

Rural fire districts propose tax levies

By JACK HEFFERNAN
The Daily Astorian

Rural fire protection districts have placed renewals of five-year tax levies on the ballot this May, one of which will include an increase.

The Lewis and Clark Rural Fire Protection District is seeking an \$887,000 levy, a 20 percent increase from past measures. Money would go toward maintaining emergency services, paying employees, replacing fire equipment and other operational costs.

The fire district — consisting mostly of volunteers — responds to an average of more than 300 calls each year and serves more than 3,000 people in the Lewis and Clark and Youngs River areas. It operates two fire stations on the north and south ends of the district, one on U.S. Highway 101 Business and the other on Logan Road.

The fire department would eventually like to purchase a new fire engine, which typically costs about \$500,000, and brush truck, which costs more than \$100,000, Fire Chief Jeff Golightly said. Funds would also help update other equipment such as fire helmets and turnout gear.

The cost of purchasing



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian
The Lewis and Clark Rural Fire Protection District wants to increase a five-year tax that finances operations.

fire equipment has increased as much as 15 to 20 percent annually in recent years, Golightly said.

“It’s constantly going up,” he said. “We’re bopping it up to put a little more money away. It’s more of something to keep up with that increase so we can keep up with that service.”

Meanwhile, the Clatskanie Rural Fire Protection District hopes to renew a \$5.3 million levy at the same rate as the previous measure, citing similar cost needs.

The district, which also relies heavily on volunteers, responded to more than 1,000 calls last year. Its three fire stations cover Clatskanie and over 135 square miles of rural area that extends into Clatsop County by Bradley Summit.

Jail bond: ‘Then let the voters decide’

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But architects and county officials have said the \$12 million design would require higher annual operating costs. “It’s \$12 million to construct, but it is terribly expensive to operate,” Moore said.

Other commenters at the meeting included current and former law enforcement officials, Port of Astoria Commissioner Jim Campbell and mental health advocate Richard Elfering, who has proposed transforming the former youth facility into a mental health treatment center. All but Elfering asked commissioners to put the bond on the ballot.

Campbell referred to the fact that inmates are released from the jail each week due to overcrowding. Many come from out of the area.

“People who come to Clatsop County know that they can be turned loose within 24 hours because there isn’t room to house them,” Campbell said.

Commissioner Kathleen Sullivan said she was concerned about how the county would adequately pay for mental health treatment with a larger number of inmates staying in the jail for a longer period of time.

Sheriff Tom Bergin said the added time in jail would offer



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

The Clatsop County Jail in Astoria is chronically overcrowded.

inmates more access to mental health professionals who otherwise would not reach them before their release. The design also includes the potential for more safe rooms for inmates who experience mental health crises.

“When you have a jail that has the ability to have the right capacity, then we get people stabilized quicker,” Bergin said. “Instead of the revolving door, we can get them to help quicker.”

Sullivan also said she was

concerned about the timing of the bond. School districts have discussed placing two bonds on the same November ballot, including a \$32.4 million measure for Warrenton schools.

“I guess my statement to you would be, ‘Then let the voters decide that,’” Bergin said.

By the end of the discussion, Sullivan did just that.

“I still have some concerns, but I will defer to the voters of Clatsop County,” she said.

Lee, Sullivan and Commissioner Sarah Nebeker voted to place the bond before voters. Commissioners Lianne Thompson and Lisa Clement were absent.

Once the vote was completed, commissioners urged Bergin to promote the bond measure aggressively.

“It’s your decision to put this one on the ballot,” Bergin said. “Now let me go out and talk to the people and explain to them all the importance of a jail.”

Astoria: Oregon has 69 enterprise zones

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Tongue Point that fall within city limits, which could provide important tax breaks to a new development. Hyak, a tug and barge-building company, took over the industrial dockside site last year and plans to create a marine fabrication and repair facility.

Councilors are in favor of moving ahead with expanding the enterprise zone to include Astoria and expressed their support for Hyak. City Councilor Bruce Jones called the project the “best thing to happen in the community in a long time.”

Tongue Point has “just been such a sad, sad piece of property for so long,” Councilor Tom Brownson said.

City Manager Brett Estes plans to return to the council with more information about what geographical areas the zone expansion could include, as well as other details about what it would mean for Astoria to enter the partnership. Specific boundaries have not been determined yet and the other partners in the enterprise zone will need to agree to any expansion.

Robert Dorn, CEO of Hyak, said an enterprise zone will allow for faster growth at Tongue Point, but is not essential to the success of his plans. In making the case for an expansion, though, he emphasized to the council how few boat building and

repair options exist on the West Coast. The facility he has in mind would be able to handle a variety of vessels, from commercial fishing boats to Coast Guard cutters.

Tongue Point will thrive, he said, but it will be “much more valuable to everybody sooner” if the company is able to access the tax relief provided by an enterprise zone.

Enterprise zones are used as tools to encourage development by offering property tax exemptions. Oregon has 69 enterprise zones, the majority of them in rural areas.

The Clatsop Enterprise Zone, established in 2015, includes sites in Warrenton and nearby unincorporated areas, the Port of Astoria’s airport property, sites in Miles Crossing and Jeffers Garden, and tiny areas near the Old Youngs Bay Bridge and in Knappa, according to Kevin Leahy, executive director of Clatsop Economic Development Resources, which administers the enterprise zone for the county.

City Councilor Cindy Price and former Councilor Drew Herzog voted against Astoria’s involvement in 2015, saying they did not trust the Port and had qualms about partnering with the agency, among other concerns. Jim Knight had just come on as the Port’s executive director and promised more transparency and a better working relationship.

In 2015, Knight was new

and “we really didn’t know which direction the Port was going to take,” Price said after the meeting Wednesday. “The (Port) commission was very dysfunctional. ... I didn’t want to provide any assistance to a Port that wasn’t a good community partner at the time.”

Now, she believes Knight and the Port Commission have created a much more stable agency with better leadership and she is interested in creating an enterprise zone opportunity for Hyak. During the meeting, Price commented that the maritime industry is an important piece when it comes advancing economic opportunity and growth in Astoria.

“The return on investment here seems like a no-brainer,” City Councilor Zetty Nemlowill said.

Nemlowill had been disappointed by Astoria’s rejection of the enterprise zone in 2015, but at the time had recused herself from the discussion because Fort George Brewery, a business her husband, Chris,

co-owns, would have been included. With the new discussion revolving around Tongue Point, she was not worried about a conflict of interest, she said.

To date, no developers or businesses have taken advantage of the enterprise zone, according to Leahy. He does anticipate Fort George may utilize the incentive when the company begins work on a new warehouse in Warrenton.

“I’ve not been concerned that we haven’t had any (use of the zone) up to this point,” Leahy said after the meeting.

The enterprise zone and the tools it provides to businesses and developers are still fairly new to him and new to the county. Columbia County has had some momentum with its enterprise zone. From 2013 through 2017, 12 companies have taken advantage of it. But each community is different.

“As new stuff comes in or people look to expand, we want to make sure they’re aware of that toolkit,” Leahy said.

OBITUARY

Dale Alyn Andrich

Bend

April 28, 1934 — March 7, 2018

Dale Alyn Andrich passed away Wednesday, March 7, in Bend, Oregon. He was 83 years old.

Dale was born in Astoria, Oregon, to Joseph and Lydia Andrich. He spent his childhood in Astoria. He graduated from Star of the Sea Catholic School, attended the University of Portland, and graduated from Oregon College of Education in 1957.

Dale moved with his young family to Bend in 1966, where they became members of St. Francis of Assisi Church. He coached and taught for over 35 years. He worked at Star of the Sea School, Vernonia High School, Cascade Junior High School, Bend High School and Mountain View High School. He was athletic director at Mountain View from 1978 until his retirement in 1991.

As a former athlete himself, Andrich had a lifelong passion for basketball and all sports. Dale also enjoyed reading, watching movies, listening to old-time radio, trips to the coast and having coffee with friends. He loved being with his family.

While at Star of the Sea School, Dale met the love of his life, Esther Andrich. They started dating their sophomore year of high school. They married on Aug. 21, 1954, and had three boys, Dave of Bend; Peter of Lynnwood, Washington; and Tom of Portland.

A proud grandfather, Dale was well-loved by his five grandchildren, Adrian, Sophie, Isabel, Dane and Sloane. Dale is survived by all his children and grandchildren, and his three daughters-in-law, Norma, Diann and Sarah. He was preceded in death by his wife, Esther, in 2011; his parents; and brother, Robert B. Andrich.

A memorial Mass will be held at 1 p.m. Saturday, March 24, at St. Francis of Assisi Historical Church, at the corner of N.W. Franklin Avenue and N.W. Lava Road, in downtown Bend. A reception will follow the service at the DoubleTree Hotel, also in downtown Bend.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests you donate to your favorite charity or local food bank.



Dale Andrich

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