

Local

Sam-O Swim Committee widens shower discussion

BY GINA K. SWARTZ
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The Committee for the Sam-O Swim Center met Monday, November 9 to hear updates on current projects happening and to discuss further the shower situation as well as funding for the heating system update.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Andrew Bryan and all members were present with the exception of Jason Bybee.

The Committee welcomed newest member Chuck Everson and was joined for the first time by newly appointed City Council liaison Sandy Lewis. YMCA executive director Heidi Dalton was also present as was Aquatics Director Paula Moe.

Michelle Owen, Public Works Director, began the meeting giving information on the sand filters.

“Their scheduled install date is November 18, which is awkward because there is going to be no water in the pool,” Owen said.

She asked for a more realistic install date and is waiting to hear back. She noted that they could in fact install those filters on the 18th but they would be responsible for making sure they work so that would require coming back the details had not been worked out.

Mid America has begun the resurfacing, the crew showed up within the

last week and started the project. Instead of sand blasting the crew is using a process called hydro blasting which is a much louder process.

Owen advised that there are particles in the air, glasses and hearing protection is required so it was not a good idea to go in. The crew did have a minor setback with a broken part they were waiting to get repaired but that has been taken care of. So it is going a little slower than anticipated but still moving along nicely. A few minor issues have arisen but everything is being handled.

“Is everything perfect? No. Is everything moving along? Yes,” said Owen. She is waiting for a crew chief to arrive and walk her through the project addressing any issues that have come up.

She said, “I have spoken with Austin, one of the owners at Mid America Pools and he has said ‘We are going to get you a project that gets it done and gets it done right’ so I’m feeling pretty good.”

Owen then updated the committee on the heating system funding. She has applied for a Swindells Charitable Trust grant, they have acknowledged receipt of that and will be evaluating that this month. Ford Family Foundation has also been submitted to with that being looked at in December, a write up for the trustees is being done this week.

If of one or both of these options do not work out as anticipated Owen claims she is out of options at this point and will just have to wait until the budget to move forward with the project.

Andrew Bryan spoke stating, “As you recall, we had four projects to prioritize. We started with the resurfacing especially with safety considerations and the kids, then we looked at the filter system so here we are. I think that most of the committee understands it’s a moment in time, we accomplish what we need to do this year we’ve got a clean 15 years without these types of closures. Then the boiler and when the committee made its recommendations to Council of the priority of projects the showers were the last in line, more than likely we would seek that from the 2016-2017 budget. If you recall, I had an initial bright idea to raise the funds, bring the swim community together. Then we sat back down in the midst of all the fires and everything else going on and we all shook our heads and said ‘bad time to really try to raise money’ so we kind of let that die.”

Bryan went on to advise the committee he had been contacted by Randy Daugherty about raising money to replace the showers and not waiting. Daugherty has secured \$3,000 from six individuals to immediately repriori-

tize that project and get it completed by February 1.

The YMCA board has agreed to put another \$3,000 toward the project. Replacing the showers has been estimated at between \$10,000 and \$12,000. The idea is the City will contribute another \$3000 and fund raise the remainder.

Bryan questioned whether it was the committee’s responsibility to fund raise.

Upon further discussion of the project questions were raised as to whether or not it would also be a good idea to revamp the shower replacement project into an all-encompassing project that would allow for some ADA improvements, remodeling of a restroom outside the locker room to be a family restroom/changing room and the discussion also highlighted installing a different type of shower in the locker rooms that may be a better “fit” rather than replacing units with the same type of unit that is known to have issues.

As the committee prepared to adjourn they asked that Owen research different showers and what it might take to install those as far as plumbing issues and asked that she address Council as to the fact that this project may be bigger than first anticipated therefore may need to be placed on hold for the time being. Discussion was had a last week’s Council meeting, and will continue.

Windstorm triggers crash



Photo courtesy of OSP.

A severe wind and dust storm in Washington and Oregon triggered a fatality accident and freeway closures Tuesday night.

On Tuesday November 17th at approximately 6 p.m. Troopers from the Pendleton Office responded to a report of a motor vehicle crash on Interstate 84 eastbound near milepost 193.

Troopers began to investigate a four-vehicle collision involving two commercial motor vehicles and two passenger cars. The crash occurred during high winds and visibility was limited due to blowing dust. One vehicle occupant was seriously injured in the crash.

At approximately 6:17 p.m. Troopers from the Hermiston worksite also began to investigate several minor motor vehicle collisions that occurred on I-84 eastbound near milepost 192. The crashes occurred during high winds and visibility was limited due to blowing dust. While Troopers were working their way through the minor collisions, they discovered a motor vehicle collision involving 11 total vehicles at that same location. Emergency Medical Personnel were already on scene. A total of five commercial motor vehicles and six passenger cars were involved in the crash.

Several occupants of the involved vehicles had to be extricated by fire personnel and were transported to hospitals in Hermiston and Pendleton for treatment of injuries. The driver of one commercial motor vehicle identified as William Hernandez, age 47, of Caldwell, Idaho was killed in the collision.

Pendleton Area Command Troopers are being assisted in the investigation by OSP crash reconstructionists.

Interstate 84 eastbound remained closed through the night to allow for investigation and cleanup of the crash scene.

Agencies assisting at the scene included Fire Departments from Hermiston, Echo, Stanfield, Pendleton, as well as Life Flight, Oregon Department of Transportation, and the Umatilla County Office of Emergency Management.

Regional Mayors Council meets in Richland

BY EILEEN DRIVER
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The regional Mayors Council Meeting was held on November 12th from noon to 2 p.m. at the Shorthorn Restaurant located at 200 Main Street in Richland.

The meeting was chaired by Richland Mayor Gloria Wilson.

The Mayors Council is a gathering for city, county and economic leaders to get updates on what’s happening in the towns in our area and around the county in a relaxed and friendly environment.

The gathering also gives members a chance to gather advice and information from peers and promotes community unity and collaboration.

Mayor Wilson gave an update on what’s happening in Richland, which includes working on replacing their wastewater system for which they are in the process of hiring a contractor.

They are also working on grants for a water feasibility study and investigating the need for a burn permit process for their citizens.

The newly appointed Mayor of Sumpter, Leland Myers, informed those assembled that he has mostly

been kept busy getting caught up on the affairs of the City and is hoping that the recent turmoil in the city is over and they can get back to accomplishing the City’s business. Sumpter is also working on applying for a \$30,000 water grant and hiring an engineer.

Mayor Sheila Farwell of Halfway reported that they are gearing up for three major projects to begin, wastewater, Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) street repair and the building of a new fire station. She also wanted to acknowledge the great job their fire department did in combating the fires of the past summer.

Huntington Mayor Travis Young was unable to attend but was represented by Huntington’s President of the Council who reported that Huntington is still struggling on the marijuana issue, and are at the land acquisition and Economic Impact Study phase of their wastewater project.

Idaho Power Community representative Russ Weedon reported on the Snake River Stewardship program and the Hemingway to Boardman Line project that is looking to be ready to begin in 2020. He also talked about the

plans to un-integrate Idaho Powers coal fire plants and the struggle to get the temperature of the Brownlee reservoir in line with government guidelines.

Baker County Commissioner Bill Harvey discussed the County’s work on watershed protection including but not limited to the cleaning of culverts and ditches, work with the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management on reseeded and timber projects, as well as trying to get the Lime Plant area cleaned up and the hope to find a new tenant to bring in more jobs to the area.

Baker County Sheriff Travis Ash reported that as the cold settles in, the County has slowed down and been pretty quiet.

He also wanted to stress that he is always available to address any questions or concerns that come up and encouraged all to call him anytime.

Ash also stated that he is short-handed at this time with only five deputies covering 3,000 square miles.

Greg Smith of Baker County Economic Development reported that they are working hard at creating jobs in this region through encouraging the top 50 employers to add more jobs and by doing

what they can to promote logging here. He discussed the impacts to Baker City of the Haggan Bankruptcy, and to Huntington on the relisting of Farewell Bend Travel Plaza for sale.

On the brighter side he reported that according to Timothy Bishop of the Baker County Tourism Commission, lodging in Baker County is up and looking to continue to improve.

Lisa Dawson of the Northeast Oregon Economic Development District (NEOEDD) informed all present about the Agora Investment Platform, which provides an online marketplace to advance community and economic development priorities by matching community needs with relevant funding sources.

Dawson also wanted everyone to be aware that NEOEDD would be happy to set up Business Development classes in any city that would like it.

The Shorthorn Restaurant provided a delicious off-the-menu lunch to all assembled.

The meeting was adjourned with a reminder that the next meeting would be held in the City of Huntington on January 21, 2016.

Baker City, Haines outage

Early November 18, at 2:30 a.m. multiple outages were reported in the Baker City District due to a strong storm system moving through the area bringing with it high winds.

473 members were affected along the west side of Baker City and Haines. OTEC crews were dispatched have been on-site throughout the morning isolating the area, removing downed tree limbs and restoring power to most members by 6:00 a.m.

The remaining 55 members affected in the Rock Creek, Mill Creek and Marble Creek areas have an approximate restoration time of 11:00 a.m.

Please report outages to our OTEC outage number: 1-866-430-4265

Albertsons’ winning bid only \$300K

Last week Albertsons placed a bid on the Haggan Store at 1120 Campbell Street in Baker City, which was formerly an Albertsons store six months ago.

The company submitted a bid on the 46,000 square-foot commercial building, which was built in 2001, and is valued at \$2.8 million. The baseline bid was just \$300,000, which Albertsons bid. That amount was enough to win.

Albertsons also submitted baseline bids on five other stores, winning those auctions as the sole bidder for just \$1 per store.

Economic development director Greg Smith issued the opinion, “The announcement that Albertsons has purchased the Haggan Grocery is good news for Baker City. This means residents will continue to have two shopping locations as well as employment opportunities.”

To date, the company that owns both Albertsons and Safeway has not expressed that it will operate in both the former Haggans and current Baker City Safeway buildings. Federal Trade Commission review is also pending.

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