam Saunders from Bellevue, Richard and Noel came from Bainbridge Island, and Glenda Saunders Nordahl came from the Seattle area. Ralph Saunders came all the way from Billings, Montana."

Walter is the last living child of a family of nine children born to Walter Sr. and Elizabeth White Saunders, a family that settled in Eagle Valley about 1885, and became leaders in the sheep industry for many years.

Walter has become an historian of Eagle Valley, remembering his youth and going through the Great Depression, and then being drafted into the army to go to war in Europe during World War II.

During his career as a rancher he also became a carpenter, a truck driver during dam construction, a pilot, and took higher education to become a teacher at Richland where he graduated from Eagle Valley High School years earlier.

Walter is a Granger and still takes part in community projects.

Federal Land action group launched

WASHINGTON — Tuesday, Representatives Chris Stewart (R-Utah) and Rob Bishop (R-Utah) launched the Federal Land Action Group, a congressional team that will develop a legislative framework for transferring public lands to local ownership and control.

This group, chaired by Rep. Stewart, will build on the work started by Utah and other states in recent years. "The federal government has been a lousy landlord for western states and we simply think the states can do it better," Stewart said. "If we want healthier forests, better access to public lands, more consistent funding for public education and more reliable energy development, it makes sense to have local control."

Rep. Bishop, Chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, said, "This group will explore legal and historical background in order to determine the best congressional action needed to return these lands back to the rightful owners. We have assembled a strong team of lawmakers, and I look forward to formulating a plan that reminds the federal government it should leave the job of land management to those who know best."

The Federal Land Action Group will hold a series of forums with experts on public lands policy, with the goal of introducing transfer legislation.

Other members of the Group include Representatives Mark Amodei (R-Nev.), Diane Black (R-Tenn.), Jeff Duncan (R-S.C.), Crescent Hardy (R-Nev.), and Cynthia Lummis (R-WY).

Local caregiver class offered

Powerful Tools for Caregivers Classes will be held at Community Connection Baker City Senior Center, 2810 Cedar Street, from 9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. Sessions are held every Tuesday and begin on May 5, 2015. Classes consist of six sessions held once a week.

For more information or to register, contact Rochelle at 541-963-3186 or rochelle@ceno.org or Amanda at 541-523-6591. Class size is limited and pre-registration is required.

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