

Business / Agriculture

City's new fee ordinance

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This fee replaces the current sidewalk fee imposed on City Utility bills, which Warner explained would be set to zero until the sunset clause expires June 30, 2020.

The ordinance also declares for an emergency, so if passed the City could begin collecting the fee as of July 1, 2017.

A small handful of Citizens were on hand at the meeting to speak in opposition of this ordinance. Tom Muller addressed Council. He began by stating that he didn't feel the Citizens of Baker City should have to pay these fees.

Muller felt that these fees were being imposed due to lost revenue at the 911 center under the direction of Hope Lindsey, who left the center earlier this month.

Mayor Downing replied to Mr. Muller's concern explaining that the 911 Center is a County run entity and any loss of revenue would impact the County negatively not the City.

Muller said in his opinion, "You have already decided."

He went on to say, "This is taxation without representation. If you are truly honest people, then let the people of Baker City decide at the ballot box."

Ryc Reinks also addressed Council saying, "The big thing I am worried about is you're enacting what you are calling a fee but is in fact a tax to subsidize an already tax supported Police and Fire. That's over taxation for the same entity. It's unfortunate you find yourself in this position."

He eluded to prior Council's and City Management's "terrible decisions" leading to where the City is now with a budget shortfall and said, "Now you're stuck with having to put out the fire. I agree that the easiest way to prevent a lot of ill will would be to turn it to the public, put it up for a vote."

Before leaving the podium, he asked two questions, "One, what is the legal foundation for creating a tax without public input, taking it to a vote? And two double taxation on the services already covered

by property taxes. Hope I get answers tonight."

Warner replied, "The City Council does have the authority to implement fees in Baker City; they are the elected body that does that. The Public Safety Fee (ordinance) specifically talks about that the City Council believes that all developed property uses fire and police protection. As far as public taxation this is all money that goes into the general fund and I don't think double taxation applies."

Reinks told Warner, "I don't think your answer is accurate. I don't think it leaves you free from liabilities as a body, the reason being property taxes pay for Police and Fire. Now you are saying this is general fund. It doesn't matter where you put the money, it states in the Ordinance what it's for, it's for an entity that exists on tax dollars at this time. You are in fact taxing us twice for the same service."

Reinks also told Council, "My wife and I were talking and felt if our ambulance and fire trucks and police cars go outside the City Limits, maybe we should put a meter on them like a taxi start to bill the County."

Finance Director Jeanie Dexter pointed out a difference in a user fee vs. property tax, in a user fee the City cannot place a lien against or foreclose on property for failing to pay whereas if property taxes are not paid those options become available.

Dexter noted several different ways the general fund is funded. "It's fines and forfeitures from the Police, ambulance fees, franchise fees, permits among other things, not just property taxes. Even though property taxes do account for 3/4 of the funding," she said.

Dexter also provided information about other Oregon Cities that were implementing fees including some similar to the Public Safety Utility fee.

Councilor Nilsson expressed concerns he was now having over implementing of the fee and stated he had been reviewing meeting minutes from years prior.

Councilor Thomas made light by suggesting that policemen and

firemen be cut and said that maybe we could just ask the criminals to only commit crimes Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., and analyze data to decide when most fires occur and only staff during those times but quickly followed up with, "It's hard, not comfortable (to implement a fee) but I understand the need and we can't pick and choose when Police and Fire might have to shut their doors."

Councilor Joseph motioned for a first reading of the Ordinance with a second by Councilor Thomas. Warner read the ordinance aloud in its entirety.

Then Councilor Joseph moved to accept the first reading, seconded by Councilor Nilsson.

All voted in favor followed by Councilor Joseph then moving for a second reading that Councilor Thomas seconded.

In order to hear a second reading a unanimous vote was needed.

Councilor Andersen opposed so there was no second reading, that will happen at the next Council meeting.

Council did discuss the possibility of taking the matter to the public for a vote and will explore that option.

It takes time to get an initiative together to place a matter on a ballot. Council agreed that maybe for long term funding that may be a direction to pursue, however, the need is now and therefore the fee is recommended for immediate relief.

2015/2016 Annual Financial Report

Kent Bailey, who was the principal auditor for the City was on hand to address Council as to the audit report. Dexter noted that the audit was severely delinquent due to factors that included Bob Seymour, who had been responsible for the Cities audit in previous years, leaving the firm in charge of the audit to changes in utility billings requiring more attention than had been expected. Dexter apologized and advised that steps were being taken to avoid the same situation again. In addressing Council Bailey thanked Councilors for the service they were providing and said "it's a hard thing to do, deciding whether or

not to impose fees. You're going to have a lot of hard decisions coming up."

He noted that PERS had significantly impacted the City and advised Council that it was going to continue and get progressively worse but he did offer hope that the Legislature may provide some reforms that would ease the burden.

He told Council that with new wastewater projects being required that Council may at some point, in the not too distant future, look at adding new fees to the water bills or ask for voter levies to cover a gap in funding to complete those projects.

Public Works saw several projects that were facing similar challenges. Bailey noted that the City currently has a policy where purchases over \$2500 must be approved by the City Manager.

He noted several purchases that just exceeded that cap that had not been pre-approved and suggested two things that might alleviate the problem—the first being that the limit for pre-approved purchases be moderately raised and the second simply crack down to prevent the problem from happening.

Finance Director Jeanie Dexter welcomes any questions regarding the audit.

City Manager/Director Comments

City Manager Warner suggested that Council hold a special meeting to further discuss the Public Safety Utility Fee as well as review a draft of the proposed fee schedule. After a brief discussion, Council agreed that a special meeting would be held in June 6th at 7:00 p.m. in Council chambers at City Hall. Additional public comment will be heard at that meeting.

Council Comments

Councilor Thomas gave one final reminder to citizens that the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center will be celebrating their 25th anniversary on May 25th from 9-11 a.m.

He also noted that former Governor Barbara Roberts, who was in office when the Interpretive Center opened in 1992, would be on hand for the celebration.

With nothing further, Mayor Downing then adjourned the meeting.

— WEEKLY HAY REPORT —

Friday, May 19, 2017 — Eastern Oregon

Prices trended generally steady in a limited test compared to week ago prices. Most demand lays with the retail/stable hay. According to some producers, horse owners prefer lower sugar, higher protein hay. Many producers are sold out for the year, and are busy out in the fields preparing for new crop.

Tons Price Range Wtd Avg

Alfalfa/Orchard Mix — Large Square Premium
700 130.00-130.00 130.00

USDA Market News Service—AMS.USDA.gov

— CATTLE MARKET REPORT —

Wednesday, May 17, 2017

Vale, Oregon

Cattle sold through the auction: 715

Steer Calves

300-400# Bulk 161.00-174.00 Top 176.00
400-500# Bulk 154.00-168.00 Top 170.00
500-600# Bulk 149.00-161.00 Top 163.50

Heifer Calves

300-400# Bulk 149.00-162.00 Top 167.00
400-500# Bulk 146.00-164.00 Top 174.00
500-600# Bulk 137.00-148.00 Top 149.00

Yearling Steers

600-700# Bulk 139.00-147.00 Top 149.00
700-800# Bulk 122.00-128.00 Top 131.00
800-900# Bulk 119.00-127.00 Top 128.00
900-1,000# Bulk N/A Top N/A

Yearling Heifers

600-700# Bulk 122.00-134.00 Top 139.00
700-800# Bulk 107.00-115.00 Top 116.00
800-900# Bulk 108.00-116.00 Top 117.00
900-1,000# Bulk 98.00-110.00 Top 113.00

Thin Shelly Cows 57.00 - 66.00

Butcher Cows 66.00 - 74.00

Butcher Bulls 72.00 - 85.00

Stock Cows Young N/A

Hfretts 79.00 - 102.00

Pairs Young - 1325.00-1525.00

ProducersLivestock.com

541-473-3136

— LOG PRICE REPORT —

Prices are based on the majority of saw mills in Northeastern Oregon and Central Idaho. The prices listed below are a composite prices of various sawmills willing to visit with me about this topic.

Ponderosa Pine—small diameter class 8-11 inches diameter class \$250 per mbf. Only one sawmill was willing to buy small diameter pine at this time.

Ponderosa Pine—medium diameter class 12-17 inches diameter class \$300 to \$350 per mbf

Ponderosa Pine-large diameter class 18 plus inches diameter class \$380 to \$410 per mbf

The Pine prices are still approximately \$40 per mbf below average lumber/log market due to 2017 fire salvage

Doug Fir & Western Larch—\$380 to \$420 per mbf. Normal prices typically ranged between \$425 to \$475 per mbf.

White Fir-\$300 per mbf. Normal prices typically ranged between \$340 to \$360 per mbf.

Engelmann Spruce—\$350 at one Idaho sawmill, other sawmills including with White fir prices.

In general, the log prices still impacted from 2015 fire season and fire salvage that resulted. Sawmills are starting to get log yard inventory in line with sawmill production needs. With a new Administration as of 1/20/2017, a more normal economic environment should result and hopefully a more healthy housing situation will result in a better climate for Northeast Oregon Sawmill and private forest landowners.

Courtesy of Arvid Andersen,
Andersen Forestry Consulting

— PRECIOUS METALS REPORT —

Price per ounce, USD

Gold: \$1,257.10

Silver: \$17.20

Platinum: \$949.49

Palladium: \$771.75

Bloomberg.com

— AG COMMODITIES —

Corn: \$370.50/bu/USD

Wheat: \$432.00/bu/USD

Soybeans: \$952.50/bu/USD

Oats: \$247.00 bu/USD

Rough Rice: \$11.06/cwt/USD

Canola: \$524.40 CAD/mwt

Live Cattle: \$121.70/lb./USD

Feeder Cattle: \$152.40/lb./USD

Lean Hogs: \$80.23/lb./USD

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Forest Access for All Banquet

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George, who served for a year in Afghanistan, said, "Something we like to do at our banquets is recognize our veterans. So, would our veterans please stand," which was followed by applause. George announced the winner of the door prize, a pair of binoculars, awarded to guest Carmelita Holland.

Staff of the Sunridge served guests dinner, which included a dinner salad (lettuce, red onion, carrot, and dressing) or the choice of prime rib or halibut, baked potato, green beans, and a dinner roll.

Pitchers of ice water were provided at each table, and guests had the

option of ordering other drinks, including alcoholic beverages.

George asked the guests for their dinner critique, and he received a positive review and applause, followed by more applause, as he recognized the efforts of the Sunridge's chef and serving crew. "We appreciate all your hard work...Thank you all," he said.

George introduced the all-volunteer leadership of FAFA, including President Tork Ballard, "the rock of our outfit," Vice President Chuck Chase, "also very active with the Eastern Oregon Mining Association (EOMA)," Secretary Wanda Ballard, Treasurer Bobbie Danser, without whom, "we wouldn't keep things squared with

out check book," Public Affairs Specialist John Creighton (who was unable to attend), who "does a great deal for us," and Web Designer Rob Brown-ing.

George called the first guest speaker, Palmer, up to the podium.

Palmer emphasized recognition for former Baker County Sheriff Terry Speelman, who was present, and Palmer said, "I think he's well overdue for some recognition, as well..." which was followed by applause.

Palmer, an Air Force veteran, also emphasized recognition for his wife of thirty-three years, Rosanne, who was present (and who stood per his request), and with obvious emotion, he told the story

of meeting and marrying her, which he said was "...one of the best things that's ever happened to me...I love you."

Palmer said this was the second time in fifteen months he'd spoken publicly, the other being an hour-long interview the previous Thursday, for Nebraska-based Rural Route Radio.

"I've been shying away from the media, because of some of the stuff that's happened... There's some media that we can trust... But... Be careful what you read, and what you believe..." he said.

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