

Illinois Valley News

Wednesday, April 11, 2007, 2 Section, 18 Pages, Volume 70 No. 4 Cave Junction, Oregon 97523

illinois-valley-news.com



EGG-STRA EFFORT -- Youngsters flocked to Jubilee Park Sunday afternoon, April 8 to race for eggs and

goodies at the I.V. Lions Easter Egg Hunt. See page 10 for more photos. (Photo by Michelle Binker/ 'IVN')

County Republicans elect to support public safety levy

By SCOTT JORGENSEN
IVN Staff Writer

The Josephine County Republican Central Committee voted unanimously to support the county's proposed May 15 public safety levy during its Thursday, April 5 meeting in Grants Pass.

The vote came after Commissioner Dwight Ellis gave a presentation on the

county's budget in relation to federal O&C funds, given in lieu of declining timber receipts.

Commissioner Dave Toler gave a similar presentation to the Josephine County Democrat Central Committee on March 22. The Democrats also voted to support the levy, meaning that it has the backing of the local chapters of both major

political parties.

Ellis began by stating that the county passed a jail levy of 78-cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value earlier this decade. That levy met the state's double majority requirement, which states that more than 50 percent of registered voters must turn out and approve a measure for it to pass.

Around 56 percent of the county's voters participated in that election, with 52 percent voting in favor of the jail levy.

Discontinued federal funds will cause a 57 percent reduction in the county's general fund, Ellis said, a loss of slightly more than \$12 million.

Ellis said that monies collected from the levy would go toward replacing the lost federal funds.

"It's not additional money," Ellis said.

There are 17 taxing districts in the county, Ellis said, including fire, water, sewer and school districts. For every dollar that residents pay in property taxes,

8.4-cents goes toward running county government. Those figures will add up to a total of \$3 million this year, Ellis said.

Ellis said that the Josephine County Sheriff's Office requires \$9 million in funding, and that laying off all county employees still wouldn't cover the \$12 million loss.

The statewide median property tax rate is \$2.80 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. Ellis said that Josephine County commissioners have spoken with the area's state legislators about bringing counties with lower tax rates up to that median.

Ellis said that if federal funds are approved, the county will reduce the levy amount collected dollar for dollar, as per a Feb. 14 resolution passed by the commissioners.

"That's our promise to the voters of Josephine County," Ellis said.

The O&C funds are currently attached to an emergency spending bill

(Continued on page 12)

Council approves requests from housing developers

By SCOTT JORGENSEN
IVN Staff Writer

The Cave Junction City Council agreed to grant requests by a couple of developers at its Monday, April 9 meeting.

Developer Larry Osborn had asked the council to modify a condition of approval for a Master Planned Development (MPD) tentative plan for the Southridge at Laurel Pines subdivision. He made the request in writing on March 30, according to city documents.

The tentative plan called for Osborn to "provide a notarized agreement with the owner of the (River Valley Village) mobile home park and other intervening property owners until access is gained to a public right-of-way for use of Ollis Road as emergency access."

But at the council meeting, Osborn said there was a need for "correct language" in the agreement, due to a

dispute between himself and the mobile home park's owners.

"They don't even own the land," Osborn said.

Ollis Road, located off of Sawyer Avenue, goes through Osborn's development property and River Valley Village.

Osborn said that the mobile home park's owners are "encroaching" on his property, and that an error was made during the surveying process. He said that in a worst case scenario, he could put a gate across the road and resolve the dispute in court.

"There are state statutes that cover roadways that are private when there's no written agreement between parties," Osborn said.

Osborn said his attorneys are currently reviewing those statutes, and needed the council to approve his request so he could give direction to his attorneys.

Councilman Margaret

(Continued on page 2)

The politics of O & C:

Wyden optimistic on O&C; coy on elections

By SCOTT JORGENSEN
IVN Staff Writer

In a conference call with news media representatives on Friday, April 6, U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Oregon) gave an update on his continued efforts to secure federal O&C funds for timber-dependent counties.

Wyden had spent the previous week conducting a series of town hall meetings throughout the state and visiting veterans' health-care centers. He claimed a "huge, huge victory" for O&C legislation garnering more than 70 votes in the Senate last month.

"I had been hoping to get 55," Wyden said. "It was an extraordinary bipartisan showing of how strong support is for communities where the federal government owns so much of the land."

The Senate plan would provide more than \$1 billion for rural communities during the next five years, with the first year being fully funded at \$282 million.

"Now, I think the challenge is to have a grassroots coalition to try and get the House to go along with the Senate's position," Wyden said. "We just need rural

communities to have the time they need to make the transition."

Wyden said that he would like to see timber-dependent communities enter into areas like biomass and forest thinning.

With regard to veterans' health care, Wyden said he learned much from his recent tours of regional facilities.

"My sense is that there are an awful lot of good doctors, hospitals, nurses and providers, but there are still an awful lot of veterans falling between the cracks," Wyden said. "Part of the challenge is, a lot of the system hasn't kept up with the times."

The O&C legislation is part of an emergency appropriation for the U.S. military actions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Congressional Democrats have included a time table for withdrawing U.S. troops from Iraq as part of that bill, which President Bush has promised to veto.

As such, Wyden said, "There's going to be a lot of sparring back and forth between Congress and the president with respect to Iraq."

(Continued on page 6)

'Active stewardship' seen by Walden as key in West

Pushing for O&C funds and outlining the effect of federal land management policy on the West, Congressman Greg Walden (R-Ore.) testified last week before the House Committee on Natural Resources.

He told the committee, "Let us not defend a system that is so complicated that it takes three times longer to remove a burned, dead tree than to rebuild the Pentagon."

He said that an increasingly urban population that in the East is far removed from forest realities, is part of the problem. He added that a "well-funded environmental political industry that aggressively opposes active forest management" is another.

Plus, he added, an indecisive, if not bipolar Congress, has not helped.

As chairman of the Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health in the 109th Congress, Walden led the effort for responsible forest management following catastrophic events like for-

est fires.

"Yes, the West is changing," he said, "not just because of changing demographics, but largely as a result of federal policies and judicial decisions which keep our forest and rangeland professionals from managing forests."

"Healthy communities, healthy forests and healthy rangelands go hand-in-hand. If we are to see broad and long-term stewardship success, Congress must step up to the plate and pass laws to allow for thoughtful, quick, and active stewardship of our federal lands."

Walden also requested that Natural Resources Committee Chairman Nick Rahall (D-W.VA.) give the "earliest possible consideration" to H.R. 17, the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (county payments). Walden and Congressman Peter DeFazio sent a letter to Rahall on Jan. 26, asking that the committee consider H.R. 17 as quickly as possible.

(Continued on page 5)

Expected cutbacks outlined in light of O&C funding loss

Impending loss of federal O&C funding would affect county employment and services -- including law enforcement, libraries and road maintenance -- in areas statewide such as Josephine County.

To put into perspective what the loss would mean to average citizens in Josephine County, state Rep. Dennis Richardson (R-Central Point) provides the following. He obtained the data from a member of the Josephine County Board of Commissioners.

"The commissioner said Josephine County is prepar-

ing for the initial loss of the federal funds," Richardson related. "In recent years it has created a contingency fund of about \$5 million.

"If the O&C replacement funds end in June this year, cuts will begin -- and continue during the last half of the year.

"Assuming the federal payments will not be extended, Josephine County voters will determine whether or not the cuts in county services will be required. The commissioners have placed a levy on the May ballot that would quad-

(Continued on page 5)



Remote and steep terrain slowed recovery efforts. ('Illinois Valley News' photo)

Illinois River claims life

52-year old woman found near McCaleb Ranch

The body of a woman who is an apparent drowning victim was pulled from Illinois River Thursday afternoon, April 5, just above the swinging bridge at McCaleb Scout Ranch.

Illinois Valley Fire District, American Medical Response and Josephine County Sheriff's Office (JCSO) responded to the scene some 18 miles from Redwood Hwy. out Illinois River Road from Selma.

Witnesses phoned 911 at 4:39 p.m. and said that they heard a woman screaming, and later found the body floating near shore, said JCSO.

The victim, identified as

52-year-old Joanne Lynn Stevens, of Ashland, had parked her black Audi upstream and had been walking the shoreline, according to witnesses. She presumably slipped, causing a head injury, and drowned in the turbulent water downstream, said JCSO.

Witnesses who pulled Stevens from the river attempted CPR, but were unable to resuscitate her. She was pronounced dead at the scene.

Steep terrain and hot weather slowed recovery efforts. County Search And Rescue Mountain Rescue Team assisted with recovery of the body.