

# Illinois Valley News

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## JoCo Library looks to form tax district

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Once again, the Josephine Community Libraries, Inc. (JCLI), the nonprofit that runs the libraries of Josephine County, wants to take the issue of library funding to the voters. Unlike the Library District effort of 2014, which did not pass, the newly proposed district would not encompass the entire county, but only those precincts in which voters supported the district. The proposed taxation rate will be the same as the last effort at \$0.39 of \$1,000 of assessed property value.

The saga of the libraries of Josephine County and the quest for funding began with the passage of Measure 50. This statewide measure, which passed in 1997, allowed counties to take existing, temporary tax levies and make them permanent. At the time, the library had a 3-year levy of \$0.33 per \$1,000 of assessed value. This became a permanent tax collected by the county. Over time, due to a lack of funding for law enforcement, the county commissioners began to gradually take money from the library to pay for criminal justice.

JCLI Executive Director Kate Lasky, referred to what happened next as "death by attrition." The county stopped purchasing new books in 2003. Between then and 2007, when the libraries were closed, no new books were purchased. O&C Funds continued to dwindle and in 2006 the library went out for a special tax district which failed. In 2007, after the failure of a public safety levy, the county closed the libraries in order to have more money to pay for law enforcement.

Shortly after the closure, an opinion piece in the Grants Pass *Daily Courier* called on library supporters, and those who voted for the 2006 library district, to donate what they would have paid in taxes to help reopen the libraries. The nonprofit JCLI was formed from the outpouring of donations. Over the next two years, with volunteer labor, private donations, grants and \$300,000 in seed money from the county, JCLI re-opened the libraries in Grants Pass, the Illinois Valley, Williams and Wolf Creek.

JCLI currently operates those four branches on a budget of \$800,000 per year, 55 percent of which comes from donations, 35 percent from grants, and 10 percent from fines and fees. JCLI receives no tax funding. All of the branches are primarily staffed by volunteers, who donate the equivalent of \$500,000 in labor per year. Since its inception in 2007, JCLI has raised \$2.2 million in donations and received \$1.1 million in grants. Unfortunately, this is not enough money to provide the level of service that the community needs; Josephine County library expenditures per capita are the lowest in the state, and the level of services offered reflects this. The nonprofit library model, as novel as it is, is proving difficult to sustain.

SEE LIBRARY ON A-3

## Fire takes home



(Photo by Dale Sandberg, IVFD Media Dept)

Illinois Valley Fire District firefighters work to knock down a structure fire located in the 200 block of Hogue Drive in Selma Saturday, Jan. 14. The residents of structure were not home at the time of the fire. Rural Metro assisted at the scene. American Red Cross was notified and is assisting the residents.

## City leadership changes

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Past council members said their farewells, and a new mayor and council members were sworn in, Monday, Jan. 9 at the first Cave Junction City Council meeting of the year.

Margaret Miller, who has served in council position 2 since 2004, joked that she is too young to retire and so she will continue to serve the public in some capacity. She advised incoming and sitting council members, "When you make a decision, remember the law; the laws that we have on the books, the laws that we are trying to change, and, if you have any questions, err on the side of the law. If you have questions, ask. There is always somebody there to give you advice." She added, "If you need something, I am available also."

Departing councilor, John Gardiner, has served in council position 4 since 2012. He thanked the council and city staff, "The last four years have been quite the education." He encouraged the council to move forward with outreach to local businesses, philanthropic

organizations and nonprofits, and added, "May your deliberations be cooperative and harmonious over the next four years."

Outgoing mayor, Carl Jacobson, kept his farewell address very brief, "There have been ups and downs, and I learned a lot." As for his plans for the future, he said, "I don't know, maybe I'll go back to school, get a degree in education."

After the outgoing councilors said their goodbyes, new councilors Lindsey Gillette and Mark Dillinger were sworn in and took their seats on the council.

New mayor, Daniel Dalegowski, then gave the State of the City address, which the city charter mandates must happen at the beginning of every year. Dalegowski began by congratulating local Federal Communications Commission-licensed radio station, KXCJ-LP, for raising their antennae and getting on the air, an accomplishment he attributed to community cooperation. "The cooperation of CaveNet, and so many other local organizations and individuals, is an inspiration and shining example of what committed individuals can do for their community," he said. He added that KXCJ, which broadcasts

at 105.7 FM, would be an asset to the community, especially in terms of local communication during emergencies. He also thanked local Roger Brandt for his volunteer work for the city. Brandt recently wrote a grant to secure funding for the creation of a new Master Parks and Recreation Plan for the city.

Dalegowski then laid out some of his goals for the coming year, including looking into developing riverfront land for recreational use and revamping the mayor's job description. "The office of the mayor has a lot of authority," he said. "The mayor is the executive and administrative head of city government. The mayor supervises all city employees, makes sure that ordinances are enforced and that agreements are observed. The mayor approves all expenditures, supervises all city utilities and city properties. I don't believe that it is appropriate now and into the future for so much responsibility to be invested in one volunteer individual." Dalegowski suggested that some of the responsibilities currently undertaken by the mayor would be better accomplished by an invested, full-time employee, and that the council look into the matter.

SEE CITY ON A-3

## Meteorologists: Stay prepared for more weather

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The current series of storm systems impacting the Illinois Valley could bring up to 6 inches of rain and possibly more snow on the Valley floor by the end of the week, according to National Weather Service meteorologist Dan Weyland.

"We don't expect impacts as severe as the New Year's storms, but people need to be vigilant for potential flooding because there's so much snow pack. While Josephine County's rivers aren't expected to flood, we can't completely rule that out. And there is a high probability of smaller streams flooding.

"As the week progresses, snow levels will drop," he said. "The first storm will likely be quite high, with a warm and wet southwest flow, but as the low pressure system moves inland toward the weekend, we'll get into the colder portion of the air mass, which will bring the snow levels lower." Weyland said the current storms are "a different scenario from the New Year's storms. The only similarity is that we'll get a lot of precipitation."

Winter storms in this region are often characterized by an "atmospheric river often referred to as a Pineapple Express" over the Pacific Ocean that picks up moisture from the tropics and aims a "fire hose" at the West Coast - which is what's predicted this week. Weyland explained that with the New Year's storms, the additional component of a deeply dipping jet

stream that stalled over the Pacific Northwest coast brought frigid air from the Bering Sea and Alaska and turned the rain to snow.

Weather dominates everything - and while this simple truth is easy to forget during the busy course of modern life, when major storms hit, people are reminded that they're not really in charge. And for some who live just outside the Illinois Valley, being prepared is essential - as they know they're likely to be cut off from services when Mother Nature roars.

Veroune "Ronnie" Chittim has lived 10 miles up the Illinois River Road near the McCaleb Ranch for many years. She said between 3 and 4 feet of snow fell at her place. During the height of the New Year's storm, she crawled out onto her roof every two hours to shovel snow off the solar panels that provide power to her home.

"I knew the storm was coming so I had plenty of food for myself and my animals," Chittim said. "I went to town, paid my bills, went to the post office and picked up more food. I had a list and I went down the list. I knew I'd have to sit it out. I was lucky, I never lost power, but I have a generator with a lot of stored gas and plenty of wood and lots of canned and dry food. It's different for those dependant on companies to keep their wires up, but I've learned to always be prepared for the worst.

"It started snowing on New Year's Eve and I didn't get to town until the 11th. The Forest Service plowed the road Jan. 9, but there was still enough ice, so I didn't want to chance

it for a few more days," she said. "On the eighth day I heard from the caretaker at the Boy Scout Ranch, who had tried to get out, that there was a rock slide just above Six Mile. Then the Forest Service came out and cleared it. I was so grateful to have that communication, just to know that somebody was experiencing the same thing."

"I just finally got to town the other day," said Maureen Connolly, who lives at mile eight on Caves Highway. "My driveway is really steep, so I still can't drive out. But luckily my son lives behind me, and he was able to get down to me on his Arctic Cat. It wasn't easy; in fact he got stuck a few times."

Connolly lost both power and her land phone line for six days and she said "the Wi-Fi on my cellphone wasn't reliable either, so I had some moments of 'Uh oh, what am I going to do?' It cost me a little bit of panic, but my son did a really good job making me feel like I wasn't alone, but really, there was no way for anyone to get to me if I'd had a medical emergency." She said her son, Arley Tree, stayed busy helping numerous neighbors gain access to the highway or brought them supplies, as he was the only one who could get to town. "He's still exhausted," she said.

Connolly also has a wood stove and said she "amused myself. I enjoyed the candles and the quiet. I went 10 days without TV or internet, so I got crafts done and read a book. But I felt bad that I couldn't be out helping people, because that's my nature, but at least I

didn't have to burden anybody, because I was prepared. I can my own food, so I had plenty. I cooked on my woodstove, everything from chili, stews, soups to rice and vegetables, I ate pretty well. I had kerosene lamps, and knowing the storm was coming, I filled my tub with water. Being up here, my electricity goes out sometimes more often than in town. We're often the first out and the last restored."

Jason Bayless, public information officer with the Illinois Valley Fire District, said "a lot of people just weren't prepared. The biggest thing, if we learn from this event, is that we need to be prepared. And we're talking about neighbors coming together and helping each other. That happened a lot. There were so many individual crises, driveways that needed to be cleared out, people that didn't have wood or water, or needed gas generators or food. Pacific Power was doing what they could do, but they were completely overwhelmed. And with trees down in driveways all that stuff had to be moved before they could get in. Josephine County Search and Rescue brought in two Snowcats that were able to gain access which helped a lot."

Bayless also said, "That storm didn't go the way the National Weather Service said it would, and now, the flood danger is not over yet, there's so much snow pack. We really need to watch these next storms - and people really need to get prepared to be on their own for extended periods."