



OATHS OF OFFICE for (from left) Mayor Tony Paulson and Councilman Lynne Atteberry were administered by Cave Junction City Recorder Jim Polk during the city council meeting in city hall Monday night, Jan. 9. Councilman Dan Fiske was unavailable for the swearing. Paulson was elected Nov. 7 to his second two-year term; Atteberry was elected to a four-year term to replace Tom Green, who was appointed to fill the seat resigned by Rita Dyer; and Fiske was re-elected to a four-year term. In his absence, Fiske was elected council president to preside in the event that the mayor is not present. (Photo by Scott Jorgensen/Illinois Valley News')

State aiming to deal with major disasters

Bill Riley, with a background of developing programs to aid varying segments of humanity, has been chosen by the Oregon Dept. of Human Services (DHS) as project manager and policy consultant for emergency preparedness planning for “vulnerable populations.”

“During an emergency, it is especially important that we have effective ways to reach the many different communities and populations in Oregon,” said Susan Allan, a physician and DHS Public Health Division chief.

The planning is intended to be flexible, recognizing that different groups are vulnerable in different kinds of emergencies. The planning process will include but not

be limited to: racial and ethnic minorities, rural populations, seniors, children, the physically or mentally disabled, homeless individuals and migrant workers.

Riley will manage the planning effort to see that the needs of these groups are included in the statewide emergency planning that is under way. Another important aspect of his work is to communicate and coordinate with local governments, the Legislature, advocacy groups and project stakeholders.

Riley, a Portland resident, has a bachelor’s degree in psychology and a master’s degree in social work from Syracuse University in New York State. He was president of Gemini Consulting, a firm

that worked on a variety of organizational projects, but primarily helped government and nonprofits develop consensus solutions on how best to use tax dollars on services.

He also has managed nonprofit residential service programs and worked in the areas of assistive technology, policy analysis, strategic planning, and system development.

The statewide public health emergency preparedness planning program intersects with many partners including health departments, hospitals, private health-care providers, and state and local emergency managers. Its goal is to ensure coordination occurs before, during and after public health events.

Rural fire protection plans scrutinized
Committee has until March to make final recommendation to county board

By SCOTT JORGENSEN
IVN Staff Writer

The Josephine County Fire Protection Committee is well on its way to preparing recommendations for the board of county commissioners.

Formed last year, the committee is charged with developing a plan for fire protection in portions of the county that are beyond the boundaries of Grants Pass city limits and local fire-fighting agencies. The committee has until March to finalize its recommendations, and has been charged with establishing boundaries, standards and rates.

According to committee Chairman Fes Lellis, a Grants Pass insurance agent, the committee passed a motion during its Dec. 21 meeting to establish boundaries for the rural fire district.

“It was a map that was already created that follows fairly closely to Rural/Metro’s fire district boundaries,” Lellis said.

The subcommittee on standards already has produced a report on how the district could meet national fire code and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requirements, Lellis said. Those standards include base levels of personnel certification and training.

Rates have yet to be determined, as the committee must first move forward with its other recommendations.

During its meeting

Thursday, Jan. 4, the committee took the step of eliminating four of its original seven options for rural fire protection. Members voted unanimously to rule out any options involving multiple service providers, citing problems relating to economies of scale and participation.

“There’s really no way of having everyone contribute to the same system,” Lellis said. “There’s still not guaranteed participation. It doesn’t get away from the current, existing system we have or really alleviate the problems.”

The first of the three remaining options would be to develop a franchise for a single provider, with terms of the agreement to be overseen by the board of commissioners.

“The provider would get the contract and would have to adhere to the standards the Board of County Commissioners sets forth,” Lellis said. “It will also be open to bids, like an ambulance or garbage service.”

Another option would be to establish a fire district with taxation and contract to a single provider. Lellis said that such a scenario would be good from an insurance perspective.

“You know there would be uniformity throughout the county at that point,” Lellis said.

One advantage to that option is that residents would be able to deduct their fire protection ex-

penses on their property taxes. The proposed fire district would also be able to pursue grant monies, Lellis said, and is similar to what most counties in the state already do.

“That one is like every county in Oregon,” Lellis said. “It follows suit for what’s already tried, tested and true.”

Some residents may not like the idea of a taxing district, Lellis said, but the option won’t change the way many of them pay for fire protection.

“A lot of people are already supporting fire department subscriptions now by either belonging to Grants Pass Rural or Rural/Metro,” Lellis said. “This is just a different way to do it so that everyone has the same service.”

The final remaining option is to have a fire district with taxation that operates independently. A downside of that plan is that the district would have to purchase all its own equipment, which would result in tremendous startup costs.

Lellis said that the committee is on track to meeting its March deadline.

“We’re definitely in the hashing stage at that end of it,” Lellis said. “I think we’re definitely making some progress.”

The committee’s next public meeting is scheduled for Thursday, Jan. 18 at 4:30 p.m. in Room 157 of the county courthouse in Grants Pass.

Weather predictions for the next several days indicate some of the coldest temperatures since 1999. Protecting water pipes and pumps can be critical, according to Country Plumbing at 592-2540

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