

Classifieds / Local

FARM / RANCH



12 yr.-old sorrel mare. 14 hands high. \$1000. 541-519-5035.

LAWN / GARDEN



LAWNMOWER.
Craftsman lawnmower. Works great but owner has upgraded to an easier to start mower for herself. Retailed for around \$350. Asking \$150. 541.519.0572. Leave a voicemail.

RENTALS

Office Space for rent in Baker City. Prime downtown location. Handicap accessible. Off-street parking. Air conditioning. 541-523-5851.

NOTICE OF BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING

A public meeting of the Budget Committee of the City of Sumpter, Baker County, State of Oregon, to discuss the budget for the fiscal year July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018 will be held at the Sumpter City Hall, 240 N. Mill Street, Sumpter Oregon. The meeting will take place on 1st of June 2017 at 3:00 p.m.

The purpose of the meeting is to receive the budget message and to receive comments from the public on the proposed budget.

This is a public meeting where deliberation of the Budget Committee will take place. Any person may appear to discuss the proposed programs with the Budget Committee.

A copy of the budget document may be inspected or obtained on or after June 1, 2017 at Sumpter City Hall, 240 N. Mill Street, Sumpter, Oregon, between the hours of 8 am noon and 1 pm to 5 pm, Monday through Friday.

At this meeting, a PUBLIC HEARING will be held to receive written and/or oral comments on the possible use of State Revenue Sharing Funds received by the City of Sumpter.

The City of Sumpter complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Assistance is available for individuals with disabilities by calling 541-894-2314 or the Oregon Telecommunication Relay Service.

—Julie McKinney, Budget Officer, City of Sumpter, OR 5.12

Public Safety Utility Fee

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

One man who lives out of town but has property in Baker City voiced concern about the fact that there was no sunset clause on this “tax.”

He sees it as something that will “just hang around forever and then what is to stop another tax from being added in the future.” His example, “a safety road tax” to fund fixing the City Streets.

Among those speaking in opposition were Alice Knapp who owns low income apartment housing. She said, “Not subsidized housing, just low income. Most of my tenants—I keep it low because they just can’t pay more—they are good tenants. I know \$60 a year doesn’t sound like much to you but it would be devastating to them.”

Ryc and Penny Rienks were very concerned about how such a large shortfall came to be.

City Manager Warner said it was just realized as he and City Finance Director were finalizing the budget proposal over the last couple of weeks. Rienks bluntly asked just how such a thing could just “hit you in the face” and questioned Dexter’s abilities as a Finance Director if this had just come to light.

“This sounds like a shakedown to me,” he said. “In my time in this city I’ve seen surpluses of money wasted. Maybe you all need to take a hard look at big salaries. When money is short, it’s always police and fire to go. Scare the people.”

Penny Rienks said she thought the City ought to do what everybody else does when money becomes a hardship and tighten the purse strings.

Warner and Dexter cited projected income from a third-party Ambulance billing service, sale of a City owned industrial property that prompted the hiring of one fire department employee and a large increase in the City’s PERS costs as factors in the shortfall.

The ambulance billing service, “which has increased all other users revenue by 30% didn’t increase ours at all and the sale of the industrial property, that prompt the hire of a firefighter, did not happen. PERS we can’t do anything about,” Dexter said.

“We joined in the 50s when costs were low but once you join you can’t get out,” noted Dexter who expressed hope that “the current legislative session will provide some much needed fixes to the PERS system.”

Mrs. Reinks said about the fee, “This is a tax and should go to the people for a vote.” She also used her time to question the City’s audit wondering why it had taken so long to complete.

Dexter addressed that concern by saying that the auditors had staffing issues and some accounting practices had changed.

Ken Hackett, also opposing the fee or tax, suggested a “staff analysis” to see where other cuts may be more effective.

Mary Miller, a retired nurse who practiced for 32 years spoke in support of the fee saying, “I’ve seen what can happen when help is delayed.”

She also said that with the anticipated 50,000 people expected for the solar eclipse this summer the area needs those police, fire and ambulance services. “We better be ready,” she warned. She told Council, “Five dollars is five coffees at McDonald’s. If people can afford Cigarettes, snooze and beer. I think they can afford this.”

Calder spoke to this matter as well. She began by saying that the gas taxes are raised all the time and citizens don’t get to vote on that.

The one-dollar sidewalk fee will be taken away if this is passed and Calder commented that she had been a fan of that program because the money went into a fund that could help those that could not otherwise afford to fix sidewalks make repairs.

“I saw a lot of sidewalks get fixed,” she said. “Maybe a hardship fund could be created where some that are more fortunate than others can help others.”

After public comment Dexter stated that the shortfall was not a surprise, she had been warning for some time, including at budget hearing last year and Warner added that he was aware but what he had meant when he said it was just realized in the last couple of weeks was that until it was on paper in front of them to see could they understood the full severity of the situation.

Warner explained he had made as many cuts as he could when going over the budget and that meeting with the Budget Board were set to begin May 15.

Warner and Dexter also tried to explain that the shortfall is in the General Fund and the General Fund is where Police and Fire dollars come from.

After some discussion Council chose to not have a first reading of the ordinance due to some language but the majority did feel that having this ordinance available to use might be a good idea.

The next meeting should see a first and possibly second reading of the proposed fee ordinance once it is revised. Public testimony will be allowed at the second meeting regarding the matter.

City Manager/Director/Council Comments

Warner advised Council that a conference call was scheduled on Thursday, May 11 at noon with Greg Smith for some economic strategic planning.

There was also a 911 board meeting on the 12th at 2:00 p.m. and May 15th at 6:00 p.m. the budget board would begin meetings.

Smith asked council if a staff analysis was something they wanted her to pursue to which they all agreed would be a good idea.

Dexter commented on the City Audit, saying it had been completed and sent to the State.

Councilor Thomas reminded everyone that May 25th was the Oregon Trail Interpretive Centers 25th anniversary urging the public to attend.

With nothing further the meeting adjourned.

Commercial marijuana grow ban discussed in Sumpter

BY MEGHAN ANDERSCH
Meghan@TheBakerCountyPress.com

Thursday, May 4th saw a public hearing in Sumpter on a proposed ordinance to ban commercial marijuana grows. Written testimony was turned in prior to the meeting, which was conducted by the Planning Commission. Leland Myers served as hearing officer with Commission member John Young also present. LeAnne Woolf served as secretary for the meeting.

Woolf read aloud the proposed ordinance and clarified that did not serve as an official first reading, but was done for informational purposes. The ordinance would prohibit commercial marijuana grows within the Sumpter city limits and impose a \$500 daily fine along with disconnection of water and sewer service for violations.

Kathleen Whitesell stated the City water is stressed in the summertime anyway and she is in favor of the ordinance. Dennis Farnsworth asked about other types of agriculture that would adversely affect water, such as growing tomatoes in a greenhouse and stated the ordinance should not restrict just one product.

Greg Selig stated he moved to Sumpter a couple of years ago for the unique environment. He said he has been around grows and the smell is horrendous. He is in favor of the ordinance.

Cary Clarke stated he is for the ordinance “one hundred percent” because the town “just doesn’t need any more of that element.” He said there have been a few issues in the last couple of weeks.

Dick Brown was also for the ordinance. He said he has been around some grows in Arizona and they really do stink. He said he also has an issue with the elements that can come in with the grows. He already has a borderline homeless camp near his house and doesn’t want any more. Brown later clarified he has nothing against people smoking pot or the marijuana shops

in town.

Catherine Dodgens said many have worked too hard to make Sumpter a historic zone. She stated she was part of Neighborhood Watch for six years. She said she heard one business is growing without permission and that she has seen one of the elements she chased out for six years openly standing in front of the business.

Jeff McKinney asked what are the benefits to the town of having a grow. Myers replied that there is not the same kind of tax base from grows. Employment may be a benefit.

Portia Mittons stated that benefits would be employment, payment of water bill “when they have water”, payment of electricity, and helping Sumpter to “sort of be put on the map.” She said this a tourist town and when people come in to visit a grow, that would also bring money to other businesses.

Mittons said she is against the ordinance. Regarding water limits, she suggested that if someone wants to do a grow, they could be required to put in a well. She said smell is relative and can be reduced by charcoal. She said the City would get tax dollars from a grow, though not as much as from the retail sites.

As to the element the business brings in, she stated it would be business owners such as herself who have never had more than a speeding ticket. She said employers do background checks and run a tight business, not a party for people to get high. She said grows would be inside a facility and not visible.

Linda Wise said she is in favor of the ordinance. Even if grown in a facility, there are still odors and we are “up in mountains for clean, fresh air.” She said the liveability of Sumpter for those who don’t support this must be considered. Some people came for a simpler, quieter life and “we’ll have to decide what’s more important—another business or quiet life in Sumpter.”

Wise said that if a nursery wanted to take a block,



Meghan Andersch / The Baker County Press

Leland Myers, acting hearing officer, addressing the public. John Young is to the left.

the City would have to look at the water issue for that, too.

Randy Joseph stated he has been here over twenty years and has watched the town shrink over that time. He does not see a grow as a threat or the people involved as criminals or degenerates. Marijuana is a big business nationwide and he thinks it would be a bigger benefit than harm.

Carson Farnsworth stated as the town continues to dwindle, these types of businesses will bring in people who purchase real estate. Myers shared that Sumpter is the only city in Baker County that is currently growing. Most of the growth is retired people. Wise stated Sumpter is not growing by hundreds but is not a dying town. Clarke said he built four new homes last year and has five scheduled this year. None have any ties to the marijuana, but are due to the recreational opportunities and “laid-back way of life.”

McKinney asked what happens next. Myers stated the Planning Commission will take all letters and oral testimony, sit down with it, and make a recommendation to City Council based on the testimony. He said that if those present wished him to read the letters, he would do so, but that of all those received, only one was against the ordinance. Clarke asked if the Commission could try to have their evaluation to Council before the next Council meeting.

Samantha Rowan asked if anyone has looked into the real estate side of things. She said she has spoken with a local realtor who has both listed and sold houses for much more than anticipated due to the local marijuana businesses. Dennis Farnsworth asked if there are any grows on the horizon. Rowan stated there are not; the City is just taking proactive measures.

John Young asked where the plants are processed after grown to maturity. Carson Farnsworth explained that grows are allowed to do trimming onsite. Otherwise, the marijuana must be processed elsewhere. Dodgens asked where businesses get the product they sell. Mittons explained they have to purchase from licensed buyers. Dennis Farnsworth said it’s comparable to the meat industry. If anyone gets sick, the product can be traced back to exactly where it came from.

McKinney asked what parts of the City grows would be allowed in. Woolf said that she has spent quite some time double-checking and that currently the zoning ordinance allows for nurseries or truck farms in residential areas. It also states industrial areas can be used for anything that the State does not prohibit. McKinney stated he wants to make clear this could happen in residential areas. Myers stated that is correct, without the ordinance restricting it.

Pulitzer prize winner coming to Ladd Marsh

An action-packed weekend is coming up at the 12th annual Ladd Marsh Bird Festival, May 19-21.

Friday night opens with

the Odd Strings band playing original songs about birds, birding and Ladd Marsh at 7 p.m.

Following the short

concert is Pulitzer-prize winning journalist Mark Obmascik who’s book, *The Big Year: A Tale of Man, Nature, and Fowl Obses-*

sion was turned into a movie starring Steve Martin, Owen Wilson and Jack Black. Call 503.947.6232 for information.