



# Lear returns as Enterprise mayor

## Lear says city should consider making mayor's term four years, suggests changing the form of city's government

By Rob Ruth  
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE – Steve Lear, who was sworn in as Enterprise's mayor for a second time, floated a few ideas for making major changes to the structure of city government as a new governing group assembled Tuesday night, Jan. 13, in the Enterprise City Council chambers.

At the outset of the monthly regular meeting of the Enterprise City Council, Michele Young, city administrator, administered the mayoral oath of office to Lear, and then the councilor's oath to

three council members, Laura Miller, Jenni Word, and Dave Elliott, who were sworn in as a group. Among the trio, only Elliott is new to Enterprise government.

Lear, who was previously mayor from 2011 to 2013, and before that served four years as a councilor, spent the past two years outside of government after being defeated for re-election in 2012.

In his return to the gavel last week, Lear spoke for several minutes about his vision for city government, mentioning certain concerns he said he periodically heard from residents "on the street," but also extolling Enterprise as "a wonderful

city" that compares favorably "to anyone in the state."

Additionally, Lear talked about the possibility of changing the form of city government, suggesting that city officials should explore the merits of "a city manager or a strong mayor system."

While Lear's comments about the structure of government included no recommendations, he was more definite about another change he'd like the city to consider: lengthening the term of mayor from two years to four.

See MAYOR, Page A3



Enterprise Mayor Steve Lear, right, began his term of office at the Jan. 13 meeting. At left is City Administrator Michele Young, who administered oaths of office to Lear and to three city councilors elected in November.

# Walden talks plans at meeting

By S.F. Tool  
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE – An enthusiastic crowd of two dozen Wallowa County citizens forsook football and crowded into the community center to greet District 2 U.S. Representative Greg Walden at a Jan. 18 town hall meeting.



Walden

Walden, casually dressed in a plaid shirt and jeans, spent a congenial period of well over an hour answering questions and bantering with audience members.

Walden opened the forum with an obligatory mention of the Oregon Ducks loss in the national championship game before getting down to business informing the audience of congressional activities in Washington D.C., and answering audience queries on subjects ranging from forest management to U.S. foreign policy.

See WALDEN, Page A3

# A triple threat

## Musician delights as a singer-songwriter-instrumentalist

By S.F. Tool  
Wallowa County Chieftain



S.F. Tool/Chieftain

Singer-songwriter-instrumentalist Heidi Muller plays dulcimer in the living room of her Enterprise home.

Local musician Heidi Muller comes from the far-flung land of New Jersey. "Rural, northwest New Jersey, not near the cities. We were near Pennsylvania, where it's all farmland," Muller said.

A triple threat as singer-songwriter-instrumentalist, Muller's love of music goes as far back as she can remember. "I was told I walked up to the piano and played a little tune when I was three years old. I grew up in the '50s and my older brother and sister had a record player with 45s which we'd play getting ready for school and I'd just sing harmony to them," Muller said.

Muller learned to play guitar when she was 11 and her expertise is mostly self-taught. "By the end of high school, I was doing folk songs like Joan Baez and Joni Mitchell and by college I was performing with friends and it just kind of grew from there."

She attended a small college near Boston and majored in psychology. "I worked a bit in the field when I graduated, but I couldn't get far without an advanced degree," Muller said.

Muller left the East Coast to work in Texas for a few years and didn't like it. She had traveled the Pacific Northwest in her college days and heard its call. She moved to Seattle with the idea of obtaining her master's in social work from the University of Washington.

See MULLER, Page A3

**WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN**  
Wallowa County's  
Newspaper Since 1884  
Volume 132 Issue No. 40  
© 2015 EO Media Group

# Joseph street repair plan still has bumps

By S.F. Tool  
Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH – Nearly 25 Joseph residents attended a Jan. 15 town hall meeting to offer the city council their opinions and solutions addressing the city's street repair quandary.

The council, Mayor Dennis Sands, and Brad Baird, president of Anderson Perry & Associates, the engineering firm that created the proposals already under consideration, listened, answered questions and took notes from citizens whose demeanors ranged from congenial to nearly hostile.

Sands opened the meeting with a rundown of the city's preferred alternatives of funding the street repair through either a property tax increase or a transportation utility fee.



S.F. Tool/Chieftain

Mayor Dennis Sands (standing) leans forward to listen to an audience member's comment regarding the funding of Joseph street repair.

While a transportation utility fee, which would amount to approximately \$14 per month added to the sewer/

water bill of Joseph residents, gained some traction within the audience, others complained those who owned

lots without hookups would escape the fee. The council offered to investigate the possibility of collecting fees re-

actively.

The transportation utility fee is, in fact, the \$1.2 million bottom rung of three alternatives to repair the streets. The other alternatives include a \$2.55 million street repair bond levy voters torpedoed and sank in November, and a \$4.2 million comprehensive repair plan with unidentified funding.

Town hall attendees proposed a number of alternatives, one calling for the city to purchase the road repair equipment and perform the work itself, and then selling the equipment after the project ended. Baird proposed the city establish talks with the Wallowa County Road Department to minimize the repair costs.

See REPAIRS, Page A7

