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Fire board gives chief a pay raise

By BRITT FAIRCHILD
Staff Writer

Illinois Valley Rural Fire Protection District (IVRFPD) board members thanked Jeff Gavlik for his efforts as Interim Chief with a 30 percent pay raise during their Thursday night, July 17 meeting in Cave Junction City Hall.

It amounts to an approximate \$4.50 more an hour for Gavlik, noted the board.

The increase, to be retroactive to July 1, is the second one Gavlik has received since taking on the IVRFPD head role after then-Chief Kyle Kirchner took administrative leave on March 28.

That raise was for 5 percent, which according to Gavlik, totaled an additional \$35 a week.

"Thirty-five dollars a week is not fair compensation" to be burdened with that responsibility," said Gavlik -- who is also the district's training officer -- who introduced the idea of a pay increase to the board during the meeting.

He added he thought that as the interim chief for the time being he deserved a wage at least comparable to the highest paid city employee, who earns around \$38,000 a year.

Agreeing with him, the board discussed, and then approved, the wage raise.

"Jeff is doing a good job," said board member Leonard Frick. "Everybody really likes him and trusts him."

The board also discussed advertising for a new chief. There are no candidates yet, Frick said, noting that the plan is to advertise with several fire associations. The process could take several months, he added.

In other business, the board discussed, and decided to wait until next meeting to make a decision about, a ban on the sale

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IVRFPD finds new home for Selma station

Wait over for firefighters and valley community as plans for new firehouse proceed

By BRITT FAIRCHILD
Staff Writer

After several years of searching for the perfect spot, the Illinois Valley Rural Fire Protection District has found a home for its new Selma station.

Board members approved the purchase of 3.5 acres of land off Redwood Hwy. for the coming station during their Thursday night, July 17 meeting in Cave Junction City Hall.

The property, owned by Selma resident Carl Alleman, is located across from the current station.

"As far as our negotiations are concerned, we're ready to proceed," Interim Chief Jeff Gavlik told the board, noting that the



DAY FOR WORSHIP - Families gathered at Jubilee Park in Cave Junction on Saturday, July 19 for I.V. Extreme, a Christ-centered event for the community featuring carnival games (left photo), a bounce house (right photo), puppet shows, music, dancing (top photo), volleyball and other activities. The day was co-sponsored by Cross Quest Expeditions and area churches. More photos: page 8. (Photos by Steve Fairchild)

New JoCo budget shaves 80 positions

Josephine County Board of Commissioners late last month adopted a \$108.5 million budget for fiscal year 2003-04.

In finalizing its spending plan, which took effect on July 1, some 80 positions were eliminated to balance the budget. Approximately 65 people, most of them front-line workers, have been laid off since January.

"This year was balanced with cutting positions. Next year it could be another way," said Commissioner Jim Brock.

Rising labor, health insurance and PERS costs, as well as inflation, contributed to the county's \$1.8 million deficit for the year.

There was also \$875,000 less money in the county's discretionary general fund than during fiscal year 2002-03.

"We've lost some services," Brock said. "(But) I think we're making it work."

He noted that the sheriff's office, deemed by the board as a priority, received more money this

year. Funds were moved from other areas, such as mental health and parks, and allocated to Sheriff Dave Daniel, Brock said.

The office will also likely receive \$100,000 of \$500,000 in funds allocated to the sheriff and the Community Justice Dept., which is expected to become available when the state adopts its budget.

In examining this year's budget, Brock said the board looked at various alternatives to save money, including establishing a 36-hour work week. That idea however, he said, was cause for some concern in some areas.

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agreement with Alleman was that he would sell the property for \$80,000 with a \$20,000 donation to the district for tax deductions.

**"Selma is growing and they need a good fire station."
-Leonard Frick**

The benefits of this property compared to others the district considered are that it has water and septic already on site, said board member Leonard Frick. The current station doesn't have either on site.

Plus, with a ditch on the back of the property, it has better drainage than the current building, which has a tendency to flood in

the winter, he added. "Selma is growing and they need a good fire station," Frick said, adding that the new building will be constructed to serve for at least 20 years.

Following the closing of the sale, surveying, planning and tests will be done prior to breaking ground. A builder for the project must also be found.

The new station could be completed within the next several months weather permitting, Frick added.

The board also acknowledged real estate broker Lynn Johnson of I.V. Real Estate for donating time and efforts to help the district locate property.

Use of library increases despite reduced hours

By BRITT FAIRCHILD
Staff Writer

Reduced hours, as a result of fewer funds, at Josephine County Library System branches apparently haven't hurt circulation.

Total June checkouts for the main branch in Grants Pass and the Illinois Valley, Wolf Creek and Williams branches rose slightly, according to Library Director Sue Luce, despite a 22 percent decrease in hours from a year ago.

Circulation at I.V. branch was up 9.8 percent for June despite the cut-back.

Like other county departments, the library faces the 2003-04 fiscal year with a tight budget.

It lost \$500,000 when a November levy failed.

"That cut our budget dollars by 25 percent," Luce said, noting that the library's budget is \$1.4 million for the fiscal year, which began on July 1. Approximately \$1 million comes from the county, she added.

A systemwide slash in staff scheduling, preceded by some positions being eliminated, was made as a result.

At I.V. branch, a clerk and library page -- a high school student paid to shelve books -- were let go in February.

As of June 30, the I.V. branch in Cave Junction is open Mondays and Tuesdays from noon to 5 p.m., Wednesdays 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Saturdays 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. The location is closed on Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays.

All the branches, which are now open one fewer day than before, are closed on Fridays.

"We worked hard to try and keep everybody. Everyone had cuts, but they weren't equal," Luce said of staff, noting specific reductions in hours were based on requirements of each position.

Jennifer Berubee, I.V. senior library specialist, for example, had her schedule reduced by 10

hours, knocking her down to 30 hours per week.

Luce added that compared with such rising fixed costs as building maintenance, staff hours were "really the only flexible" budget component.

While no employees lost their job benefits such as health insurance, according to Luce, she said the changes did affect some of their benefits.

"They have to pay more themselves," she said.

That is the problem that some, like rural Grants Pass resident George Long, have with the way the budget was decided on. As in a letter to the editor sent to "I.V. News," and in public comments made to county commissioners during their June 25 budget meeting, Long said it isn't fair that employees, including his wife -- who has worked at the library almost 11 years -- are losing hours and benefits.

As a full-time employee, Berubee paid \$25.43 a month for health insurance, including dental, to cover her and her young daughter, according to Peggy Lowell, county HR tech.

That same level of coverage, minus dental, now would cost her \$234.14 a month. Dental would be an additional \$75.04, Lowell said.

"I had no choice but to opt out and choose not to have health insurance," Berubee said.

"I know some people are hurt (by the situation)," Luce said. "It's a tough time, but we're doing the best we can."

Two employees have resigned at the main branch in Grants Pass, Luce said.

Likely, Luce said, the only way the cut hours will be restored will be with the passage of another levy proposal in November.

Now more than ever, the branches are relying on volunteers. Luce said anyone interested in volunteering at the I.V. branch should phone the location at 592-3581.



HEAVY-DUTY DEMOLITION - Workers began tearing down the north portion of the main building of Lorna Byrne Middle School, the original I.V. High School, on Tuesday, July 22. The new school complex that has been constructed, is set to open for classes in the fall, and will be visible from South Junction Avenue.

(Additional photo on page 7)