

Local

Sam-O committee gets grants to upgrade heating system



Gina K. Swartz / The Baker County Press

Sam O Committee, L-R councilwoman Sandy Lewis, Chair Andrew Bryant, Public Works Director Michelle Owen, YMCA Aquatics Director Paula Moe, Noel Scott, Chuck Everson, and Jerri Wickert.

BY GINA K. SWARTZ
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Monday evening was the first committee meeting of the year for the Sam-O Swim Committee.

Chairman Andrew Bryant called the meeting to order. “We have to approve the minutes of the last meeting,” said Bryant with City Staff representative Michelle Owen adding, “I love it when you follow that procedure.”

A motion to approve the minutes was made and seconded with all present voting in favor to approve.

Those present were Bryan, Jerri Wickert, Noel Scott, Chuck Everson, Public Works Director Michelle Owen, YMCA Aquatic Director Paula Moe and City Council Representative Sandy Lewis.

Jason Bybee was unable to attend this meeting.

The committee began by speaking of the successes of the sand filter replacement and pool resurfacing projects.

All noted how beautiful the pool looked. “The water’s clean, no abrasions. Things are awesome,” said Bryan.

Owen jumped in with some very big news. “We got grant money. We got the Ford grant and a \$27,000 grant from a privately funded foundation that wishes to remain anonymous,” she announced.

Excitement buzzed in the room.

“Thank you,” said Wickert to whomever made that private grant possible.

Owen also had good news on Energy Trust. She said, “They have once again increased their incentives. So initially it was around \$23,000 in incentives then it went up to \$28,000. Now it could be close to \$32,000.”

That money will not go into the City coffers but will most likely be forwarded straight to the contractor.

Owen explained it was a financial challenge to bring that money into the City and then try to allocate it for its intended purpose.

It becomes an accounting nightmare and she sug-

gested anyone interested in looking into those workings speak with Jeannie Dexter, the City finance manager for an explanation.

Owen advised that she is working with Abacus Engineering, a professional aquatics engineering team to put together specifications for a hopefully very near future RFP (request for proposal) to complete the heating system project that should include replacement of the boiler, numeric controls, air handlers etc.

“The engineering team will write those specs for us. Things are so particular with the humidity and things that come into play there and we will put all of that on the proposal page. They are charging us a modest hourly rate to do that and of course they will want to bid on the job also which is perfectly allowable. Once those RFPs are out there the bids usually come as in a lump sum but we are requiring them to describe the equipment that they intend to use. We need to make sure we are meeting what energy trust says we should. So I’m going to be looking for a little bit of a guarantee from whomever does this work as will Energy Trust. An on-site visit will also be required in order to make a proposal,” Owen said.

There was concern that bids may come in just a bit higher than what is already allocated for the project but with saving from energy trust as well as other areas Owen was confident that there was a small amount of “float” money that could be utilized and that amount may grow because the project would most likely not be done until the weather is warmer since the project would require no heat to the building while being replaced. “Who is going to turn off the boiler when we need it? We’re just not going to do that.”

Owen also advised if for any reason bids came back much higher she would likely be able to approach the Budget Board for additional money to cover any shortfalls.

Bryan asked “So this(bids) needs to be done

prior to the budget process?” to which Owen said it should.

In order to have time to award a bid, to order parts, address any budgetary concerns and overall prepare things need to be done fairly quickly.

The Committee came to the consensus that the work would best be done during the routine pool shut down that happens every year in September.

Owen was congratulated by committee members for her hard work in securing these grant monies.

Bryan did mention to the committee that as “press releases are done we need to cast this as one more step completed in this broader time period where we’re really trying to do a lot of renovations. Keep reminding people that there is a bigger picture we are working in.”

Wickert added, “It’s important, I think, to also reiterate what’s already been done too.”

With that tentative calendar they moved forward to other business.

The group discussed the showers, which at the time of the meeting were not working again.

Owen said that the consensus she recalled was that the committee wanted to remain with the same type of showers the facility currently had only higher quality units with dials rather than push buttons.

Owen advised she had “been in contact with Dave Billings at Action Plumbing out of La Grande” and he was aware of the type of units being sought.

He did the other local YMCA building and according to Owen, “Did a great job,” but she was still waiting on a number to give the committee from him for the cost of replacements.

Owen said she did not feel that was going to be in the cards to get done in this fiscal year and said she was looking at it to be a September project also.

Because of the lower dollar amount, it will not require an RFP, they can just hire it done skipping that step.

Owen said it may however go before Council for informational purposes

only.

The question was raised about adding a water softener as well to cut down in the mineral deposits that over time build up and cause issues.

Owen said she could add that to what Billings was looking into for her cost-wise.

The committee also looked at options for the family/ADA restroom dressing room. Variations to the proposal are still being considered and each committee member will have a chance to review ideas and give input. Also mentioned was the reconfiguration of the entire front lobby area and that would include the drinking fountain.

Paula Moe, aquatic director at Sam-O Swim brought up the issue that more often than not users of the adjacent skate park come into the facility to use the drinking fountain causing her to leave whatever post she is at to “keep an eye on them.” as it is currently located in an area that is not easily visible. Relocating to a more visible area may not be an option as far as plumbing so she asked if the fountain could be eliminated entirely.

Owen stated to her knowledge a public building was required to provide drinking water.

It was then suggested that if unable to move the fountain due to plumbing perhaps a water cooler be an option as a suitable replacement.

They were cost effective and could be placed in an area that was more desirable for Sam-O Swim staff to monitor.

The committee also talked about fencing of the property adjacent to the Truck Corral property creating a more secure environment for families with increasing the use of the green space (park) and gazebo being mentioned as well as ideas for future projects that may include a slide and or a splash park.

The Committee agreed that an update to City Council needed to happen soon and that would be discussed at the next meeting. With that the meeting adjourned.

Police chiefs

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Sixteen districts comprise the OACP, the regional directors making up the Board. According to Chief Rock Rakosi, Myrtle Point Police Department and President of the OACP, the mission of the organization is, “To promote and enhance the highest ethical and professional standards in law enforcement at all levels throughout Oregon.”

Not only police chiefs attended the training in Seaside, but sheriffs, command staff, and representatives from Oregon State Police. As Lohner put it, “executives in law enforcement from across the state.”

Added Lohner, “I’m optimistic about the opportunities to bring positive change in rural eastern Oregon. I think this is a good opportunity to represent the area.”

P.E.O offers scholarships

Chapter AX P.E.O. offers scholarships 2016 Chapter AX of the P.E.O. Sisterhood will award two academic scholarships to two graduating senior girls from high schools in Baker County and North Powder in May 2016.

The Gertrude Fortner-Rose Haskell Scholarship was named for two charter members of Chapter AX who strongly believed in higher education for women.

The Mildred F. Rogers Chapter AX P.E.O. Scholarship was established in 2000 by her daughter and her grandchildren.

Mrs. Rogers was a long time member of Chapter AX, being initiated in 1951 and holding the office of president in 1952. She was a descendent of Oregon Trail pioneer grandparents and lived her entire life in Baker City. Always a loyal citizen, she gave of herself to the community of Baker City and to its people, so that future generations would have the opportunity to appreciate life as she had. She died at the age of 100.

Scholarship applications are available in the guidance office at high schools in Baker County (Baker, Pine Eagle, Burnt River and Huntington) and North Powder. Baker High School applicants must return applications to the high school office by 8AM February 29, 2016. Other Baker County and North Powder applicants must mail applications to arrive by 8AM February 29, 2016 to Dorothy Mason, PO Box 446 Baker City, OR 97814. All women students from Baker County or North Powder, who plan to enroll in an accredited college or university are eligible.

The scholarships are awarded on the basis of academic achievement, goals, activities, financial need and personal character.

The P.E.O. sisterhood is an international philanthropic educational organization, which was founded in 1869 at Iowa Wesleyan College in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa. P.E.O. promotes educational opportunities for women through a variety of scholarship and grant opportunities.

The P.E.O. sisterhood owns and supports Cottey College in Nevada, Missouri. Chapter AX was organized in 1932 in Baker City. For further information about the scholarships... Contact: Dorothy Mason at 541-523-7642.

Bentz now on energy oversight committee

SALEM—Oregon House Speaker Tina Kotek announced on January 6th the appointment of State Representative Cliff Bentz (R-Ontario), and three other State Representatives, to the Legislative Interim Committee on Department of Energy Oversight. They will join four Oregon State Senators on this Joint House and Senate Committee.

Oregon’s Department of Energy (“Department”) has struggled mightily in its attempts to manage several green energy programs created by legislative action, most notoriously, the “BETC” (Business Energy Tax Credit).

Recently, Rep. Bentz and four other Republican lawmakers sent a letter to State and Federal authorities outlining alleged improprieties within the Department emphasizing several issues including the discounting of BETC tax credits process. These concerns had been brought to these Legislators by several state employees concerned about actions and inaction within the Department.

Rep. Bentz said: “The Department of Energy was originally established to oversee and regulate nuclear energy generation. Over time, its charge has been broadened to include management of many different important and often expensive programs. It is possible that as the Department has evolved, staffing, mission, funding and other elements of a focused and effective bureaucracy have not kept up with the duties delegated to the Department by the Legislature.

“The purpose of the Committee, although not yet fully developed by the Speaker and Senate President Courtney, will probably include a review where the Department stands from a work load perspective, what it is supposed to be or could be doing, and how effectively (or poorly) it is conducting its charge. As an eight year member of both the Revenue and Energy/Environment Committees, I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the necessary effort.”