

Local

City Council

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Council approved unanimously, upon a motion by Councilor Thomas, seconded by Councilor Lowe, the consent agenda consisting of the minutes from the July 12, 2016 Council meeting and a big deal grant for Glacier 45 Distillery. Mayor Mosier then called for citizen participation to which there was none.

Consideration of City Councilor Application

City Recorder Julie Smith addressed council advising that two applications had originally been received from Chris Parker and Loran Joseph for the council seat recently vacated by Councilwoman Sandy Lewis.

Since being received Parker had withdrawn her application. Smith advised Council that Mr. Joseph was present and should the Council choose to appoint him she was prepared to administer the Oath of Office so that Joseph could take a seat among Council for the remainder of the meeting.

Councilor Lowe moved to appoint Joseph with a second by Councilor Abell. Mayor Mosier stated, “Before we vote is there any discussion? Would Mr. Joseph care to say anything to Council?”

Council declined the opportunity to further discuss Joseph’s appointment and Joseph declined to address Council. Council then unanimously voted to appoint Joseph.

Smith had Joseph come forward and administered the Oath of Office, then Joseph took at seat among his fellow Councilors.

Approval of Master Arts Master Plan

City Manager Warner addressed Council advising that the plan before them is what the Public Arts Commission had forwarded to them for final approval. He did note a couple of small clerical errors that had been discovered and corrected.

Mary Miller was present

representing the Public Arts Commission to answer questions.

Mayor Mosier stated she had taken some time to review the master plan and had a question regarding the properties recommended for public art installation “The sites for the art on loan program, these sites are all fantastic, but I just want to point out the Baker City library is its own district and not an asset of the City. It’s a great idea to have public art there but that would have to be worked out through the library and the library board,” she said.

Miller questioned if that needed to be removed from the document and it was decided that it did not as long as the Commission understood that it would require a different approach to place art at the location.

Mosier also noted the document stated that it was the Commissions intention to build a successful relationship with the City. Mosier suggested that the Commission make the effort to address the Council at their annual goal setting meeting usually held sometime in March.

Miller agreed saying that the Commissions had all agreed to make goals, accomplishments and financials readily available to the public and Council and thought the idea of a presentation at the goal setting session was a good one.

After the discussion Councilor Lowe made a motion to approve the Public Arts Commission Master Plan with a second by Councilor Downing. The vote to approve was unanimous.

Appoint Volunteers to Boards and Commissions

Julie Smith addressed Council stating that the City had been advertising for volunteers for open positions on both the Parks and Recreation Board and the Sam-O Swim Committee. “It is probably best if we do each one separately,” she advised.

• Parks and Recreation Board

This board has two positions opening with the terms of both Lisa Jacoby and Linda Collins expiring. No new applicants had applied; however, both Jacoby and Collins had submitted applications reapplying for their positions.

Smith noted that both had provided tremendous service and recommended each be reappointed. Council all agreed that they were aware of the contribution both had given to the Board.

Councilor Thomas moved to reappoint both women to the board, seconded by Councilor Downing. Both were reappointed with a unanimous vote by Council.

• Sam-O Swim Committee

One position is open on this board, the position that Chuck Everson filled after the resignation of Rustin Smith. Everson reapplied as did Alan Blair. Councilor Langrell stated, “That was part of Chuck’s job when he worked for the city, I would move that we appoint him” That motion was seconded by Councilor Thomas with Council voting to unanimously approve Everson’s reappointment.

Mosier said “I want to thank all of our volunteers for applying and remind anyone not selected to keep applying as we do have vacancies arise that they could be utilized in.”

City Manager/Director Comments

City Manager Warner advised Council that he and Greg Smith, the City’s Economic Developer had travelled to Portland last week to meet with the Vice President of Public affairs and other officials with Albertsons to express concerns our community had over a second Safeway store open right across the street from the current Safeway.

The lack of the number of jobs being created by such a decision was also concerning to the economic development of the City. Warner acknowledged the fact that while both

Albertsons and Safeway are now one company and that would create a monopoly, Albertsons and Safeway still offered different weekly items in their ads and Albertsons used a different pricing model.

He stated that it was expressed to those officials that our community was experiencing a great deal of “leakage” in that when our citizens travelled to La Grande or Ontario to shop for groceries they were also shopping for additional items and dining out in restaurants, spending money that had they been able to stay in Baker City for groceries, that additional money would have been spent locally.

He stated he also advised that there was a general unease in our community with déjà vu of the Albertsons, Haggen debacle where a new store opened but then closed shortly after, putting us in the same situation of only having one grocery store. Warner stated that they had expected “an answer from them (Albertsons officials) last Friday but they had requested more time, we are expecting to hear something this week.”

So it seems nothing definitive has transpired yet. Warner also briefly advised Council that there have been some mechanical issues at the 911 center and some improvements were needed. Also mentioned were the Mayor’s Council meeting Friday at noon in Haines and Warner urged any of the Councilors to attend with him. Warner also stated that an Economic Development meeting was being held on Thursday at the County Courthouse.

Councilor Comments

Mayor Mosier stated she had recently attended an Oregon Mayor’s Association meeting advising her fellow Councilors she would be happy to share information she had learned should anyone be interested. Councilor Thomas formally welcomed Councilor Joseph and with that the meeting adjourned.

Nonpartisan issue

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Last week, the County Clerk’s office confirmed that the group had successfully gathered in excess of the 430 signatures needed by the end of August, meaning the issue once again returns to the voters in November.

To recap past coverage of the issue, Oregon has always had a closed primary, meaning Republican voters receive Republican ballots and Democrat voters receive Democrat ballots.

Rohner has stated that she believes only the voice of one party is heard as a result when it comes to elections, including that of County Commissioner.

“That’s nonsense,” counters Baker County Republican Chair, Suzan Ellis Jones. “The local Democrats have just as much opportunity to find a viable candidate to run for any of these positions. They have failed at a County level to produce an electable candidate.”

Jones believes that by removing party affiliation, candidate transparency is diminished, and voters may be tricked into believing a candidate is conservative when they’re not, or vice versa.

Rudi, who is registered as a nonaffiliated voter or NAV, is quoted in another media source as being displeased with having to re-register during each primary in order to vote.

“This shows the ignorance we’re dealing with here,” said Jones. “Under Oregon Statute, NAVs can just put in writing to the County Clerk which ballot they’d like to receive, and vote either way without re-registering. They’ve never been disenfranchised.”

“They don’t know the system at all, and yet they want to change it,” said Jones.

Jones also points out one nasty side-effect of changing Commissioner seats to nonpartisan: loss of local control.

She said, “If a commissioner resigns, under a nonpartisan system we lose a whole layer of local representation.”

At present, under the partisan system, there are up to 48 precinct committee people from all corners of Baker County, elected by voters to represent them at a precinct-level. These grassroots elected officials would be tapped to serve during the nominee selection process when replacing a commissioner.

“The decision, if we went nonpartisan, would be left to just two remaining Commissioners or even worse—the Governor if two commissioners resign. The governor would choose the first commissioner, and then the new commissioner and the remaining commissioner would select the third person themselves. Who would want Kate Brown deciding who our County Commissioner will be?” Jones asked.

Solar pilot project proposed

Idaho Power customers may soon be able to participate in a Community Solar Pilot Program if the company’s proposal is approved by the Idaho Public Utilities Commission (IPUC).

Under the proposal, Idaho Power would build a 500-kilowatt (kW) solar array on property it owns near its Boise Bench substation on Amity Road. Interested customers could purchase subscriptions entitling them to a portion of the electrical output from the project. They would receive a monthly bill credit based on the amount of solar generation. Additional details about the program are available at idahopower.com/solar.

Pie auction

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Sharon said, “I was surprised. We hadn’t expected that at all...We were really excited.” In speaking about the return, Dallas said, “I love Baker. I’m very happy here. I always knew I was going to move back.”

Parker, who wrote the original nomination for the Defrees, said, “I think they’ve got a really good shot at the Nationals,” speaking about the Defrees’s Oregon Tree Farm System’s Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year award, for the Western Region. National competition includes four candidates, from four regions.

“In terms of management, and all the other criteria looked at, they just hit the ball out of the park, on every single item. They’re a century farm, and their family is so involved, and something that’s always impressed

me, is their commitment to the community...They’re very conscientious about everybody in the community,” Parker said.

The Defrees family has active membership in the Baker County Chapter of the Small Woodlands Association, the Blue Mountain Forest Cooperative, Eastern Oregon Forest Protective Association, and OSU’s Tree School East Planning Committee. Parker said, if the Defrees receive the American Forest Foundation’s National Tree Farmer of the Year award, it will be the first time for anyone from eastern Oregon.

The Fair Board includes Chairman Ron Rowan, Vice Chairman Dean Defrees, and members Christina Smith, Michelle Kaseberg, Mark Johnson, Cynthia Norton, and Cliff Schoeningh. Fair Staff includes Manager Angie Turner, Assistant Manager Rochelle Adams, and Bruce Smith, Maintenance/Janitorial. Terri Siddoway, Janice Cowan, Rob Ellingson, and Mark Bennett serve as Advisory Board members.

Last year, Rowan said,

the event brought in almost \$4,100 (and over 70 people attended), and \$1,000 from Friends of the Fair was used to purchase the stage. New purchases included tables as well, and, through a grant of \$7,000, and a contribution from Friends of the Fair of \$1,000, new fencing is planned for this year.

Kaseberg announced the Fair Family, the Defrees,

Kaseberg said there were two letters of support for the nomination, one of which Kaseberg had written. She read hers: “With great honor, I would like to nominate the Defrees family of Sumpter Valley, for 2016 Baker County Fair Family. The Defrees family has been a part of the Baker County 4-H program... Mr. and Mrs. Defrees have instilled in their kids a sense of pride in their family heritage, and pride in their ranch, in keeping it ... sustainable ... Mr. and Mrs. Defrees, along with their children, Nancy, Dean, and Cheryl, were very involved with various programs, and various projects...I can’t wait for the next generation of Defrees family to

show their animals at the fair...”

Kaseberg spoke about Dean’s efforts serving on the Board, and the improvements to the fairgrounds, along with the Defrees’s Tree Farmer of the Year award.

Rohner read her nomination letter: “I believe the Defrees family should be the Fair Family of 2016. Growing up, I remember the Defrees kids, Nancy, Dean, and Cheryl, always having various projects at the fair. Dean became involved with the Fair Board as an adult, soon after he returned to the family farm after college. Dean and Nancy’s children all grew up with the Baker Junior Show as part of their summers. Dean and Sharon, and Nancy and John were very involved at this time... Dean continues to be on the Fair Board, long after his children’s involvement, showing their dedication to the children of the community. You can count on Sharon and Dean to adhere to the rules, that a Fair Family must smile all week (followed by laughter from the crowd). Enjoy your week.”

Kaseberg presented Dean with the award and gift basket. Dean said it’s been a privilege serving, and thanked everyone.

The dinner included sliced beef, broccoli salad, dinner salad, beans, potatoes, garlic bread, dessert, and beverages. The beef—about 120 pounds of ball tip, provided for the dinner—was acquired through Country Natural Beef. The rest of the meal was prepared by Turner, and Kaseberg.

The beef was barbecued on the “Titanic,” a grill owned by Dan and Jo Warnock of Sumpter Valley, converted from a large tank found on their property, by a friend from Eugene over 20 years ago. It was dubbed the Titanic by Jo when she first noted the size of it, and saw the rivet pattern, which reminded her of the ship with the same name, she said. This Titanic’s crew included the Warnocks, and Butch, Kay, and Del Markgraf.

Tyler Brown, Manager of Barley Brown’s Brew Pub in Baker City, was present again this year, serving Barley’s Coyote Peak Wheat, and Pallet

Jack IPA.

Following the dinner was the lively pie auction, with donated pies and desserts from members of the community. Extra beef was also auctioned, with Baker City Manager Fred Warner, Jr. at the microphone, as auctioneer, and Dallas assisting him as his “Vanna White,” he said.

Brown, who was the high bidder last year with his purchase of a pie for \$300, held that honor this year, purchasing one for \$450.

Previous Fair Families of the Year included: Markgraf family (2001); Barr family (2002); Bunch family (2003); Wendt family (2004); Cockram family (2005); Rohner family (2006); Jacobs family (2007); Phillips family (2008); Gerald and Bonnie Colton (2009); Coomer family (2010); Crabill family (2011); Rob and Dianne Ellington (2012); Warner family (2013); Siddoway family (2014); and Morris family (2015).

The mission of the Baker County Fair Board is to “...manage, maintain, and promote the Baker County Fair Grounds for the benefit of its citizens.”