

Skeletal remains identified

Jason McMillen
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During the afternoon of Feb. 7, 2017, the skeletal remains of a single male individual were discovered by two hikers in a wooded area of Josephine County near 13600 Williams Highway, Provolt. Josephine County Sheriff personnel along with several others, including the Oregon State Police, responded to the scene and concluded that the remains had been there for quite some time. During the initial investigation the scene was photographed and examined with no evidence of "foul play" being discovered.

Since the initial investigation the Oregon State Police have determined that the remains belong to Chase Cook, 22, who was reported missing June 26, 2012. Cook was identified through dental records, personal property and identification. Evidence from the scene supports that Cook committed suicide by gunshot. Contrary to some social media "outlets," there is no evidence that Cook's remains were bound or that there was more than one set of remains discovered.

When Cook was reported missing he was believed to have been driving a vehicle that was spotted "in the area" of Williams Highway but the vehicle had been moved by an unstated party before law enforcement arrived at the scene. Cook's remains were discovered less than a mile from where that vehicle was reported.

Since Feb. 9, 2017 there have been no further developments in the case.

Harbinger of spring



(Photo by Dan Mancuso, Illinois Valley News)

Vineyard workers prune grapevines in preparation for the upcoming season in rural Cave Junction Tuesday, Feb. 28.

Code enforcement tops city council meeting

Caroline Griffith
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The Cave Junction City Council met Monday, Feb. 27 to discuss potential policies for volunteer code enforcement officers. The city has begun to recruit volunteers to help enforce existing ordinances, and although there are already rules on the books in regard to volunteer ordinance officers, they have never been put into action.

Currently, the city's code enforcement policy is complaint based. Residents must come to the city and lodge complaints about garbage accumulation, unkempt lawns, illegal fences or business signs that are not maintained, among other things. The city then issues notices to property owners to fix the problem or face fines. This process is slow and relies on people to come forward to make the complaints. At the urging of Councilor Mark Dillinger, the council has begun looking into ways to streamline the process and clean up problem properties around town.

According to rules already on the books, the council has the authority to approve

up to three volunteer citizens to serve as ordinance officers. These officers would have the power to take all actions necessary, as authorized by council policies, to enforce applicable city ordinances. They would have no powers of arrest and would not act as general law enforcement officers; their only authority would be to issue citations for property issues.

Council discussion centered on safety and how to keep these volunteers from engaging in interactions that could escalate out of their control. According to Mayor Daniel Dalegowski, volunteer safety is of the utmost importance and volunteers would be trained on how to follow the law, as well as counseled on what sorts of violations they should focus on. The council debated whether citations should be delivered in person or by mail, which is what the city's legal counsel suggests. No decision was made on that front.

A lively public discussion followed, with citizens weighing in on what sort of violations should be cited and how citations should be delivered. Jimmy Evans of CJ Patrol asked if the code enforcement officers would be issuing citations to transients and

what authority, if any, they would have to cite known drug houses. The council decided that volunteers would not be approaching transients or trespassers, and that trained law enforcement officers should address those issues. As for known drug houses, they could be cited for excessive garbage, disabled vehicles, or weeds over 12 inches high, but aside from property issues the volunteer officers would have no authority.

Resident William Douglas asked the council if it were possible to cite drug houses for conducting business without a license. City recorder Ryan Nolan responded that, in theory, if someone were to come to the city to complain that sales were being conducted out of a residence without a business license then the city could issue a citation, but that this is a tactic no one has tried yet. The entire city code is available to the public on the city website, www.cavejunctionoregon.us.

Councilor Dillinger thanked the council for moving forward on the issue, "We need to do something, so I'm really glad this is happening."

The council also heard a presentation from Civil West Engineering on a variety of

issues related to the city's water treatment system. A workshop was tentatively scheduled for March 20 to further discuss improvements to the wastewater treatment system, the bulk water station, and other infrastructure needs. Possible avenues for funding these projects will also be discussed at the workshop.

The meeting ended with plea for support from Gene Merrill, the College and Careers Coordinator for IVHS. Merrill is applying for a grant which would provide funding to create a local internship program for high school students. "One thing we can do to change the future of the Valley is to change the future of the youth," he said. The goal is to get local businesses and government to help create unpaid internships so local students, especially those who are not college-oriented, can gain work experience. The council voted unanimously to help in this effort. Councilor Jean Ann Miles said, "Any support that the city can give the youth, I support. Naturally."

The Cave Junction City Council meets the second Monday of each month, with additional meetings held as necessary. Meetings begin at 7 p.m. and are held at 222 W. Lister Street. The public is welcome.

City code violations and 'eyesores' in the spotlight

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"I've been here six years and every year it's gotten worse. Some of these houses in town look bad. And all the graffiti, junk cars and garbage lying around doesn't help either," said newly elected Cave Junction (CJ) councilman Mark Dillinger. "And the longer we wait, the harder it's going to be to clean it up."

Members of the business community are also concerned.

"It affects the whole community," said Billie Wright, owner of Wright's World Emporium. "And there's some businesses that could really use some sprucing up too - we'd all get more business if things looked more welcoming. People should have that pride. Plus, people thinking about buying a home

or a starting a business here might drive around the area and become hesitant about settling here.

"Part of the problem is that a lot of people here are beaten down by all the theft and vandalism in the area. It's like with my planters, all my plants get stolen - they even steal the fake plants," she said. "We try real hard, but people get worn-out and tired. How many times can people go out and do the same things over and over?"

Currently, the city's process to deal with rundown homes and all manner of junk lying about is complaint-driven. In other words, if no one complains; nothing happens. "We don't go around and look for trash or junk cars, we don't have the people to do that," said CJ's planning clerk, Lisa Richardson. She explained that when

someone files a complaint, the property owner is sent a letter stating they have 10 days to respond. If

“It is not our goal, we do not want to take peoples' houses,”

Lisa Richardson
City of Cave Junction

there's no response, a second letter is sent which allows another 10 days for response. After that, the city council can declare a public nuisance. The property owner is then sent an abatement notice which outlines the city's codes and warns that failure to address the situation

will result in legal action. (Property owners can protest this decision.) The city might go in and clean up the mess - with that cost becoming a lien against the property. Fines, up to \$500 per day may accrue, and if fines exceed the value of the property, the city has the legal right to seize the property.

"It is not our goal, we do not want to take peoples' houses," Richardson said. "We'd rather have them clean up the mess. We do get complaints regarding trash, noise and inoperable vehicles and usually we get them resolved."

But there's a hitch. Those who complain must sign their name on the complaint, which is then a matter of public record - and many folks fear repercussions, so instead, they suffer in silence and watch their

home values plummet.

Dillinger and Mayor Daniel Dalegowski say this system will change under their watch.

"I think oftentimes people rightly should be afraid about making a complaint," Dalegowski said. "And I want there to be anonymous channels. People can come to me and any of the other council members and say: 'Hey, we're afraid to complain about this, but would you make a complaint?' I think previous mayors have started the process that way."

"As far as I am concerned the current process needs to be updated," Dillinger added. "There are various ways to do that. It will take time. We have to show our constituents that we are doing something and not just kicking the can down the road."