

May 28 holiday

City, county, state and federal operations, including the U.S. Postal Service, will be closed Monday, May 28 for the observance of Memorial Day. Some businesses also will be closed.

The normal deadline of 5 p.m. Thursday, May 24 for the May 30 issue will remain in effect for announcements and advertisements in the "Illinois Valley News."

New 'Visitor' hot off press

This issue contains the annual "Valley Visitor" produced by "Illinois Valley News" in time for the summer tourism season and beyond.

The format has been revamped to make the publication more "user-friendly" and attractive. It has full color throughout and contains a wealth of information.

The "Valley Visitor" facelift was accomplished by IVN staff including Josiah Dean, who also operates Abundance Marketing and Design in Cave Junction. Copies will be distributed in many areas of S.W. Oregon.

Ire roused as county OKs budget

By SCOTT JORGENSEN
IVN Staff Writer

Temper flared and tensions between the Josephine County commissioners and members of the public became evident during a Thursday, May 17 Budget Committee meeting at Anne Basker Auditorium in Grants Pass.

County officials had prepared two budgets in advance of the failed Tuesday, May 15 public safety levy. The Service Level 1 budget assumed failure of the levy, whereas the Level 2 budget included funds for sheriff's patrols, libraries and other county services.

During a public hearing on the Level 1 budget, Merlin resident Bob Wantley said that he voted for the levy, but was initially skeptical about it.

"When the proposal first came out, I was against it," Wantley said. "I think it was presented poorly."

Wantley said that county officials should have tried maintaining the status quo, rather than promising more services if the levy passed.

County resident Eric Larsen suggested that officials find "more imaginative" ways to fund programs, rather than raising property taxes. He said a regional sales tax might be a viable alternative.

"We've had five years to get off this federal dole," Larsen said. "It's time to take care of our own affairs and pay our own way."

Commission Vice Chairman Dave Toler said that Lane County proposed an income tax to make up for

(Continued on page 9)

Sheriff patrols will end Sunday, May 27

Residents seeking concealed gun permits on rise; self-protection consequences topic May 29 in Grants Pass

By SCOTT JORGENSEN
IVN Staff Writer

Due to the failure of a Tuesday, May 15 public safety levy, the Josephine County Sheriff's Office (JCSO) will cease most rural patrols as of Sunday, May 27, said Sheriff Gil Gilbertson.

The county long has relied on federal O&C dollars, given in lieu of declining timber receipts, to fund law enforcement and other operations. Reauthorization legislation was tied to a larger appropriations bill that included a timetable for withdrawing U.S. troops from Iraq.

President Bush vetoed that bill earlier this month due to the timetable. And he has threatened to veto a separate domestic spending bill that includes the county pay-

ments program.

On Wednesday, May 16, pink-colored termination slips were sent to some 125 county employees. Gilbertson said that JCSO will be reduced from 88 to 46 full-time employees, prompting 42 total layoffs in that operation. Those layoffs will be effective Thursday, May 31.

"It hurts big time," said the sheriff.

All remaining deputies will be transferred to the jail, as state law mandates jail staffing -- but not patrols.

"For us to comply with the May 31 layoff date, we needed to do the transition quicker than originally expected," Gilbertson said.

He said that he had planned to make the personnel transfers at the end of June, but that the county

commissioners decided on the May 31 layoff date for all departments.

Deputies will be closing out their case files and moving to the jail for training on Sunday, May 27. JCSO will provide "limited response" to calls until June 15, at which point all remaining deputies will be stationed at the jail.

As of May 31, the county's 262-capacity jail in Grants Pass will be limited to 30 beds, Gilbertson said. Approximately 117 inmates occupied the facility as of Friday, May 18. That does not include the 30 federal inmates also housed there.

Gilbertson confirmed that not all inmates scheduled for release will be let out simultaneously.

After June 15, Gilbertson said, "911 will still be a viable way to call

for help, but calls will be transferred to Oregon State Police (OSP), if they're available."

OSP will be able to respond only to life-threatening situations, Gilbertson said. Residents are preparing for the worst, as JCSO has been flooded with requests for concealed weapons permits.

"I think we're doing about 20 a day," said the sheriff. "We've definitely seen an increase. We had to bring an additional person in to help with the workload."

JCSO has presented a series of self-defense seminars to help residents deal with the pending patrol losses. The next seminar is scheduled for Tuesday, May 29 at the Josephine County Fairgrounds in Grants Pass from 7 to 9 p.m.

Gilbertson said that his

office also is encouraging formation of Neighborhood Watch programs, and that JCSO can aid those efforts.

"If there's any message I want to give to the public, it's that they need to start protecting each other," Gilbertson said. "If people want to establish a Neighborhood Watch system, they can give us a call and we'll see if we can get them scheduled in."

JCSO is trying to secure other funding methods to try and shore it up until funding solutions can be found.

"We are aggressively going after whatever grants we can find. There are a couple that we are working toward now," Gilbertson said. "There are no guarantees that we're going to get them, but we are definitely going after whatever we can find."



CAVE JUNCTION VEHICLE FIRE - Illinois Valley Fire District (IVFD) firefighters responded Thursday, May 17 at 8:39 p.m. to the 27000 block of Redwood Hwy. where they found a station wagon aflame. The car is owned by Casie L. Schaffer, 23, of Cave Junction, who

was reportedly 'distracted.' The cause of the fire was not immediately known. American Medical Response and Josephine County Sheriff's Office also responded to the scene. (Photo by Dale & Elaine Sandberg/IVFD Media Dept.)

Brush peril meet topic on Tuesday

A public meeting about the identification and classification of forestland-urban interface lands in Illinois Valley will be held Tuesday, May 29, from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Illinois Valley High School gymnasium, 625 E. River St., in Cave Junction.

The owners of identified forestland-urban lands will be required by the state to reduce potentially flammable vegetation around homes and other structures, according to rules specified in the Oregon Forestland-Urban Interface Fire Protection Act.

Identified lands are assigned a wildland fire-risk classification ranging from "low" to "extreme." This classification is one factor in determining the size of fuel break required around structures.

The identification and classification process was conducted by a five-person committee appointed by Josephine County, the state forester and the state fire marshal. The committee first met in April 2006 and has held monthly public meetings during which it developed its draft maps, which will be presented during the May 29 meeting.

The maps and the committee's findings will not be finalized until after a public hearing is held. No date has been set for this hearing, but it will likely take place in early summer.

The process the committee followed for identifying and classifying forestland-urban interface lands will be explained during the meeting. Maps showing forestland-urban interface lands in Illinois Valley will be posted. Committee members and Oregon Dept. of Forestry (ODF) personnel will be available to answer questions.

(Continued on page 9)



SISKIYOU COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER (SCHC) held an open house at its new quarters on Redwood Hwy. at the north end of Cave Junction Friday evening, May 18. The large crowd viewed a ribbon-cutting conducted by (from left) Paul Janke, president of Asante Health System; Denise Terrell, vice chairman of the health center board of directors; and Len Lea, interim CEO for SCHC. He replaces Susan Scheufele. Attendees enjoyed refreshments provided by Kate Dwyer Catering. Asante is a partner in the enlarged facility, which is open and accepting new patients. (Photo by Scott Jorgensen/IVN')

Last Chance!



See page 7

