

Local

Sumpter's new mayor sworn in

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Sumpter City Council met in regular session on January 17th. The meeting was rescheduled from the 10th due to a power outage.

Cary Clarke was sworn in as Sumpter mayor. Clarke had been serving as interim mayor and was elected to the position by write in vote in November's elections. Councilors Samantha Rowan and Robert Armbruster were also in attendance.

Utility Manager Report

Clarke stated Utility Manager Jeff McKinney could not be at the meeting as he was busy getting water going for five or six residents with frozen pipes. Clarke asked that residents don't shut their water off just because it's warmed up. He said there is frost down in the ground and he has personal knowledge that one of the pipes frozen today is five-feet deep.

Fire Department Report

Jim Sheller reported one medical call out and one standby for Lifeflight. He stated they have had three call outs for Lifeflight and crews haven't been able to fly to any of them. Landing spots have been identified, including a spot on Highway 7 by the gravel pit. The recent request for Lifeflight was cancelled as they couldn't fly due to weather.

Sheller reported Fire Chief Kurt Clarke has been in town this week clearing out fire hydrants. Some along the highway were buried ten feet back in snow banks. Cary Clarke said he observed a couple out early one morning walking their dog and clearing out hydrants with a shovel. He said if anyone noticed a hydrant that had been missed, please call City Hall.

Rowan suggested, "or adopt the hydrant," and clear it out.

Planning Report

LeAnne Woolf reported that at their December 15, 2016 meeting, the Commission discussed possible repercussions of the marijuana ordinance.

They also discussed the results of the marijuana survey and some recall petitions being so close to 50/50 and the ramifications for knowing the true goals of the citizens of Sumpter.

The Commission discussed goal 10 of the comprehensive plan and the draft of the "Ready, Set, Go" portion of the evacuation plan.

In their January 5, 2017 meeting, they discussed a piece in the Local Focus speaking to a local hazard mitigation plan coming from the comprehensive and evacuation plans. They reviewed the 2010 census, which showed of 307 dwellings, 119 or 38.8% are lived in on a permanent basis.

LUBA Appeal

Clarke stated that Ordinance 2016-3 passed last month had an appeal filed against it with LUBA, due to wording restricting marijuana businesses from being within 1,000 feet of a park.

Clarke said he consulted with City attorney Dan Van Thiel this week.

Van Thiel advised letting the ordinance go through the LUBA process, which



Meghan Andersch / The Baker County Press
Cary Clarke being sworn in as mayor by City Recorder Julie McKinney (center). Councilor Samantha Rowan looks on from left.

would include submitting all information on how the ordinance was put together, why, and the reasoning behind it.

Van Thiel said he feels good about the ordinance but did not want to go to Salem and represent the City as he didn't think they should pay him to drive to Salem, spend the night, and go to court.

He said he would put all the information together and they could represent themselves as well as him doing it.

Meanwhile, the OLCC has issued licenses to two businesses, the Coughie Pot and the Nugget.

Clarke asked if the Council wanted to repeal the ordinance and start over or let it go through the LUBA process.

He explained the Council wasn't trying to restrict where the marijuana businesses could be with the ordinance, but were trying to stop it completely.

He said he feels the way the ordinance as presented to LUBA is different from how he represented it.

Vern Hollopeter asked if Van Thiel could recommend an attorney in Salem that would represent the City in this matter. Clarke replied that would put off making the decision.

Jody Hallett asked where the concerns about meth users and thefts are coming from. He stated they have been in Huntington for the last year with no problems of the sort. He said typical stereotypes are untrue. For example, he stated the majority of their customers are 50+ years old. He said he would rather be in a room of stoners than drunks.

Hollopeter said he has been told by people in Huntington that marijuana customers make purchases, go park down side streets, smoke what they've bought, and then go down the freeway.

This started a discussion about Sumpter's lack of law enforcement presence. Clarke stated he talked to Sheriff Ash a month ago about this issue and they can put the money from State revenue sharing toward having more police presence.

Jenny Long stated there is the potential of a class action lawsuit against the City, due to legitimate businesses being held up when they have spent money and gone through the proper procedures to be in business.

She stated the proper process for the City to take with notices to landowners and public hearings is not overly long, with 35 days required for notice to the State and notices to landowners required 20 days before the public hearing.

Clarke made a motion to repeal the ordinance and not go through LUBA. Motion passed with two in favor and Clarke against. Ban on Marijuana Initiative

Hollopeter stated that as chief petitioner of this initiative he feels he represents the 44 who signed it and must give them a voice on how the matter was handled by the City.

He said City Recorder Julie McKinney intentionally and illegally changed the initiative and submitted it to the Baker County Clerk. Also, the initiative has not been adopted or rejected by City Council.

Clarke stated he was the first to sign the petition and that he did not think that McKinney had intentionally done wrong.

Clarke said "municipal law is crazy" with a person at one agency contradicting the person sitting at the next desk.

He said he spoke with Cindy Carpenter at the County Clerk's office the day after the initiative was submitted and she said it was all good to go.

McKinney stated everything had been handled and fixed earlier in the day, she didn't know the initiative had to go before Council, and she apologized. She explained that all the text on the submitted materials was in the title box so she was trying to improvise the summary.

Motion to send in the 802 Notice of City Measure Election passed unanimously. Motion to adopt the initiative to be put on the ballot also passed unanimously.

Council input

Clarke asked that residents be patient with snowplowing. He said streets in Baker are not nearly as nice as Sumpter's.

He said snow in front of driveways is just part of plowing—snow comes off the blade. He said Sumpter is out of plow money and he doesn't know what they're going to do to buy fuel.

Armbruster mentioned upcoming Elected Essentials training.

Public input

Myrna Clarke said that Baker City has an "adopt-

a-hydrant" program.

People clear out and take pictures with the hydrant and shovel. Monthly there is a drawing for \$25 at a local business. Clarke said she knows a couple firemen and one woman who have been digging out hydrants on the weekends and it would be nice to have others who could help.

Sheller reported the snowmobile club has been hard at work grooming trails.

They have 1100 miles on the Cat already and are having a hard time keeping up the trails with all the snow, with 20 more inches expected this week. The club maintains four hundred miles of trails. The annual poker run is coming up February 18th.

Kathy Vinson, Bookkeeper, brought two proposals to Council. She is retiring in June and suggested the City hire Guyer and Associates.

They have a payroll expert who could handle payroll, quarterlies, and W2s. She stated they take classes every year and are up on all the laws.

Armbruster asked for quantitative data to compare normal cost per year for these services as they have been done and the proposed cost in hiring Guyer.

A special meeting was set for January 24 at 9 a.m.

Vinson also requested that Council appoint Julie McKinney as budget officer. Council approved this unanimously.

Vinson mentioned needing five citizens to round out the budget committee. All must be registered voters who reside within City limits.

Vinson confirmed the street fund is broke. She said Dave Lindley is hoping they can get money from the emergency fund for snowplowing.

If the City has to take an interfund loan from water or sewer reserves, that will require doing a supplemental budget with a plan on paying back the loan. McKinney said a \$900 per month gas tax populates the street fund as there are no street fees for Sumpter.

Vinson explained about \$260 comes out of the fund monthly for streetlights and shop electricity.

Fuel for the grader and plow and payroll also come out of the fund.

She recommended starting a reserve fund for streets.

Man arrested

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A Facebook page under the name Bullseye Communications states, "Welcome to Bullseye Communication—home of 39 *Courier / Statesman*, *Chieftan* and other positive news Facebook newspapers touching the United States, New Zealand and Canada! Our flagship paper is the *West Richland Courier*, based in Washington State - enjoy!"

Another Facebook page under the name Bullseye Marketing states that the company is a "Consulting Agency in West Richland, Washington."

Inquiries with both the Washington and Oregon Secretaries of State show no businesses registered to or affiliated with May; however, he did register a now-expired nonprofit called the Bipolar and Depression Support Coalition up in Washington state in 2015.

During the busy summer events season, May also publicly discussed plans to reopen the once-beloved, long-since-closed Grizzly Bear Pizza in Baker City.

On Christmas morning, Baker City Police were called to a disturbance at the LDS Church on Hughes Lane in Baker City. The suspicious person was identified by members of the congregation as May; however, the suspect had fled by the time police arrived. Congregation members stated afterward that the suspect had claimed to be a prophet and they felt threatened—at which point they locked him outside the building.

Haines fire

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Hampton noted that it was an older home (built in 1925, according to County property records), and, "...they burn pretty fast ... Everybody did they best they could under the circumstances, but, unfortunately, an individual lost his life, and he was an elderly man. It's just a very sad situation."

Hampton knew Christensen, who would have morning coffee with Hampton regularly, and he said that Christensen helped maintain the property, including mowing the lawn, of the Haines United Methodist Church, which sits directly across Fourth Street, from Christensen's former home.

Among the entities noted responding to the fire, Hampton expressed high praise for the Baker County Sheriff's Department. "They did a really good job, and they need to be commended for that, from the Haines Fire Chief. Sheriff Travis Ash did a great job, the deputies did a great job, they saw to our needs, and in trying to keep us safe, blocking off the streets," Hampton said.

Kump, who investigated the fire, along with OSP Arson Investigator Nick Hagedorn, said the fire "...had originated in the front room, in the wood stove area, and we do believe that the person living there was doing something with the wood stove, and something in that nature caused the fire." He said he can't confirm the exact cause of the fire that burned hot and spread quickly, so it remains undetermined at this point, because there's no way to conclusively prove what happened, but from observations at the scene, and from speaking to witnesses, like Hampton mentioned, Kump formed the theory that the fire was accidental.

Hampton and Kump estimated the loss of the property in the range of \$50,000 to \$70,000, they said. This was based on research on the property (yet to be completed), and from speaking with witnesses. This topic was discussed during a briefing following the fire, Hampton said.

"I just really feel that Christensen was doing what he could to stay warm, and he was just up, and getting the wood stove going, and whatever occurred, leads to the origin area—the origin area all comes from the area right there, in the front room, where the wood stove is," Kump said. Though the cause of the fire remains undetermined, he said that the investigation is closed.

Ash also voiced some praise for the volunteers fighting the fire, as he noted the extreme cold—thirteen degrees below zero—during the early morning. "They were just ice-encrusted, trying to get water going, and running water on that house...Those guys need to get kudos for what they do. I think it's important to realize the sacrifice they make, to be out there at one-thirty in the morning, in the freezing cold."

Evidence could still be seen of that effort this week, including boot and fire hose tracks in the snow near the fire hydrant located by the house, on the southeast side, and icicles formed on items on the property. In honor of Christensen, someone had placed yellow flowers in the snow on the Fourth Street side. Many people expressed their surprise and sadness at the loss, as Christensen was a much appreciated and generous member of a well-known family in the community.

Scholarship available

Baker City is once again offering a \$1,500.00 scholarship. To be eligible you must be a graduate of a Baker County High School or a current resident of Baker County, who will be at least a sophomore in college by September, 2017.

The Scholarship will be awarded to a student who is enrolled in a health care profession. The application for the scholarship can be obtained from the Auxiliary Gift Shop in the front lobby of Saint Alphonsus Medical Center – Baker City at 3325 Pocahontas Rd or from a member of the Auxiliary Scholarship Committee, Peggy Payton, Chairperson 541-519-8118 or Marilyn Bloom at 541-523-2750.

The applications must be returned to the committee by April 15th, 2017. The recipient will be notified by May 20th, 2017.