

Local

Sumpter Council business: grants, roads, fire and water

• ALTERCATION BREAKS OUT BETWEEN SUMPTER RESIDENTS AFTER MEETING

BY MEGHAN ANDERSCH
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Sumpter City Council met August 11 to hear reports and updates.

Head of Council Toni Thompson also gave her resignation at the end of the meeting.

Mayor Melissa Findley opened the meeting at 7 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance. With minor corrections, minutes from July's meeting were accepted. Bills were unanimously approved.

Findley read a report from bookkeeper Kathi Vinson with the current amounts in City funds and accounts. Findley stated the amounts are low due to bills and fees due and that the City must be conservative with its funds.

Utility Manager Jeff McKinney reported the water situation is all right. The sewer pond is being pumped, and is on schedule to be at the correct level this fall. A few water leak repairs and sewer connection were accomplished his month.

McKinney read an explanation of the street repair grant. The City received a grant of \$50,000 from ODOT Small Cities Allocation for street improvements. The roads specified in the grant, which will be done by badge, are Bonanza, and Gazley Lane. Whatever funds are left over will be applied to additional City streets by priority of use.

Resurfacing materials are available in Baker City at a cost of \$25-30 per yard delivered. The County plans to pave between Sumpter and Blue Springs during the 2016 spring season and will be crushing material within five miles of Sumpter. This material will be available to Sumpter at an estimated cost of \$8 per yard.

The County also offered while in the area to pave the portion of Austin from the highway to S. Columbia for a cost of \$20,000.

The options for this grant are to start graveling this fall, purchasing the materials at the higher cost; wait until spring to start and obtain the materials from the County at the lower cost; or to have Austin and other high priority streets resurfaced by the County in Spring 2016. McKinney recommended the second option, as the funds would go further. Findley made a motion to move forward with the second option, and the motion passed unanimously.

McKinney stated there are several issues at the treatment plant. The State is requiring installation of a new effluent meter at an estimated cost of \$40,000, though McKinney stated he thinks he can get it replaced at a total cost of \$8-10,000.

This will require the assistance of a contractor. The state is also requiring that the leaking redwood tank be fixed. Estimated costs for an attempted repair are \$18-20,000.

Estimated cost for a liner for the tank is \$30-38,000. McKinney stated he has had no feedback on these issues, that they are not going away, and he does not want to see the City fined. He stated, "The safety quality of our drinking water is at stake." Councilperson Robert Armbruster asked about the deadline. McKinney said October. Findley stated they can keep trying for grants and asked for any input to raise or obtain the funds needed to address these issues.

Councilperson LeAnne Woolf stated, "Anyone still wonder why we need to raise water rates?" Findley replied that she had no issues with raising the rates, but wanted a definitive explanation of how the decision came to raise rates by \$2. Rates have not increased for the last 3-4 years. The auditor recommended raising rates and talked about 3% per year.

Council members Annie Oakley and Toni Thompson clarified that the increase is due to needing to have a surplus of funds in case of emergency and that \$2 was looked at because of the recommendation of 3% per year which had not been acted on. Thompson

also clarified that the billed amount of \$57 would increase \$2 for water and \$1 for sewer, bringing the amount to an even \$60, which is a good rate compared to other cities.

Findley asked previous mayor John Young why the rates had not been raised before. He stated they hated to raise the rates, considering people on a fixed income, and that was the decision of the Council at the time. He said the City infrastructure is going downhill and the increase of funds will not fix everything, but would help in case something semi-major goes wrong.

Findley said she is concerned about this happening again a few years from now and hitting folks with another \$2 rate increase. Findley stated Council will vote on the water rate increase at the meeting on 9/9. She asked that anyone with concerns please bring them to the attention of Council before that time. She also asked to put a plan in place for rate increases.

The Fire Chief's Report was given by John Young. He explained Fire Chief Kurt Clarke and Jim Sheller were assisting ODF looking for lightning strikes. Due to the fire activity in the Dooley Pass area, they are now in a safe zone, but can't get out at this time.

Last weekend, a draft point was put in for use by Sumpter, the USFS, and ODF. The Fire Department has permission from Water Resources to draft up to 20,000 gallons to refill tanks after training. Young stated he was told that drafting point and water from the creek cannot be used to water City Roads.

One firefighter class left, with the final exam to take place September 26. There was a joint training with Powder River on Thursday. All Sumpter Fire Department volunteers have been alerted to keep radios on tonight in case Powder River needs backup.

Cary Clarke stated Kurt Clarke wanted to also congratulate John on over 300 hours of his own time given to the Firefighter 1 class. Those in attendance

offered applause. Cary Clarke offered clarification to an e-mail regarding where the Fire Department will respond if there's a call and said they will respond anywhere.

Lila Young asked how Sumpter will water the streets during the Flea Market. McKinney stated the City has a backup city well system, which he prefers to exercise and use several times per year. Flea markets are a good opportunity for this and helps keep the well healthy.

A report from the Planning Commission meeting on July 23 was handed out. The commission tabled an application from Stan Bessire for clarification of what he is requesting.

A site inspection of the McEwen railroad park resulted in the Commission deciding this will be the primary evacuation assembly area, with alternate assembly areas also discussed.

Minutes from the meeting on August 6 were not available, but information on four permits recommended for approval by the Planning Commission were turned in to Council. Council approved the zoning permits and requests unanimously.

Park Manager Anna Stafford then gave her report. She thanked volunteers who replaced the refrigerator at the schoolhouse before their breakfast event and said the breakfast went well.

Volunteer Park restrooms see a lot of use, no matter what day of the week. Stafford said there have been more minor events of vandalism and that she and McKinney are both keeping an eye on the area.

Stafford completed a walk-through of fairgrounds and museum with an Oregon Deputy Fire Marshall, and reported there were just a few recommendations. There is an upcoming energy audit for all City buildings to see about lowering costs.

Forty vendors are already scheduled for City property for the Labor Day Flea Market. Volunteers are needed to drive the water truck. Volunteers with side-by-side ATVs are needed to assist with gar-

bage collection. Stafford stated someone young and fit would be provided to do the work and volunteers would just need to "drive around looking cool." Interested individuals can stop by City Hall.

There are continued leak issues at the Fairground shower building, which has now affected the subfloor a bit. The building is shut down until further notice, although the goal is to have it reopened before the Flea Market.

There was a wedding at the grounds, which Stafford said went beautifully. A citizen commented that some were still having a good time at 1 a.m. in front of her house. Stafford commented that if anything is wrong or funky on the properties under her management to please call her, including if she needs to come down and tell people to be quiet.

Jeff and Julie McKinney were thanked for the donation of their old refrigerator to the schoolhouse. Lila Young complimented Stafford on how well the schoolhouse had been cleaned for their event. McKinney thanked Clarke Construction for the donation of water and dust control with his tender.

Findley read signage City Recorder Julie McKinney put together regarding snowmobile and ATV use in the City limits, including 15 mph speed limit, no use after 10 p.m., and not driving on the highway or shoulder, per State regulations. Findley asked to have the information pinned in the usual places for announcements and to find out the cost for putting up some signs.

Findley explained there are issues with the Watershed Management Grant Letter of Interest. The Adobe form does not allow scrolling in boxes. Findley stated they bought the Adobe program (adding "don't worry, on our own dime") and have been trying to fix the issue. She stated Sumpter is still in the running.

Findley then stated she wanted to, after council or public input, adjourn the meeting as soon as possible. She stated, "We are evidently the dys in dysfunctional," and encour-

aged everyone to make it an early night.

Councilperson Oakley stated she searched the Internet and found plastic tanks suitable for the water truck for \$2000. She then remembered Neil Bork has a tank and he said he will sell it for \$450. The tank is a little larger than the one the City is currently borrowing. Vern Holloper said he thinks Bork's tank can be converted for use. Council will discuss this further on September 9 and McKinney said he would go out in the meantime and look at the tank.

Head of Council Toni Thompson gave her resignation, saying it was not due to the recall. She said she has recently been spending most of her time out of City limits, and is planning on spending even more time out of City limits. She also provided copies of a letter in which she encouraged everyone to be thoughtful before voting for any recalls.

Findley asked for any public input and Clarke stated he wished to address the letter sent by the Mayor to all citizens. Oakley then asked if the Council didn't need to vote to accept Thompson's resignation and Woolf confirmed this. The resignation was accepted unanimously, though most Council members stated it was with reluctance.

Findley stated she appreciates public input, but they were not going to get into all the letters and Speak Up Sumpter, etc. (Speak Up Sumpter is a blog space located at speakupsumpter.wordpress.com and dedicated to the citizens of Sumpter exercising their rights of free speech.)

Findley said, "Unless we address all letters, we are not going to address any." She stated they will see how things play out over the next month and adjourned the meeting.

Immediately after the meeting, there was an altercation between various attendees in the street outside City Hall. It appeared the imprecations and insults being exchanged did not relate directly to the Council meeting, but were related to long-standing issues between residents.

Bandstand dedication scheduled for Sept. 6

• BLUE YESTERDAYS TO PLAY AT DEDICATION

BY BRIAN ADDISON
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The Baker City community prepares to celebrate the long-anticipated dedication ceremony for the new performing arts facility in Geiser-Pollman City Park. Final touches are being applied to the \$250,000 structure and Dave Hunsaker, Bandstand Committee Chairperson, expects project completion in time for the dedication ceremony Sunday, September 6th.

The dedication ceremony begins at 1:30 p.m., with special recognition of those who made the project

possible including representatives from the Leo Adler Foundation, Soroptimist International, and the Ford Family Foundation.

Also sharing the spotlight on dedication day are Phyllis Badgely and Al Durgan, who first conceived the idea of a community performance pavilion and then spurred the project for nearly a decade to completion.

"We invite everyone to come to the dedication," said Hunsaker. "This has been a true community project. We deeply appreciate all the support we have received from individuals, businesses, organizations, and foundations over the last eight years."

It has been 103 years since Baker City residents have celebrated the dedication of a new bandstand

in the city park. Ringing in the bandstand in 1912 was none other than the world-famous band led by American march king John Phillip Sousa.

This time around, Baker City's own big band, Blue Yesterdays, have been given the honor of being the first to play in the new "Powder River Pavilion." Blue Yesterdays, traditionally a 17-piece swing era style jazz and dance band, has been working on a few patriotic numbers, and in honor of Baker City's extravagant musical past, may include a Sousa march or two.

"This truly is a great honor," said Blue Yesterdays representative Brian Addison. "The Blue Yesterdays have been playing dances and community events since 1981 but



Brian Addison / The Baker County Press

Still under construction, the bandstand in the park is slated for opening Sept. 6.

this is probably the most important event we've ever played."

Final touches to be completed by the end of August include placement of the bricks engraved with the names of those who donated toward the project, some roof-work, and placement of the letters officially naming the new

structure. Those stepping out of the Baker Heritage Museum on Grove Street will see the name of the new structure, "Powder River Pavilion."

Those approaching the Powder River Pavilion from the west side will read the words, "Heart of the Park" emblazoned on the backside of the

structure.

This permanent feature and major community project will likely host musical artists for many decades to come and is itself a work of art created by Baker City architect and president of Historic Baker City, Inc. Larry Abell and constructed by local builder Sid Johnson & Co.