

# Illinois Valley News

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## School board meeting held at LBMS

By  
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The Three Rivers School Board of Directors held a regular meeting at Lorna Byrne Middle School (LBMS) last Tuesday. An intimate and heartfelt awards presentation boosted attendance to full room capacity for the event held in the school library.

All five members of the board were present including Kate Dwyer, Ron Lengwin and Danny York. New Board Chair Karen Olmo presided over the meeting. Former chair Ron Crume recently stepped down due to the demands of his business.

Retiring District Superintendent Patricia Adams was thanked for coming out of retirement for a year to serve in the interim position, created to allow time to find a replacement for Dan Huber-Kantola. A group of students from Sally Clements' second grade class performed a farewell song, and Adams was presented with a bouquet of flowers by Dwyer's son, Owen.

Community volunteers and donors were also recognized for their years of support for the students. Recognition and bouquets of gratitude were presented to volunteer Roberta Lee by IVHS principal Casey Alderson; and to Lloyd Davis, thanked by Principal Dave Regal for volunteer years at Evergreen going back to 1977 when her daughter was a student.

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The Illinois Valley High School Softball team members spend some time on the bench. Resident Mike Phillips, donated a picnic table to use at the softball concession area.

(Photo courtesy of Kelli Augustadt for The Illinois Valley News)

## Long awaited O&C funds finally come in

By  
**Annette McGee Rasch**  
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Recent arrival of federal funds, the majority of it a one-time extension of former O&C funds that were promised last fall, will now allow Josephine County officials to designate specific dollar amounts to various departments and programs in the county's 2014 fiscal

budget, which begins on July 1.

"We don't count the money until it is in the bank," said Rosemary Padgett, Chief Financial Officer for the county. "We learned last October that congress approved it, but we were just told we'll receive the money in April."

\$5.2 million came in from the Secure Rural Schools Act that was "oddly" attached to the Helium Stewardship Act of 2013, which sets up guidelines to

ensure stable access to helium resources needed by federal agencies, medical, scientific, and commercial industrial purposes. Had the one-time O&C funding vehicle not been attached to the larger helium bill that legislators were committed to passing, it's unlikely that it would have passed muster with congress, according to several county officials.

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## Commissioner candidates square off at chamber forum

By  
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The Illinois Valley Chamber of Commerce and the Illinois Valley News (IVN) teamed up to present a candidate forum last Tuesday.

The opportunity to hear candidates for the three races impacting community leadership for county management, courts, jails and public safety drew over 50 people. The event was scheduled for 5:30 to 9:30 p.m. at the Josephine County Building, but the audience question-and-answer session added almost an extra hour.

The public forum, moderated by IVN publisher Daniel Mancuso, included candidates for County Sheriff and County Legal Council.

The last half of the evening was devoted to the race for county commissioner, Position 1. Candidates that were present included Sandi Casanelli, Mark Gatlin, Nina Horsley, Mark Seligman, Jerry Sisson, Paul Walter, Mark Wichers, and the incumbent, Simon Hare. Candidate James Rossi did not attend this forum or the forum sponsored by Community Media and Education, which was held a week earlier.

All of the candidates expressed support for mining and logging and opposition to expanding the Oregon Caves National Monument (OCNM) except Nina Horsley who stated the opposite positions.

"Hemp has 50,000 uses, there's no reason we can't use hemp stocks right now for products," she added. Horsley also said that Senator Wyden's O & C plan "is the biggest land grab in history."

In defending the current board's fiscal responsibility, Hare stated, "We're incredibly prudent. Other similar entities scrutinize budgets down to \$50,000. We scrutinize down to \$500."

Wichers expressed concern that area wells could be metered as part of the U.N. Agenda 21 program.

"This is potentially a drought year, so they might try it this year," he warned. He also pointed

out that the county owns 70 percent of the land which could go to homesteading. He also referred to the 4,000 acres of land foreclosed on in the county.

"If we sold that for taxes owed, we'd increase our tax base," Wichers said.

Gatlin stated he's a member of "Securing Our Safety" (SOS) and the organization has looked at several options to fund public safety including a sales tax, lottery, logging and mining.

"We're trying to vet them all," he said, adding that a good example is the abundance of Tellurium in Southern Oregon. "It's needed for solar panels and semiconductors; but if we pursue this, we need to make sure we don't pollute."

Gatlin mentioned the SOS Hard Rock Mining Committee is sponsoring a free Southern Oregon Minerals Summit on May 10 from 1 to 4 p.m. at the Grants Pass City Council chambers.

Seligman stated he supported Gatlin's lottery approach and stressed the need for the county to "live within its means. That means not taking \$500,000 out of the sheriff's budget." He repeated his opposition to any new taxes and his enthusiasm for medical marijuana dispensaries, which he says has meant an additional \$180 million in sales tax for Colorado.

Seligman charged that the county has hired nine new managers, but in rebuttal, Hare explained they were replacements.

"Each new hire came in on a lower pay grade than their predecessors," Hare said.

Hare pointed to his record as reason to reelect him and referenced the high level of support he's received from both the business and faith communities as well as from other public officials.

Casanelli also emphasized her record in office including opposing the "boondoggle" Paradise Ranch.

"The current commissioners say they've scaled down on management positions but I don't see it," she said.

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## Debate features candidates for legal counsel, sheriff

By  
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The Illinois Valley News sponsored a candidates forum last week at the County Building that included candidates for County Legal Council and sheriff.

First to face off were Country Legal Counsel Steve Rich, who has held the post of Country Legal Counsel for 20 years and is seeking his sixth term in office and challenger Wally Hicks, currently a state representative finishing out his second term.

"This position has multiple duties, and I like this," Rich said. "The job runs from A to Z, from airports to zoning."

Rich researches government laws and statutes and provides legal advice and representation to county departments on matters including land use, employment, ballot titles and more. He explained how the county's budget crunch in recent years and the resulting smaller workforce has created many new issues.

The failed 2013 solid waste ordinances were discussed, and Rich, who wrote the ordinances at the request of the county commissioners, said the proposed rules were essentially identical to those Jackson and Deschutes County's already have on the books.

Asked how he would have handled the assignment differ-

ently, Hicks said the ordinances were "draconian because they would have created ordinance officers and would have allowed property searches and fines. It's not what the people wanted or deserve."

"The commissioners make policy decisions, that's not my role," Rich responded. "I am not there to be an override for initiatives, government cannot function that way."

"This issue points to the philosophical difference between me and Steve Rich," Hicks said. "I believe the county legal counsel works for the people, and no one else."

Rich responded that Hicks' comment was a naive oversimplification that indicates Hicks' lack of comprehension regarding what the county legal counsel job entails.

"If you believe that legal counsel should tell the commissioners and the sheriff what to do, then vote for Hicks," Rich said. "If you want to make policy then run for county commissioner, but this role is to provide sound legal advice. Giving the county board solid legal advice is how I best represent the people."

Hicks explained that he wants to work closer to home and his growing family.

"I want to continue representing the people in this new capacity," Hicks said. "This election is important in determining who our officials work for. I am not running against Rich, I'm running for the posi-

tion."

Audience members making comments or asking questions appeared equally split on whether new blood would help the county face these challenging times, or if the better course is to retain the guiding hand of experienced officials. This theme was echoed in the debate over the sheriff's job.

Incumbent Gil Gilbertson started his career in law enforcement in the 1970's, has served two terms as Josephine County Sheriff and wants to serve one more term. Candidate Dave Daniel has been a policeman for 20 years, and has had "boots on the ground" as an officer with the Grants Pass Department of Public Safety since 2001. Ed Vincent, also a longtime law enforcement officer, has served with the county sheriff's office since 1998.

Given the current budget constraints, the candidates were asked how they would do the job differently.

Vincent, who said that law enforcement is his passion in life, has a "viable plan to rebuild the foundation of the sheriff's office."

"I understand how to manage people," Vincent said, "and I understand good leadership. One thing I'd do right away is to switch hours that county deputies work, and have them serve alongside OSP officers during peak hours when crime is occurring."

See Candidates on A-9