

City council in a taxing situation

Caroline Griffith
IVN Contributing Writer

May 23, at its second meeting of the month, the Cave Junction City Council debated a handful of proposed ordinances, including possible fuel and cannabis taxes and whether or not to allow a new telecommunications company to operate within the city.

In an attempt to raise revenue for the city, the council has come up with two tax proposals which they may refer to the voters of Cave Junction this November. The proposed fuel tax is based on similar taxes that are levied by many Oregon cities and any money raised through this tax would go toward maintenance of city streets. Many of the streets in Cave Junction were built in the 1960s and ‘70s and are nearing a point where serious maintenance is needed. The council discussed possible rates, with 1 to 3 cents per gallon being the average. The council decided to reach out to local gas station owners and get their input before going forward.

The other tax proposal which could be referred to voters is a tax on cannabis sales within Cave Junction. Currently, there is a moratorium on recreational cannabis sales in city limits pending a judgment on a lawsuit brought on behalf of the city. The lawsuit seeks clarification on whether or not the city will lose vital federal grants if they break federal law by issuing business licenses to marijuana vendors. If the judgment gives them the green-light to license marijuana businesses, the city wants to be ready to tax the sales. Councilor John Gardiner commented, “I congratulate the city on taking this initiative. It’s the first positive step we have taken in terms of cannabis.”

The next step forward for the council, if they approve these proposals, is to refer them to the voters of Cave Junction, who will then vote whether or not to implement either of these plans.

Also on the docket was the discussion of a lease agreement and an ordinance for a utility franchise for a broadband internet provider. Lightspeed Networks, Inc. (LSN), a fiber optics company owned by a consortium of utility cooperatives and the Coquille Tribe, specializes in providing telecommunications services to rural communities. Phase one of their proposal to operate would involve providing broadband services to Frontier Communications, the main internet service provider in the Illinois Valley. According to Bryan Adams, director of sales and marketing for LSN, larger bandwidth to existing internet service providers would result in better service to individual customers. Phase two of their plan involves improving wireless internet services. The council approved their request for a utility franchise, but the details of the lease are still being hashed out.

The council also discussed two proposed ordinances to amend the city code, one of which would allow for the construction and occupation of accessory dwelling units, or mother-in-law units, on properties within city limits. The ordinance language specifies size limits for the units, and all accessory dwellings would need to be approved by the city and the county before building began. The other ordinance would allow for the temporary use of a travel trailer as a security measure during the construction of a home or business. Both ordinances were in their first reading, meaning that they will be read again and come to a vote at the next council meeting.

The Cave Junction City Council meets the second Monday of the month at 7 p.m. Meetings are open to the public and are held at City Hall, 222 Lister Street. Audio recordings of meetings are available on the city’s website, www.cavejunctionoregon.us.

Speed and alcohol are factors in deadly crash

According to a press release from Oregon State Police (OSP) May 20, at about 7:30 p.m., a head-on crash occurred on O’Brien Road in Josephine County.

Preliminary information revealed a 1997 Subaru Legacy was eastbound on O’Brien Road from Highway 199 lost control on a corner and crossed the centerline (near Waldo Road). The Subaru struck an eastbound Mazda Protégée head-on.

The driver of the Subaru, Tommy E Dodson, 69, of Cave Junction was pronounced deceased at the scene. The driver of the Mazda, Michael T Kennedy, 62, and his passenger Tammy L Blind, 51, (both of O’Brien) also were pronounced deceased on scene. A dog in the Mazda was also killed.

Speed and alcohol consumption are being considered contributing factors in the crash. Additionally it was discovered that Dodson had a suspended Oregon driver’s license. The roadway was closed for about three hours as OSP Troopers from the Grants Pass Office conducted their investigation. OSP was assisted by Illinois Valley Fire District. No further information was available at press time.



(Courtesy photo for The Illinois Valley News)

Two cars rest off 199 near O’Brien after colliding Friday, May 20. All passengers died on the scene.

Dome School set to expand



(Courtesy photo for The Illinois Valley News)

Students, teachers and supporters celebrate the ground breaking of the Dome School expansion Wednesday, May 18. See full story on Page 3 in this week’s special edition with the Dome School Times.

Feds look to clean up swimming holes

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A summertime visit to the Illinois River can be described in many ways, two of which, unfortunately, are “lawless” and “littered with trash.” In an effort to change this and foster a more family-friendly atmosphere, the National Forest Service (NFS) is proposing to ban alcohol consumption on parts of the river from Memorial Day until Labor Day.

Matt Paciorek, district ranger of the NFS Wild Rivers District, said that the proposal was brought about by continued alcohol-related issues along popular parts of the river, as well as continued problems with trash. Paciorek stated that in his time

as district ranger he has received citizen complaints about the state of this section of the river, known as the Illinois River Corridor. Many of these complaints have been variations of, “There’s no way I’d ever take my family down there in the summertime.” A ban on alcohol consumption, said Paciorek, is one tool to improve the situation. The proposal is to enforce the ban from Memorial Day to Labor Day and, “see how it goes.”

NFS law enforcement officers will be patrolling the areas affected by the ban, which include Store Gulch, Sixmile and McCaleb Ranch. According to Paciorek, enforcement of the rule would depend on the situation, with fines for offenders being one possibility. The NFS will also be contracting with the Josephine County

Sheriff’s Department for additional patrols of the area during the high season.

According to Sheriff Dave Daniel, the patrol deputy, who will be contracted to the NFS for six months, will be enforcing state and local laws, not federal law. The NFS, which is a federal agency, administers the Illinois River Corridor; therefore any rules affecting this area are federal. Though not there to specifically enforce this ban, the contract deputy will be an extra law enforcement presence in the area and has been instructed by the sheriff to make sure that this stretch of the river is a family friendly environment.

SEE RIVER ON A-11

A tale of 2 races for county commissioner

Annette McGee Rasch
IVN Senior Contributing Writer

Lily Morgan topped the field of 17 county commissioner candidates running for two seats on the board by a wide margin, earning 45.50 percent of the vote in her race. Had she received 50 percent, the race for Position 3 would be over - but as it stands, there will be a runoff between the top two vote-getters in the November general election.

“It’s absolutely incredible. I am truly grateful for the support,” Morgan said. “I’ve met so many new people and am so impressed by how much they care about the community. They care about public safety and they care about the future - they want jobs and hope for the kids.”

In a field of eight candidates, Morgan’s closest competition came from Bill Hunker, with 15.43 percent of the vote; and Cave Junction native Ronald Smith, who received 15.32 percent. Just 28 votes separate those two candidates.

“There’s the possibility for a recount in the race between Ronald Smith and Bill Hunker because it’s so close,” said Josephine County Clerk Trisha Myers. “If we determine that there’s one-fifth of 1 percent difference between the two candidates, then an automatic recount is triggered.” Updated results (after her office deals with unsigned or illegible ballot signatures) will be posted on the county’s website June 1; and official certified results come out June 6.

“I believe I would

have received enough votes to make it into the general election, but I think some name confusion took place,” Smith said, referring to candidate Ray Smith, who ran in the same race. “Ray is a nice guy, I have no problem with him at all. I just wish the ballots had been set up differently.”

Smith added, “I believe I am the candidate that can beat Lily Morgan. I’ll be a true county commissioner, I know the issues and challenges in the county, and I am the forestry expert. Lily Morgan will focus on the city of Grants Pass, because that’s all she knows. If Morgan and DeYoung win both positions, they’ll focus on the city, and places like Cave Junction and Wolf Creek and all the outlying rural county areas will be left out.”

For his part, Hunker

said, “I am not discouraged in any way. The results are not what we’d like, but it is what it is. I’m feeling pretty comfortable about it. It ends up with the people - when they speak we have to listen.” Hunker added, “The thing I keep looking at is that we need some business eyes on the board, to help with business transactions, including the budgets. All of us have to live within our means and that’s what needs to happen at the county level as well.”

Twice elected to the Grants Pass City Council, Morgan currently works as a parole and probation program supervisor at JoCo Community Corrections, and, while serving on the sheriff’s reserve, she patrolled the Illinois Valley at night.

SEE RACE ON A-11