



Frog Slide found in the Rain-drop product list will be featured at the upcoming splash pad at Jubilee Park.

PAD ...

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This only served to reinforce the decision to use pastel colors, and more fitting colors for the frog were quickly decided upon. A smaller frog, called “Frog Jr,” is also set to be a part of the design, although unlike its larger counterpart, Frog Jr may have get to have spots unless that feature costs extra. Along with the frogs, the design includes some multicolored fish with a lighthouse, a sea sprite, a butterfly named Iris, and a snail named Scooter. There will also be a multitude of brightly colored flower fixtures with names like “Dancing Daisy” and “Tiny Tulip.”

Seating for the splash pad was also discussed, though nothing was firmly decided upon, as the initial seating plans didn’t take into account the fact that the splash pad area will be divided into two sections- an area for older children and an area for babies and toddlers. As a result of this, the seating that will presumably be used for parents

of the younger children is sparse at best. This is undoubtedly something that can and will be remedied in future design plans.

As Tina Casey Jones pointed out over the course of the meeting, though these seem like small decisions compared to the overall picture, this project has been “a long time coming,” and board members were understandably excited about being able to enjoy something as simple as selecting a color palette when there have been so many larger things at play. After the previous company that had been selected for the splash pad fixtures raised their prices, the second selection, a company called Rain-drop, seems like it’s really going to come through for Jubilee Park.

Around this time next year, local children and their families may finally have somewhere safe to gather and stay cool, something that the Illinois Valley has desperately needed for a while since the closing of our local swimming pool. With the board’s help, the new features are going to be as eye-catching as they are useful.

COUNTY ...

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“We live by example, whether it’s our families and kids and teaching them not just to throw their cups out the windows. I’m seeing our community get better and better.”

Bill Hunker of Merlin used his time at the podium to discuss Josephine County’s transition in recent decades from a prosperous community to a poor one, and made the argument that county political leaders have been part of the problem.

“We had no property tax from 1970 to 1980, and a very minimal tax base during the ensuing years,” Hunker explained. “We were rolling in money, we built projects and bloated the county government to 696 employees in 2003.

“Boy, those were the days. My friends in county leadership thought they would never end. But did they ever put any rainy day funds away? The answer was no.”

Hunker blamed the county commissioners of that era for sitting idly by as 40 lumber mills closed down, which “thwarted our economy’s plans.”

“We’ve endured decades of reactive, not proactive county leadership,” added Hunker. “The citizens trust their commissioners to protect the county, but they fumble the ball time and time again.

“It’s therefore galling to hear that we’re the problem because we only pay 58 cents in taxes. Let me say clearly: It is only our low property taxes that keeps Josephine County from becoming an Appalachia of Oregon.”

Hunker concluded his remarks with, “Let’s stop blaming the citizens for the county’s failures, and begin to hold our county leaders responsible.”

Commissioner Dan DeYoung thanked Ahrens for her involvement with the Declaration of Independence reading, and took the time to

slam The New York Times publication for failing to publish the Declaration of Independence on the Fourth of July for the first time in many years.

Commissioner Darin Fowler added, “It was (supposed to be) their 100th anniversary of doing that.”

“And they missed it,” tacked on DeYoung.

DeYoung issued a forceful rebuttal to Hunker’s criticism: “Mr. Hunker, you are looking at one commissioner that has been here two years, one that’s been here four years and one that’s been here six years, and everything you mentioned right up there at that microphone happened well before we took office, yet you want to blame us.”

The commissioner went on, “We’re not blaming the citizens for 58 cents. We’re only bringing out that 58 cents is what is frozen by Measure 5.”

In response to Hunker’s Appalachia comment, DeYoung pointed out that property taxes are quadrupled mere miles away in Jackson County.

“It is the 58 cents that is the problem, Mr. Hunker,” opined DeYoung. “And other than that we can only deal with levies or taxing districts... Every time anybody wants to fund that Sheriff’s Department, there’s the ‘No New Taxes’ people pounding up and down in front of the courthouse, and yet they want 24/7 patrol, they want the jail open, they want to have a full and vibrant law enforcement community.”

“To sit up there and tell us that we’re remiss in our duty - I take offense to that,” concluded DeYoung.

“Commissioner Baertschiger is going to have four forums... in which people can say what we can do and what we think will fund law enforcement. And then we’re gonna land on one and when we land on one we’re gonna expect some people that are normally nos to come along and at least kick it into neutral to give law enforcement a damn chance in this

community. “I’ve lived here 72 years. I don’t like sales tax, I don’t like taxes. I also don’t like lawlessness. Now, you smirk because I say I don’t like taxes, but you know what? You got another way to pay it? You gonna win the lottery or something? I didn’t think so.”

At the end of DeYoung’s fiery accord, Fowler made a point of shaking his peer’s hand and saying, “Nicely done. I couldn’t have said it better myself.”

While DeYoung’s remarks were pointed, he avoided crossing the line into a personal attack. Fowler crossed that line quickly during his comments.

“It’s easy to come in here every few weeks and tell us how things should be and are in your own mind. But I say you get off your wrinkled retirement ass and get on a committee or run for commissioner instead of coming in here and tossing rocks like a small child.”

This prompted a rare reprimand from Chair Baertschiger, who told Fowler, “Commissioner, restrain yourself.”

Fowler wasn’t done: “You may be articulate, but you’re also very stupid, and that annoys me to no end, that you think representative government is supposed to get up and tell you what to do. You’ve lost your way, sir.”

Baertschiger struck a more respectful but no less angry tone when it was his turn to speak: “I know people are frustrated over the funding... I’ll be frank: The anger needs to be pointed at (senators) Wyden and Merkley. They have obstructed harvesting timber on federal land. Wyden has been in there for over 20 years and he is the major reason we do not have timber revenue in Josephine County that paid for everything. So let’s put our anger at where it needs to be directed.

“I hope you go to their town halls and I hope you give them the riot act, because that’s where this all came from.”



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