

Vagrants loitering around city of Cave Junction prompt numerous complaints

Legal limitations hamper ability to deal with situations including intoxication; although trespassing can be addressed if locations are posted

By **SCOTT JORGENSEN**
IVN Staff Writer

Every summer, valley residents and others who pass through town frequently witness the sight of vagrants hanging out along Redwood Hwy., the “main drag” of Downtown Cave Junction.



Mayor Tony Paulson has become all too familiar with the complaints -- often related to panhandling, loitering, trespassing, and sometimes disturbances. He frequently is asked why the city doesn't do something to move along the urban wanderers.

While the city has ordinances prohibiting menacing and trespassing, those laws are limited.

“They are only violations,” Paulson said. “They’re finable, but they’re not arrestable offenses.”

Property owners who post “No Trespassing” signs can request law enforcement personnel from Josephine County Sheriff’s Office (JCSO) to help remove violators. However, the city has no laws prohibiting public intoxication or vagrancy, because it simply cannot.

Oregon Revised Statute 430.325 states:

“A political subdivision in this state shall not adopt or enforce any local law” against public intoxication, public drinking “except as to places where any consumption of alcoholic beverages is generally prohibited,” drunk and disorderly con-

duct or vagrancy.

It adds, “or other behavior that includes as one of its elements either drinking alcoholic beverages or using controlled substances in public, being an alcoholic or a drug-dependent person, or being found in specified places under the influence of

alcohol or controlled substances.”

“That’s why we can’t make any law to do anything about it,” said the mayor. “We’d have to change state law,” he said.

Al Hurt, semiretired owner of Hometowne Interiors, said that he’s dealt with his fair share of vagrants during the years.

“It’s been going on every since I’ve lived here,” Hurt said. “I’ve had problems off and on with them all along.”

Hurt said that vagrants often sit in the shade on the side of the former location of his business building (“Caves Mall” between Caves Avenue and Junction Avenue) and forage through his dumpsters while scaring customers away.

“There’s no law to enforce it, so what are you going to do?” Hurt asks.

Back when JCSO Deputy Cory Krauss maintained an active presence in Cave Junction as city contract officer, Hurt said, it was considerably easier to get rid of vagrants.

But budget cuts in the sheriff’s office have led to decreased patrols, and to Hurt, the results are obvious.

“There’s more (vagrancy) now than there used to be,” Hurt said. “What it boils down to is, there’s no law.”

Kneeling near his camouflage backpack and several empty cans of 211 Steel Reserve malt liquor on a gravel driveway near some businesses in Downtown Cave Junction, “Mountain Mike” offers a different perspective.

“Mike” said that he and his friends are “harassed quite often” by business owners, although they try not to cause any trouble.

“The problem is with people bitching about vagrancy,” he said. “We’re

just people.”

Joining “Mike” on the driveway, Neil White said that he prefers to think of himself as “houseless,” not homeless.

“I’m home,” White said while slapping the ground in front of him.

Being “houseless” is nothing new for White, who said that he left home at an early age.

White added that his early adulthood was spent touring with a band. He later worked on a shrimping boat off the Florida coast, and said that those experiences have helped him cope with the realities of living on the streets.

“The typical day is, you wake up and you’re alive,” White said.

White, who will turn 60 next month, said that his mornings usually began at Shop Smart. He waits until the store opens at 7 to recycle cans and bottles.

Those efforts fund the bulk of his alcohol consumption, White said, along with “gratuity.” For sustenance, he relies on an Oregon Trail food stamp card.

For now, White is content to spend his days in whatever shady areas he can find. But whenever winter’s wet weather rolls around, he has to make adjustments.

“You wear a cowboy hat and a long coat,” White

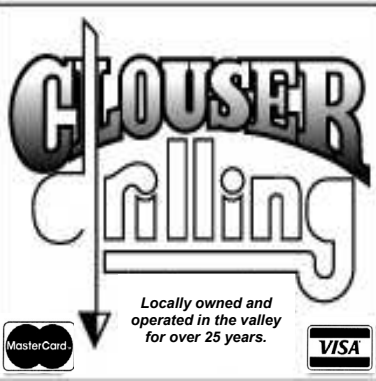
noted from experience.

On this particular night, White is reasonably safe from the elements. He said he plans to sleep in the bushes surrounding a down-

town Cave Junction business, but doesn’t seem the least worried about it.

“Whatever happens, happens,” he said philosophically.





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Two Grants Pass residents injured in gun, knife incidents

Attempted murder involving a gun, and an assault with a knife kept Grants Pass police officers busy Thursday and Friday, July 26 and 27.

The first incident resulted in the arrest of two suspects, with a third still at large, said Grants Pass Dept. of Public Safety (GPDPS).

Arrested on a charge of attempted murder was Kenneth Allen Faddis, 42. Arrested on a charge of conspiracy to commit murder was Wanetaha Dawn Biddle, 29. Both are Grants Pass residents, and they were lodged at county jail.

The victim was identified as Christopher Lee

Murray, 33, also of Grants Pass. He went to River City Grill on K Street shortly before midnight with gunshot wounds to his left cheek and jaw, and his left shoulder, said GPDPS.

He had been shot in front of his residence on Ninth Street, said GPDPS. American Medical Response (AMR) took him to Three Rivers Community Hospital (TRCH) in Grants Pass.

Investigation led to the arrest of two suspects. The third suspect is sought. He is described as a white male, 6 feet tall, clean-cut with a medium build.

A suspect vehicle was

recovered. Officers are looking for a motive in the case, and anyone with information is asked to phone 474-6370.

The stabbing case occurred Friday, July 27, and was reported at 8:22 p.m.

Police said that Grants Pass resident Clinton Perry Hall III, 49, suffered stab wounds to his neck, and one wrist and arm. He was taken by AMR to TRCH from Fourth and G streets.

After investigation, a suspect identified as Grants Pass resident Edward James Sargent, 58, was arrested on a charge of first-degree assault, said GPDPS. He was taken to county jail.

Bioenergy biz burgeoning

A new study of the potential for bioenergy businesses in Oregon reveals an industry taking off with surprising speed, spurred by business tax credits, aggressive advocacy groups and streamlined regulations.

The report was funded by a \$40,000 grant from the Oregon University System and Oregon Economic and Community Development Dept. It shows that there are few hurdles for new businesses to jump, much private and public interest and a new era of bioenergy production.

“We knew there was a lot of interest in this area and opportunities for growth, but

it was very surprising to see how much is already going on,” said Kenneth Williamson, head of chemical engineering at Oregon State University at Corvallis.

“It appears that the most activity so far has been focused in corn-based ethanol and waste-oil biodiesel production, but we expect the field to broaden,” he said.

“Because electricity from hydroelectric production is so inexpensive in the Pacific Northwest, the production of liquid fuels may continue to be the most promising area, especially in areas like cellulosic ethanol where we have some advantages.”

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