

Local

City Council approves budget



Gina K. Swartz / The Baker County Press

L-R: Julie Smith, Fred Warner, Jr., members of the Baker City Council, Jeannie Dexter.

• OPPOSITION TO PUBLIC SAFETY FEE CONTINUES

BY GINA K. SWARTZ
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Tuesday night Mayor Downing called the City Council meeting to order.

Councilor McQuisten led the pledge of allegiance and gave the invocation reciting a simple quote by Mark Twain: “Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see.”

City Recorder Julie Smith called roll with all councilors present.

Next Council moved to accept the consent agenda that consisted of minutes from the May 23, 2017 and June 13, 2017 regular City Council meetings and the June 6, 2017 special City Council meeting.

Downing called for Citizen Participation.

Tom Muller stepped forward to address Council in opposition of the recently passed Public Safety Fee.

He began his prepared speech by saying, “All City Councilors make \$150 per year—that’s \$10 per meeting. The City Manager makes \$98,000 per year and serves at the pleasure of City Councilors.

“The main reason I’m hearing from all of you for the reason these \$6 and \$3 fees were imposed is because you’re concerned about the safety of the City of Baker City not being safe by not having enough Police Officers.

“I ask why do you believe that? Do you base it on the population of the City in relation to how many Police Officers we need?”

Muller went on to point out that in the last official census done in 2010, the population of Baker City totaled around 9,800.

Muller stated, “If 17 full-time police officers at an average of \$4,000 per officer are needed based on an outdated census, which was seven years ago, this is not only wrong, it is ethically wrong and morally wrong.”

Muller told Council that he believed they also based their decision in part on information given to them by the Chief of Police Wyn Lohner who informed Council he needed 17 full-time police officers and could not do with less.

“Well, we all know the

police never lie,” Muller said.

He went on to advise Council that he had tripped twice over sidewalks since he came to Baker City a year and a half ago and asked, “Are you more concerned about paying the average Baker City police officer \$4,000 per month than the safety of people falling and possibly hurting themselves on dilapidated sidewalks?”

He told Council they could be found liable for such incidents.

On a final note, he added that if in fact the basis of the number of police officers needed was determined by population, the City should conduct a new population census to determine that number because in his year and a half in Baker he did not believe the 2010 census data to be accurate and that the actual population was much lower than in 2010 yet provided no facts to support his claim.

After Muller was finished Council moved forward with the agenda.

Budget Items

A. Public Hearing Regarding Possible Uses of State Revenue Sharing Dollars

Downing declared the opening of a Public Meeting concerning this matter.

No one came forward to speak, so without public input Downing closed the meeting.

City Finance Manager Jeannie Dexter advised Council that to receive State Revenue Sharing Dollars it is a requirement that there be documented a minimum of two public meetings in which citizens may give input.

She advised that the first meeting had been opened for public comment during Budget meetings in May.

B. Public Hearing Regarding the Allocations in the 2017-2018 Approved Budget

Downing again declared the opening of a public meeting concerning this matter.

Again, with no public input he closed the meeting. As Dexter had stated this matter also required documentation that a minimum of two public meetings had occurred, the first had also occurred during budget meetings in May.

C. Consideration of Resolution #3798 Electing to Receive State Revenue Sharing Dollars

Dexter advised Council

that this resolution was required by the State in order to receive Baker City’s portion of state revenue sharing which comes from a portion of the taxes imposed on alcohol and is based on the city’s population.

An estimated \$105,000 is expected to be received with those funds will go into the General Fund. Police, Fire, Parks and the Cemetery are among the City departments that will benefit from the utilization of these dollars.

Upon a motion by Councilor Joseph that was seconded by Councilor McQuisten, Council unanimously passed the resolution.

D. Consideration of Modifications to the 2017-2018 Approved Budget Dexter explained the modifications that would occur upon the passing of resolution #3800.

A permit rate tax of \$6.3314 per thousand dollars for general government limitations would be imposed as well as setting an appropriation level for the City budget, setting a legal spending limit.

Dexter went on to explain some minor changes to the budget board approved budget. Changes included the Transient Lodging Taxes, the City had explored the option of taking back from the County the administration of this but the County decided to keep control.

The city budget was decreased from \$108,000 to \$88,000 to adjust for anticipated savings the City would have had in taking over administration.

The County has agreed to fund an additional \$65,000 to the 911 Center reducing the City contribution. Dexter also noted that the City budget would see an additional \$20,000 by leasing out space in City Hall for Economic Development Contractors.

Dexter also noted a revenue change due City Council’s decision on raising water/wastewater rates from the proposed 12.8% to only 10%.

E. Consideration of Adoption of the Appropriations for the General Fund’s Administration Services Department

Downing declared a conflict of interest in this matter saying, “Because I work for and receive a paycheck from 911 which comes from the Administrative Services Depart-

ment I will step down from this vote.

Councilor Joseph moved to adopt with a second heard by Councilor Thomas. All voted in favor with Downing abstaining.

F. Consideration of Resolution #3800 Adopting the 2017-2018 Budget, Making Appropriations and Imposing and Categorizing Taxes

Once the separate vote pertaining to Administrative services had been done Joseph moved to approve the resolution in its entirety with a second by Councilor Nilsson.

A unanimous vote in favor of passing Resolution #3800 was cast.

G. Consideration of Resolution #3799 Making Modifications to the 2016-2017 Budget

This resolution noted an unexpected increase of \$20,000 in building permits that is going to be removed from the building inspections line and placed in contingency.

Joseph moved to adopt the 2017-2018 Budget with this modification.

Thomas made a second then Council voted unanimously in favor passing the 2017-2018 budget in the amount of \$22,551,737.

Interfund Loans

A. Resolution #3795 Interfund Loan from State Tax Street Fund to the General Fund

This resolution authorizes an interfund loan in the amount of up to \$200,000 between the General Fund and the State Tax Street Fund.

The interfund loan is necessary due to a shortfall anticipated between the beginning of the Fiscal year (July 1, 2017) and November when property tax revenue begins to come into the City.

The City will then repay the State Tax Street Fund with interest that the fund would have earned on the money had it remained in the fund.

B. Resolution #3796 Interfund Loan from Equipment and Vehicle Fund to the Golf Course Capital Projects Fund

This resolution allows for a budgeted transfer of dollars from the Equipment and Vehicle fund to the Golf Course Capital Projects Fund for the purchase of golf cart that will in turn be leased by the concessioner for a period of ten years, repaying the loan with interest.

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Lightning strikes house

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Access was made into the crawl space from the exterior and initial knock-down obtained. Additional access was gained through the crawl space entrance.

Fire crews remained on the scene to remove smoke and heat from the crawl space.

Thermal imaging cameras used to assess attic spaces, main floor, and crawl space for heat and fire.

The home’s occupant was Jackie Hughes, and the owner, Al Schmits.

Baker Rural Fire, Cascade Natural Gas, OTEC, and Baker City Police assisted.

The property was estimated at \$75,000, with about \$5,000 in damage.

Fair to hold garden contest

Start planting and creating in your very own gardens/ yards to be judged and photographed for the best garden in Baker County. Don’t have a garden of your own, nominate a neighbor, business or friend’s garden. Get creative—incorporate the fair theme “100 Years—Celebrating Traditions” and/or our fair colors (Gold, Silver, & Blue).

Entry Deadline: Friday, July 28th, 4:00 p.m.

Judging Date: Saturday, July 29th 9:00 a.m.

Awards:

1st place: “Best Garden in Baker” signage displayed in your yard.

2nd place: “2nd Place” signage displayed in your yard.

3rd place: “3rd Place” signage displayed in your yard. (1st - 3rd places will all be features in our local publication(s) and posted on our website and Facebook page.)

Guidelines:

This is an Open Class contest, meaning it is open to everyone.

Nominations encouraged

Entry forms must be received in the office by 4:00pm on Friday, July 28th.

For questions please call or email the fair office. Go to bakerfair.com for Entry forms.

Fire closes freeway



Photo courtesy of Darleen Hallett

On June 26, a grass fire closed I-84 both directions for several hours in the afternoon. There were no injuries reported and 49 acres burned. Lightning also ignited a handful of other small wildfires near the Halfway area, ranging .25-1 acre each.

Volunteers needed at fair

Are you creative? Would you like an opportunity to serve your community? Are you a business that would like to showcase your goods and/or services? Are you someone who has some extra time, and would just like to get out of the house and help with a large community event? Love working with kids in a large fun environment?

We are making plans to create an even larger “Kidz Fun Zone” and need your help manning stations. The Baker County Fair organizers are looking for your help! Creative types: We are looking for help decorating the Event Center. Your ideas and talents would be MOST welcomed!

Businesses: Join our list of fair sponsors! This is a great way to tell the community about your business and even showcase it at the fair, while sponsoring the youth of Baker County! Your sponsor money helps us to put on a “free” Fair.

Volunteers: We are facilitating check-in for the Open Class on Monday and Tuesday this year, and need YOUR help!! If you are organized and would like a behind the scenes task, look into the Open Class.

For more information, please contact Angie Turner/ Fair Manager or Rochelle Adams/Asst. Fair Manager at 541-523-7881.