

Local

City Council

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Smith questioned, “Are there any other nominations?” With none heard, Smith declared Downing Mayor.

Smith then stated she would turn the meeting over to Mayor Downing.

His first official act of Mayor was calling for the appointment of a Vice Mayor.

Councilor Joseph nominated Councilwoman Rosemary Abell as Vice Mayor with Councilor Lowe seconding that motion.

No other nominations were voiced and a unanimous vote was cast officially appointing Abell Vice Mayor.

Council then proceeded to tackle the evening’s agenda.

Consent Agenda

Mayor Downing asked if Council wished to make a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the last regular meeting that was held December 13, 2016.

Councilor Lowe spoke up stating that those minutes needed to be amended as they were incorrect. It was stated he was not present when in fact he was and he asked that the correction be noted.

Downing confirmed with Smith that she would make that correction to which she stated she would.

Councilor Lowe then moved to approve the consent agenda with corrections, Councilor Joseph made a second with Council then casting a unanimous vote.

Citizen Participation

Mayor Downing then called for Citizen Participation. One citizen came forward: Dan La Place, who is spending his first winter in Baker City after moving from the East.

He advised Council of a system that was used there for snow removal where he recently moved from.

La Place said, “They used to plow on odd numbered side of the streets on odd days and even numbered side of the streets on even days. It worked pretty good and they still use that system to this date.”

Indicating the public was aware of this plan and would park accordingly so that their vehicles didn’t get plowed in, creating hazards by narrowing the streets and making them more dangerous.

Public Works Director Michelle Owen addressed his concern stating that they had considered a similar system; however, it had been decided that main routes that police, fire and ambulance use were priority as were school bus

routes.

They then moved to east, west and north, south streets as able.

She also mentioned that the current snow removal map was available in the city website and that where she hailed from in Minnesota she was aware of the odd, even schedule and agreed that it did work well but also noted that if a car was parked where the plowing was occurring it was simply towed at the owner’s expense.

“We don’t want to be like that,” Owen said, noting that this community has a great deal of elderly and disabled that would be severely impacted if that were the approach the City chose to take.

Board and Commission Appointments

Smith addressed Council stating that several of Boards and Commissions had vacancies created by term expirations.

The Golf Board currently has four vacancies for three year terms.

Mark Ward, Larry Smith and Lyle Kuchenbecker have applied for three of those vacant seats. The Historic District Design Review Commission has three vacancies.

Lea Gettle has applied to fill one of those vacancies. The Budget Board has three vacancies.

Former Mayor Kim Moiser has applied to fill one of those vacancies.

Public Works Advisory Committee has three vacancies.

John Wickert has applied to fill one vacancy.

Councilor Joseph asked Smith if they could just make a motion to appoint all applicants to the respective board or commission or if they had to do each one separately.

Smith advised one motion to appoint all would be sufficient.

Joseph made that motion with a second by Councilor Lowe.

All Councilors voted in favor of the motion.

Councilor Joseph suggested to Mr. La Place he might consider volunteering to serve on the public works advisory committee.

Mr. La Place smiled and nodding, saying, “I wouldn’t mind hopping on a grader and helping out.”

With seats still open citizens are urged to consider volunteering their time to one of these boards or commissions.

Julie Smith can be contacted at City Hall or by calling 541.524.2033 for further information on how to apply and what is available.

Resolution # 3780 Anthony Silvers Street Tree Grant Program

Anthony Silvers, who passed away in 2011, left

a substantial amount of money to Baker City with the requirement that the interest earnings be used for street trees.

The Tree Board recently developed guidelines to facilitate public participation in the program. Passing the resolution before them will set clearer guidelines for the grant program.

Councilor Abell gave accolades to the program saying that two very nice trees were planted outside of the Pythian Castle on Washington Street where the Historic Baker City office is located.

Abell is currently the secretary/treasurer for HBC.

Councilor Lowe moved to approve the resolution that was seconded by Councilor Joseph.

Council unanimously passed the resolution. More information about the program and requirements for participating can be obtained by contacting Jennifer Murphy at City Hall 541.524.2063

Mutual Agreement and Order (MAO) Negotiation with DEQ Update

Public Works Director Michelle Owen updated Council on the ongoing work to reach an MAO with the DEQ regarding Baker City’s current practice of releasing treated wastewater into the Powder River.

The City is operating under a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit that allows this practice.

The City was fined \$6800 in October 2015 for exceeding the (BOD) Biological Oxygen Demand and a reduction in fine hearing held in Sept 2016, at which time the City had exceeded the BOD once again earlier in that month. DEQ then suggested that MAO be entered into to prevent future potential effluent discharge challenges. An MAO would protect the City from any further litigation, a reduction in fine for the first violation in 2015 to 6,400 and no fine for the second violation in 2016.

The MAO will also include steps the City will need to complete in order to make improvements to the facility, including a timeline to achieve these goals.

Owen indicated that the option of creating a wetlands of sorts or discharging into fields in lieu of the river was most likely was would need to happen.

She advised Council that she anticipated an MAO should be expected before the next council meeting and that they would then need to consider what action to take.

City Manager/Director Update

City Manager Fred

Warner addressed first a letter of resignation he had received from Councilor Lowe. Lowe spoke saying that his “resignation will be effective at the close of this meeting.”

He indicated that his wife has accepted a position at OHSU in Portland and they would therefore be relocating.

He thanked his fellow Councilors and expressed sadness that he was leaving the community and that he had truly enjoyed serving. He also urged others to step up and volunteer in our community.

Warner advised Council that he felt applications should be available until the next Council meeting at which time they could select a replacement.

Warner also commended Public Works on the good job he thought they had been doing in the never-ending job of snow removal.

He also mentioned the fire departments campaign ‘Adopt-A-Hydrant’ in which citizens are urged to locate their nearest hydrant and shovel it out so that if for any reason the Fire Department needed access to that hydrant they would be able to reach it easily.

Owen stated that 500 flags have been ordered to “mark” hydrant locations in an effort to assist in hydrant location.

She also advised Council that earlier that afternoon she had receive several phone calls from citizens that they had received letters from the Post Office that they were unable to deliver mail to some mailboxes and for those customers would need to pick up their mail at the post office until their mailboxes could be accessed again.

Owen expressed regret for the situation but stated that those affected would have to be responsible for digging out their own mailboxes as Public Works was taxed already and could only do so much.

Unfortunately, there are locations where those things happen.

She also advised that it was likely that contingency money would need to be transferred in order to continue those snow removal efforts and Council will likely see that at the next meeting.

She stated that although costly, they have the money available and are still sitting in fairly good shape.

Council Comments

Mayor Downing praised the Adopt-A-Hydrant campaign saying “I have seen a good number of pictures posted on Facebook.”

With nothing further, he adjourned the meeting.

City Council has vacancy

The City of Baker City is looking to fill one open position on the City Council. The City will accept applications through the office of City Recorder beginning January 11th until January 24th at 4:00 p.m.

The individual who is appointed by a majority vote of the City Council will serve one term on the City Council through December of 2018.

An applicant must be a registered voter in the State of Oregon and have resided within the City of Baker City for 12 months immediately preceding the appointment.

To apply go to www.bakercity.com to download and complete the City Councilor application located on the City’s home page and submit a letter of interest to Julie Smith at City Hall. Applications can be returned to:

Attn: Julie Smith
1655 1st Street
Baker City OR, 97814
Fax: 541-524-2024
Phone: 541-524-2033
Email: juliesmith@bakercity.com

Officials ask for Malheur Co. state of emergency

Representative Cliff Bentz (R-Ontario) and Senator Ted Ferrioli (R-John Day) have officially requested that Governor Kate Brown declare a State of Emergency in Malheur County.

Rep. Bentz said, “Following conversations with constituents, the Malheur County Judge Dan Joyce, and Ontario Mayor Ron Verini, I asked Sen. Ferrioli to join me in a meeting with Governor Kate Brown this morning, held for the purpose of requesting that Malheur County be declared a disaster area. I have received a number of additional requests for assistance in managing challenges presented by the 30 inches or more of snow blanketing the Treasure Valley.”

“While in Governor Brown’s office, I asked if we could contact Judge Joyce and Sheriff Brian Wolfe directly. The Governor’s staff made contact, placed them on the Governor’s speaker phone, and the Governor listened to their description of the problems facing the County. She immediately instructed her staff to coordinate a response with the Office of Emergency Management and with Governor Butch Otter’s office in the State of Idaho,” said Rep. Bentz.

“I want to thank our Governor for her concern and willingness to help with the challenges facing Malheur County.”

Declaring a State of Emergency for the County will allow the State of Oregon to allocate additional resources to the assist Malheur County in their snow containment and ice removal efforts.

According to measurements taken at the OSU Malheur Experiment Station, Malheur County received more than 26 inches of snow between December 1st and January 5th. With road closures (currently I-84 and Highway 20), stores closing because of fear of roof collapse (Walmart and Albertsons), with rapidly diminishing supplies of salt and ice melt (not to mention snow shovels and snow rakes—the supply of which is apparently completely exhausted), and water backing up behind ice dams, Malheur County faces real and dangerous challenges. It is hoped that help can be found to remove the ice dams, prepare for flooding, and restore access to county and state highways.

Chaining up should happen when required

All truck drivers and motorists in passenger vehicles are reminded to look for chain requirement signs and obey the chain law. Several freeway and highway closures over the past several weeks, including the closure of I-84 and I-82 today were due to motorists (typically commercial trucks) not chaining up when required, then losing control, crashing and blocking the freeway lanes.

Because of recent severe winter weather chains have been required on several highway sections at various times, with snow, ice and slick roadways creating challenging driving conditions. In some cases chains are required only for commercial trucks or motorists towing trailers. In other cases chains are required on all vehicles, with traction tires as an alternative for chains on some passenger vehicles.

Know the chain law and stay in compliance. It will not only help you maintain control of your vehicle, save you from getting a ticket, but also help prevent road closures and long delays for other motorists. Don’t risk your life and the lives of others by refusing to comply with chain requirements.

For current chain requirements and information on Oregon chain law, visit www.TripCheck.com.

OTEC reports Sumpter outage

On Tuesday, January 10, at approximately 6:27 p.m. multiple outages were reported in the Baker District due to a tree, overburdened with heavy snow, falling into the line.

With strong snowstorms moving through the area, 679 members were affected by the outage in Sumpter and Granite.

OTEC crews worked throughout the evening, safely isolated the area, removed the tree from the

line and restored power to all members by 10:15 p.m.

Additionally, beginning at 8:40 a.m. this morning, various outages were reported in the Keating, Medical Springs and South Baker areas. OTEC crews were dispatched, safely isolated the area and restored power to all 401 members affected by 10:22 a.m.

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

