

Illinois Valley News

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(Photo by IVFD Media Dept)

IVFD Fire Chief Dennis Hoke (left) and JoCo Sheriff Deputy Ken Lehman take a break Aug. 2, 2016 when both agencies took part in the cleanup of Old Stage Park.

IVFD takes levy passing in stride

“I wasn’t surprised that the fire levy passed, but I’m ecstatic that the public safety levy passed. I truly want to thank this group and the community. I never expected that all four levies would pass.” - IVFD Chief Dennis Hoke

Judy Hoyle

IVN Contributing Writer

It was business-as-usual at the May 17 Illinois Valley Fire District (IVFD) monthly meeting. Despite the fact that Illinois Valley voters handed the district an enormous vote of approval for Measure 17-78, the mood in the room was businesslike and matter of fact.

The new 5-year levy at the rate of 50 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value will be imposed for the 2017-18 fiscal year and was passed with 61 percent in favor.

Fire Chief Dennis Hoke delivered his report to the board and discussed plans to hire four firefighter/emergency medical technicians over the next few months.

“This is a new chapter in the history of the Illinois Valley Fire District,” he said. “I wasn’t surprised that the fire levy passed, but I’m ecstatic that the public safety levy passed. I truly want to thank this group and the community. I never expected that all four levies would pass.”

Hoke said the application process would begin shortly and that physical agility and written exams would be involved. He estimated that they would be able to bring the new staff on board around late November or early December.

The new firefighters will work alternating 24 hour shifts to provide full

time staff for response to emergencies, doubling the number of paid staff available to cover the 144 square mile territory.

While the current board presided over the May meeting, Carol Dickson will step down and long time firefighter Joe Feldhaus, who won the Rural Fire Protection District Director Position 1 will be taking her place beginning in June.

Feldhaus has 36 years of fire experience in a variety of settings, including forest officer for the Oregon Department of Forestry for eight years and division chief for IVFD from 2005 to 2013.

In addition, Richard Bouchard was re-elected to his second 4-year term for Position 2. The remaining board members include Chairman Ron Humphres, Jerry Lamb and Edwin “Bob” Butler.

Following a discussion about legal counsel, the board voted unanimously that before the board spends any district funds that such expenditures must be approved by a majority of the board.

Deputy Chief Ken Gavlik’s report included status reports on various grants that he’s written. He also said that of the two new IVFD volunteers who are attending the multi-agency fire academy, one has dropped out about half way through the training.

He also announced that IVFD will partner with AMR ambulance service to present a “CPR Challenge”

demonstration event May 25 at Shop Smart. The public will have the opportunity to practice their cardio-pulmonary resuscitation skills between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. in the parking lot.

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) coordinator Sue Williams announced that they had won a Homeland Security Program grant for over \$13,000 which will help pay for radios, battery operated LED “pelican lights” and other support equipment.

The organization continues to train routinely and works to prepare for major emergencies, such as the recent winter storms or the potential Cascadian earthquake event.

I.V. CERT and search and rescue teams from all over Oregon and Northern California will participate in a three-day search and rescue seminar at Lake Selmac, June 15 -17 under the direction of Josephine County Sheriff’s Deputy Cory Krauss.

In response to Williams’ comment that the I.V. CERT group has volunteered over 430 hours for IVFD, Chief Hoke commended their high level of participation and support for IVFD and said, “I don’t see any other CERT group doing what our group does.”

Voters pass jail levy

Anita R. Savio
IVN Contributing Writer

On May 16, Josephine County voters passed Measure 17-80, a 93 cents per \$1,000 public safety levy, in a 52 to 48 vote. So what comes next?

Sheriff Daniel and the county commissioners have promised to provide three resident deputies with the added funds, including one in the Illinois Valley. Also coming down the pike is an increase in jail capacity, bringing the number up to 185 beds.

Daniel stated he is now in the process of hiring an Illinois Valley resident deputy, plus four more patrol deputies.

But, according to Daniel, it will take time to ramp back up from a force that has been decimated by layoffs and quits since 2012.

“It’s going to take time to hire, train and certify deputies. So the first six months will primarily be at the same level we are now. It can take up to a year to hire and get a patrol deputy up and running, unless I can get lateral hires.”

A lateral hire is an applicant who is already certified, and therefore does not need to be put through certification training at the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training Academy.

Corrections deputies can be up and running in about six to seven months, Daniel added.

Fortunately, Daniel will not need to wait until November, when new property tax revenues come in, to start the process. According to Commissioner Simon Hare, the county is planning to transfer at least \$2.5 million to the sheriff from the General Fund, and is looking for additional allocations in order to bridge the time gap.

In the meantime, the contract for the Cave Junction deputy will continue, and Daniel has already increased jail capacity to 150 beds.

“I also requested from the board the ability to get to 185 as staffing allows. That will be a board-related topic coming very soon.”

Daniel said he is looking for a new 911 dispatcher, as there was a vacant position he was holding open, pending levy results. And he is in the process of evaluating a new schedule to increase hours of patrol service.

“Please be patient while we increase our forces,” Daniel added. “We are working very hard and fast to show what we can do with the amount they have provided us. We will keep our promise and serve the community more as fast as we can.”



(Courtesy photo for The Illinois Valley News)

Overdose antidote available to public

Annette McGee Rasch
IVN Senior Contributing Writer

Are you worried about someone who takes opioid prescription painkillers like OxyContin, Vicodin or other street drugs like heroin? There’s good cause to be - in 2015 opioids were involved in 33,091 deaths and drug overdose is now the leading cause of accidental death in the U.S., according to the Center for Disease Control.

SEE OPIOID ON A-5

Industrial space sparse in JoCo

Jason McMillen
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Julia Schmelzer, director of community development, reported that Josephine County is experiencing a profound lack of industrial land that is viable for sale in areas where most prospective businesses inquire about locating. As a result, the county has had to turn away businesses interested in locating here as well as local companies who wish to expand their enterprise. Schmelzer holds that,

SEE SPACE ON A-5

Siskiyou Field Institute to revamp facilities in anticipation of Outdoor School for All

The 850 acre Siskiyou Field Institute, which provides outdoor education to adults and youth alike, is launching their Million Dollar Makeover campaign sometime this year in an effort to raise said million dollars. **STORY ON A-10**