

Local

Sumpter City Council tackles full agenda



Meghan Andersch / The Baker County Press

L - R: Parks Manager Anna Stafford, Councilor Carey Clarke, Councilor Samantha Esposito, Mayor Leland Myers, Councilor Robert Armbruster, Councilor Ann Oakley, City Recorder Julie McKinney.

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Tuesday evening saw Sumpter's new mayor's second City Council meeting. Mayor Leland Myers opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Council reviewed and approved minutes from the September 22 Council and October 9 Emergency meetings before hearing reports and discussing several items of business.

A Letter of Intent for serving on the Planning Commission was submitted by LeAnne Woolf. Myers stated this would give the Commission a quorum again.

Councilperson Robert Armbruster asked how many are on the Commission.

Myers stated that Woolf would make three, with five being the goal. The Council is willing to receive more letters of intent. Woolf's addition to the Planning Commission was approved unanimously.

Myers stated that before hearing reports, he wanted to propose a policy that written reports be attached to the minutes instead of trying to rewrite the content of the reports into the minutes.

Utility Manager Report Jeff McKinney stated September and the first part of October have been challenging. The City truck has had "driveability problems," which were finally identified and repaired by Clark's Electric in Baker City. Pumping is occurring as scheduled at the sewer lagoon.

Seasonal water shut-offs are ongoing.

On September 19, the valve at the treatment plant that controls water coming in broke, believed to be due to a broken limit switch.

McKinney received a \$1600 repair estimate and stated he will change out the replacement circuit board himself. On September 24, the main computer went down. McKinney got it back up in two days and will send out the main board for repair and replacement as necessary.

On Thursday, October 8, McKinney received a report that water was running across the entrance to McCully Forks. The main transmission line was broken.

Lee German assisted with that repair, which was completed Saturday. McKinney also thanked

Carey Clarke for his assistance and Myers for his expertise.

Michelle Clarke reported on Saturday, October 10 that the Volunteer Park toilets were plugged. Baker Sewer was able to come out Monday and fix them. The main line was backed up, with the problem appearing to be due to paper towels in the line.

McKinney asked if the City would consider electric hand driers.

Barbara Malone asked if there are signs in the bathroom to remind folks not to flush paper towels.

McKinney stated that there are not and that the perception is that these incidents are due to vandalism.

Councilperson Samantha Esposito suggested locking the bathrooms at 5 or 6 p.m., stating that would be sad but may save the City some expense.

Woolf asked how durable hand dryers are.

Parks Manager Anna Stafford responded that so far nothing in the bathrooms has been broken. Incidents have been limited to plugging the line.

Armbruster asked how many times this has happened. It is the third incident.

Myers stated the City will continue to look into ways of resolving this issue and asked citizens to be aware.

Parks Manager Report

Anna Stafford reported that on Monday, September 28, the Fairgrounds Building had to be shut down due to continued plumbing leaks. As of now, there are a few items to do to finish winterizing the building.

Numbers are still coming in on the Labor Day Flea Market. At this point, they are showing about a \$1000 loss. Stafford again thanked all volunteers who helped with the Flea Market.

Stafford said the water truck project went smoothly this year thanks to the "whole bunch of folks who worked on putting it together." She said it's time to get the equipment broken down and turn the truck back into a snowplow. Stafford asked that Council please be proactive in thinking about next year.

Stafford thanked members of the Sumpter Valley Blue Mountain Snowmobile Club for purchasing and installing windows at the Schoolhouse.

She mentioned one of the microwaves at the Schoolhouse died. It was a commercial wall-mounted wall-vented unit.

Stafford asked that anyone with ideas or suggestions for replacement share them.

Stafford said she has accumulated a pile of items that haven't been used in a long time, including older chairs and electrical equipment. She has them stored in the City shop.

Armbruster had e-mailed a list to the other Council members and handed out pictures of the items at the meeting. Myers said some of the items have historic value, including a little table that sat up at the schoolhouse.

Members of the Council agreed to meet at the City shop on Friday to visually inspect the items.

No decisions as to their disposition will be made at that time.

Fire Department Report

Jim Sheller gave the Fire Department report as Chief Clarke was attending a CPR training.

Six or seven individuals completed the Firefighter 1 class, passing their test two weeks ago.

Sheller thanked John Young for teaching the class and estimated he put about 2,000 hours into preparation and teaching. Sheller said the Department has 20 members, well above the average for most cities.

John Hellgerson donated a Jaws of Life that will eventually be installed in the QRU.

Sheller's friend Kevin Ferguson at the Gresham Fire Department donated 15 red \$300 jackets for use by emergency responders.

The Annual Fire Department Auxiliary Spaghetti Feed is Tuesday, October 27. The money raised will go to the Fire Department for equipment, etc. Myrna Clarke stated the Auxiliary would like to have baked goods brought for serving and for sale to hunters.

Sheller said there were a couple call outs for burning this weekend. There is still a burning ban in town.

The fire danger is also back to high. Sheller thanked the Fire Department, EMRs, and Auxiliary for everything they do, saying "we wouldn't have the insurance and policies we have without them."

Jeff McKinney stood and said Galizewski, the

911 coordinator for Baker County, told him Sumpter has the quickest response of any City in the County by five minutes.

McKinney said Sumpter has a lot to be proud of in their volunteers.

Myers mentioned that the next Council meeting night would occur the same night as the Spagetti Feed. The Council agreed to forego October's second monthly meeting.

IFA Application

The IFA Application to finance sewer upgrades required by DEQ is getting ready to be sent in. Woolf said she has not heard back yet from Shanna Bailey if the engineering details and specs expense can be incorporated into the loan request.

City Charter

Myers stated his goal is to be able to have a new City Charter on the ballot in May. He said the changes will be minor and that City-wide workshops will be held to help everyone learn about it. He looked at the newest League of Oregon Cities model charter and said it addresses several things the City has had problems with. He said the City Charter was last updated in 1972 from a 1902 model.

Newsletter

Myers asked if the Council would like to recommence sending out a monthly letter to the citizenry to be included with the water bill. Councilperson Carey Clarke stated it was a good idea and Armbruster said, "the more communication, the better off we'll be." The rest of the Council concurred.

Employee Harassment

A complaint was received regarding harassment of City employees. Myers forwarded the information to the City Attorney. The issue was tabled to allow the attorney time to respond.

Wage Request

The Council then turned to discussing a wage request received by Lori-Jean Pruitt. Myers stated that in his opinion, Pruitt worked for the City in the belief that she was going to be paid and that BOLI says if person has expectation of being paid, they are to be paid.

He suggested agreeing to the \$598.50 payment.

Armbruster said he has done a lot of investigation and interviewing and that he could not verify that Pruitt was hired or that anyone agreed to pay her

anything for being part of a Flea Market committee.

He stated there is never a recorded decision made by the Council that anyone is to be paid anything until the hiring of the Parks Manager on April 14, 2015 effective May 1, 2015.

Armbruster stated he would not vote in favor of paying Pruitt at that time. Esposito and Ann Oakley shared information from February and March 2015 City Council Meeting minutes.

Then-Mayor Melissa Findley had challenged two individuals (Pruitt and Stafford) to form a committee. March's minutes stated the committee had a list of goals and opportunities and was going to meet again the next Monday.

Clarke stated that as a business owner who has had to be involved in hiring and firing and dealing with BOLI, "they don't play fair."

He stated that on both occasions that he dealt with BOLI, he swore he was in the right and both times it cost him money.

He suggested paying Pruitt and making it clear in the future who is and is not an employee. After further discussion, Clarke made a motion to pay the full amount. Myrna Clarke asked if there is a conflict with Pruitt being Clarke's brother's significant other.

The Council agreed that there was not a conflict, but in the interest of caution, Esposito made a motion to pay the full amount and Oakley seconded.

With three votes in favor (Myers, Esposito, Oakley), one against (Armbruster), and one abstention due to perceived conflict (Clarke), the motion passed.

Brooke Hewitt, EOU Master's Thesis Project

There was some discussion on Brooke Hewitt presenting the findings of her EOU Master's Thesis Project. She will bring the finished product to a meeting in December or January.

Sewer

Chuck Everson, a grade 4 Sewer Operator, has been signing off for the City while Jeff McKinney works on getting his wastewater certifications. Everson is retiring at the end of the year.

McKinney stated he should be receiving his certifications within the next 45-60 days. In case there is a gap between Everson's retirement and McKinney's certification,

McKinney will coordinate with the sewer operator in Haines.

Council input

Clarke stated that either at the next meeting or in a special session, they need to talk about having an application and making employment with the City a "cut and dried deal."

Oakley stated job descriptions and the employee handbook need to be updated.

Public input

Jim Moore asked why the City burn pile is closed. McKinney stated the pile is too full currently and is almost backed up to the shop. There has also been some abuse of the pile, dumping off trash, tires, etc.

Barbara Malone suggested that a statement be included with the newsletter letting people know what is going on with the burn pile and encouraging people not to burn needles and pine cones in their own yards as the Fire Department will be stretched to the limit.

Ron Borello asked why he is being billed for septic tank pumping at Borello's. McKinney stated the septic tank was full of grease in violation of the sewer ordinance.

Borello responded that he informed the City whenever he cleaned his grease trap. He said the tank had not been pumped for over four years.

He stated he also told McKinney that he would uncover the septic tank with his backhoe whenever McKinney wanted to inspect and also talked about the two abandoned septic tanks, but that nothing was ever done.

McKinney stated he will compile a report and file for the review of the Council and they can make a decision as to how to proceed.

Woolf announced that Arnie from the County will be in town on Friday October 16th from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. or until he runs out of the herbicide concoction for killing spotted knapweed.

Each household can receive up to five gallons, and food containers for storing the herbicide are not allowed. Knapweed is an A-listed invasive in Baker County and property owners are required to help in the control of this pest.

Sumpter's next City Council meeting will be November 10th at 7 p.m.