

# Illinois Valley News

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## City cans gas and pot tax

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After an intense, well-attended public hearing, the Cave Junction City Council opted Monday, Aug. 15, to not continue with the process of pursuing a fuel tax or a marijuana tax. This was the second of two required public hearings on the issues, both of which have been discussed by the council at multiple meetings since being proposed at the end of May. The first public hearing, held Aug. 8, yielded zero public comments. This hearing was quite different.

The proposed fuel tax was first on the docket. This potential one-cent-per-gallon tax would have gone strictly to the city's road maintenance fund. Jeff Stiles, the owner of the Oregon Caves Chevron, was the first to speak out against the ordinance. Stiles, who has operated the local Chevron station for over 30 years, questioned why the council had opted to pursue a fuel tax and not some other sort of a tax that would affect all businesses equally. "I am all for nice roads," Stiles said, "but I don't know why one particular industry is being singled out." He pointed out that last week's newspaper article was the first that he had heard about the proposed tax and that he wished he had been involved in the discussion before this point. He added, "I would think that the residents of Cave Junction would be responsible for their own road maintenance, not tourists who are just passing through, not rural residents. I take it kind of personal."

Councilor Dan Bosch responded to Stiles' concerns by pointing out that this was not meant to be tax on Stiles or his industry, but a tax on road users. "It is hard to connect with all of the people who use the road," said Bosch, "but this is a way to do so."

After impassioned comment from the public, including area business people and one member of the Chamber of Commerce, the council decided to not pursue referring this matter to the voters, at least at this time. Councilor Margaret Miller stated, "After hearing your concerns, I'm not sure that the ordinance is ready to go to the voters. More research needs to be done." The council agreed with her.

One concern brought up multiple times was the lack of communication between the City Council and the local business community. One resident suggested that the Chamber of Commerce send a representative to each meeting to act as a liaison between the city and the business community. Councilor John Gardiner agreed, suggesting that the city pursue a more holistic approach. "We need to involve stakeholders," he said, "and come to a consensus." It appears that future tax proposals will involve more input from the business community.

Next up was the proposed 3 percent tax on cannabis sales, which was also met with passionate public comment, both for and against, though mostly for the tax. Anti-tax/pro-cannabis activist Mark Seligman took the opportunity to beseech the council to drop the lawsuit that is currently pending seeking clarification on whether the city needs to follow state law or federal law. "Until you drop this lawsuit, you have no right to collect this tax," he said. "If you claim it is federally illegal, how can you accept this tax? It won't be a tax, it will be drug money." As that topic was not on the agenda, it could not be discussed at this meeting.

Many of the meeting attendees spoke in favor of the proposed tax, one man said. "If you are going to have it, tax the hell out of it." Resident Rhea Taylor said, "I would love to see this go through. You are lying to yourself if you think that this city isn't already supported by marijuana revenue." Though council members seemed largely in favor of the tax, they opted to heed the advice of their legal council and not pursue the issue until receiving a judgment on the pending lawsuit. Councilor Miller said, "We need to stick to our guns and wait for a decision to be made. Until that decision is made, I cannot support this ordinance." Councilor Gardiner agreed. "We've got our selves in a pickle," he said. "I think it is unethical to tax cannabis if we are not allowing it to be sold within city limits." In the end, it was the will of the council not to refer this issue to the voters.

And so the city finds itself right back where it started, in terms of ideas for raising funds. As Councilor Bosch stated, "I have said many times, if anybody has any ideas on how to raise city revenue, we would love to hear them." The Cave Junction City Council meets the second Monday of the month at 7 p.m. Their next meeting is Sept. 12 at 222 W. Lister Street.



(Photo by Dan Mancuso, Illinois Valley)

Oregon Caves Chevron owner Jeff Stiles speaks to the City Council Monday, Aug. 15.

## Fire destroys homes



(Photo by Dale Sandberg, IVFD Media Dept)

Illinois Valley Fire District works the Deer Creek section of the Redwood Hwy. Fire Friday, Aug. 12.

According to a press release from the Oregon State Police (OSP) Arson Unit and the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) began an investigation into the cause of the Redwood Highway Fire (RHF) which led to a Selma transient. Marcus A Yeoman, 35, arrested on an unrelated warrant and detained at the Josephine County Jail. Later it was determined that Yeoman had built a campfire which led to this wildland fire. On Aug. 13, Yeoman was cited for reckless burning.

In a separate release from ODF, fire

crews worked through the night cooling hot spots and monitoring fire lines on the RHF in Selma. Cooler nighttime temperatures and calm winds allowed for continued progress to be made on the fire line, which is 87 percent contained. The fire size remains at approximately 50 acres

In the early hours of Aug. 13, the RHF, firefighters discovered a small spot fire 1,000 feet outside of the current fire line. Within minutes, firefighters extinguished the flames and formed a wet line along the perimeter. Throughout

the day, ground crews and aircraft will continue to monitor fire activity and watch for burning snags, spotting and flare ups.

Firefighters working on structural protection uncovered three homes, and at least five outbuildings destroyed by the fire. It was originally thought by fire crews that only two homes were lost on Deer Creek Road in Selma; however, the daylight revealed that there were two homes on one property, a main house and guest house. All residents managed to safely evacuate.

## Levy supporters hit mark

Judy Hoyle  
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A proposed public safety property tax levy will be on the November ballot.

The Josephine County Safety Levy Committee, an independent group of businesses and individuals led by Josephine County Chamber of Commerce President Colene Martin, Josh Balloch and Ken Smith organized an effort to pass a measure in advance of the end

of federal funding in 2017.

The group submitted the proposed measure mid-July, but signature gathering was delayed after Grants Pass resident James Rossi filed a court challenge July 27, contending the language of the measure was too lengthy and vague.

On Aug. 7 Josephine County Circuit Judge Michael Newman ruled that the ballot language was adequate.

With only five days to collect 2,000 signatures

before the deadline, over 50 volunteers fanned out across the county and managed to gather 85 percent of a total 3,450 signatures, nearly twice as many as required. The completed sheets were delivered to the county clerk's office two hours before the 5 p.m. deadline Aug. 10.

The remaining signatures were collected by six paid signature gatherers, most of whom were students.

This record-setting petition drive will result in

the law enforcement funding initiative to be included on the November ballot, enabling voters to register their decision as to whether or not to adequately fund the criminal justice system in Josephine County.

The title of the measure is "Four-Year Deputies, Prosecution, Treatment and Jail Beds Tax."

SEE LEVY ON A-10

## Labor day festival to be on the edge of wild

Judy Hoyle  
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The theme is "On the Edge of the Wild" for this year's Illinois Valley Lions Club Labor Day Festival scheduled for Sept. 3 through Sept. 5 at Jubilee Park in Cave Junction.

The 44th annual event marks the end of summer and is, for many, the highlight of the year, offering an array of activities, with something fun for everyone.

The festival is sponsored by the I.V. Lions Club as a means of thanking the community for its continued support

throughout the year. Club programs include "Sight & Hearing," scholarship awards and hospital and medical equipment loans for Valley residents.

The festival's daily activities include breakfast, softball, the Tarzan Swing, a dunk tank, beer garden, the Lion Burger booth, food and vendor booths, the greased pole climb, a money haystack, the Lions Train, bingo and 50/50 drawings.

The Tuff Truck races are one of the festival's most popular features with competition scheduled at noon Saturday and Sunday. Trophies and prizes will be awarded. The entry fee is \$20 per person

which includes a driver's pit pass. For further entry information contact John Waltermeyer at 541-659-1074.

The Tuff Truck tech inspection will run between 9 a.m. and noon. The races will run at 1 p.m. both days.

The Labor Day Parade will be held Monday, Sept. 5, in Downtown Cave Junction. For parade applications, visit the Illinois Valley Lions Facebook page. The applications can be mailed to I.V. Lions, P.O. Box 796, Selma, OR 97538 or dropped off at CJ Coffee. For further information, contact Gary Price at 541-592-2505.

SEE WILD ON A-10