

Illinois Valley News

Wednesday, January 28, 2015, 1 Section, 12 Pages, Volume 77 No. 47 Published Weekly Cave Junction, Oregon 97523

illinois-valley-news.com

Airport project inches forward

By
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Josephine County Airports Manager Larry Graves is pleased about a proposed industrial park's progress toward becoming a reality. An Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Technology and Operations Center (UAV-TOC) is proposed for the Illinois Valley Airport's undeveloped industrial park on Airport Drive. Manor Community Development Corporation (MCDC) has signed a lease agreement with Josephine County.

The potential lease is currently going through escrow, a process that uses a third party to "quarantine" funds to assure their availability for committed costs at a later date. This process is appropriate for large commercial real-estate transactions, whether a lease or sale. It allows a long-term lease to close escrow and be recorded with the county clerk. This creates a public record of the existence of the long-term lease for potential investors to see. A recorded escrow reduces the risk to potential funders and encourages them to invest.

Escrow is most often associated with private mortgage insurance, homeowners' insurance and principal payments during and after a sales transaction of residential real estate. Once Manor Community Development Corporation (MCDC) has secured all the funding they need to have on hand to get off to a good start, the escrow will close.

Graves stated that as of January 22, escrow had not yet closed.

"Technically they are late with their initial payment to the county, but they're also not doing anything with or on the IV Airport property at this point," Graves added. "As the county's airport manager, I'm willing to wait a while longer for them to get their funding in order. I am not going to allow them to start any significant development work on the airport until they have paid their first installment to the county. There will be late charges assessed per the terms of the lease, as a consequence of being late with their payment."

See Airport on A-10

Air stagnation takes over



(Photo by Laura Mancuso, *Illinois Valley News*)

Valley air quality ratings dipped down to healthy levels Tuesday morning but is expected to rise up to moderate during the week.

Two Cave Junction murder cases moving through court system

By
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The wheels of justice can grind slowly in the criminal justice system.

And when it comes to proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt in a murder investigation, it's almost a given that a case can take a year or more. A pair of Cave Junction murder investigations are no exception to that trend.

On Nov. 5, 2013, Cave Junction resident Aaron Lee Clouser, 39, died of stab wounds soon after being found unconscious in the middle of Millie Street in Cave Junction. Oregon State Police (OSP) Criminal Investigations Division detectives quickly determined Clouser's death was homicide.

In June 2014, a murder warrant was issued for Daniel Joseph Martinson, 44. Martinson was finally arrested July 23, after he asked a volunteer at a local food bank to call 911, putting an end to an intense manhunt that included motorcycle and helicopter chases through the mountains of

Southern Oregon and California.

Martinson, also from Cave Junction, was charged with one count of murder, and according to his court appointed attorney, Chris Mecca, his trial is scheduled to begin on June 2, 2015. Martinson has pleaded not guilty.

"It's going to be a fascinating trial," Mecca said. "Everybody in Cave Junction seems to know everyone else, and everyone seems to have an opinion on what happened and who did it, but the facts are very interesting. And some of this stuff you just can't make up."

When Martinson peaceably surrendered to authorities after months on the run, he was clad only in a loincloth and wore a wreath of evergreens around his head.

"Martinson knew they were looking for him and there were several near misses," Mecca said. "He knew they wanted him badly, so from his perspective, displaying himself as he did, it would be obvious to anyone that he wasn't armed. Say what you will about his attire, but nowadays everyone needs to be sensitive to both sides of the conundrum, the possibility of

getting shot in the emotional exchange of a high profile arrest."

Mecca said there will be a lot of witnesses called during trial.

"This will sort itself out in June," he said. "From my perspective, law enforcement feels there are no other suspects, but Martinson maintains his innocence."

The other local murder case awaiting resolution involves the shooting death of Cave Junction resident Mike Clyde MacDonald, 61, on Aug. 2, 2014 at 6087 Rockydale Drive. Ironically, MacDonald was initially named a person of interest in the killing of Clouser and arrested, but charges were filed against him in connection with that incident and he was eventually released.

Stranger Davis, 28, also of Cave Junction, was charged with one count of murder with a firearm in MacDonald's death and one count of being a felon in possession of a firearm, after being arrested in Butte Falls, California.

Davis is due back in court on Feb. 4 for a status check, according to his lawyer, Peter

Smith with the Josephine County Public Defender's office. Davis has not yet entered a plea.

"This is not unusual in murder cases, not officially entering a plea, and there are legal reasons for this," Smith said. "We're evaluating all our options. Sometimes it can take time to get to the right charge."

Asked if there will be a trial in this case, Smith responded that he doesn't know yet.

"That is up to Davis," Smith said, adding that this case will likely get moved down the court calendar another month or so.

Both Davis and Martinson remain in the county jail. In Oregon, people are generally not eligible for bail when indicted on murder charges.

When asked if the county's public safety funding challenges are affecting either of these cases, all the lawyers involved said that the budget situation does not affect the timeframe of processing these types of cases.

See Court on A-10

Community First helps to feed area hungry

By
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A recent \$300 donation to the Doug Hoskins Resource Center (DHRC) food bank from First Community Credit Union came at a much needed time, according to food bank manager Tim Leyba. Last year's reduction in the federal food stamp program, known as SNAP, has left many local families struggling.

"The reduction in SNAP means there are four meals a month that they don't get," said Leyba. "What families need most are staples and proteins."

Leyba added that the DHRC typically helps 400 families in a month.

The DHRC, located behind the Fountain of Life Assembly of God church on S. Junction Ave. in Cave Junction, gets most of its food from the Josephine County Food Bank. But Leyba pointed out that that source was negatively impacted by the 2013 closure of 28 Rays and Shop Smart stores. The grocery chain was an important source of food donations to the

county food bank.

Leyba said he will use First Community's donation either to buy gas or buy food from the county food bank.

The genesis of the DHRC took place approximately 17 years ago, according to co-founder Melanie Hoskins. Hoskins explained that she, her father and mother started a food ministry by bringing food from the Gospel Rescue Mission in Grants Pass to the Illinois Valley. Over time the mission evolved and expanded. Most recently, the Fountain of Life church agreed to let the DHRC use its garage as distribution point.

Hoskins' father died in 2012. In memory, the food bank was christened with his name. Around that time Melanie Hoskins decided to retire and hand over the reins to a new generation.

"My mom and I smiled and figure my dad's still smiling too. When you have a good idea it takes a lot of work, but if it's a viable thing you just pass the baton on to the next guy, because it's their turn."

The DHRC food bank is open to all on Mondays from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Gas Prices Continue to Plummet

By
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Maybe this is the time to start planning that road trip! Drivers in the U.S. are paying the lowest average gas prices in nearly six years and the national average is likely to slide below \$2 per gallon before the end of this month. The current average gas price in Cave Junction is \$2.49, down from \$2.85 last month, and down from \$3.48 a year ago, says Marie Dodds, Director of Government and Public Affairs with AAA Oregon/Idaho. The national average has dropped a record 117 consecutive days, for a total savings of \$1.29 per gallon during this stretch. The Oregon's average has declined for 56 days in a row, falling 82 cents during this time.

According to Dodds, barring any major increases in the global price of crude oil, AAA expects the national average to remain below \$3 per gallon in 2015. "Gas prices continue to test lows not seen since May 2009. AAA expects the national average to remain below \$3 per gallon in April 2015," Dodd says. "We've seen gas prices fall like a rock, which is due to crude oil prices dropping dramatically. The prices have gone from \$107 per barrel last June, to less than \$50 a barrel."

In welcome news for those that drive diesel

fueled rigs, those fuel prices are also decreasing. Both Oregon averages and the national are under \$3 a gallon for diesel for the first time in many years.

Oregon drivers are saving more than a \$1.00 per gallon compared to this time last year. This is good news for most Americans as it frees up disposable cash to spend on other necessities or to splurge a bit. Every penny decline in gas prices gives roughly \$1 billion back to customers.

The plunging price of oil is some of the biggest news in the world right now and it is a two-sided coin. While it is bringing back cheap gasoline to the United States, it is also inflicting chaos on oil-producing countries, including the oil industry in this country. This dramatic drop in retail gas prices has been caused by a similar plummet in global crude oil prices since the end of last summer. The price of oil has declined due to weak demand, as well as a plentiful supply.

In an effort to become self-sufficient for our energy needs, the United States is now producing more oil than we have in the last 30 years. At what point does it make sense to keep producing more? Americans working in the oil fields or other aspects of the oil industry are concerned for their livelihood right now. Hopefully, our country will soon find the right balance between supply and demand.