

FIRE TRUCK: Departments help each other out

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Enterprise's 1974 La France, for instance, was donated to the Greater Bowen Valley Fire Department outside of Baker City. Greater Bowen has an identical La France but theirs is pretty much suitable only for parting out.

"The Enterprise La France will still be put to good use in Greater Bowen," Karvoski said. "They got some money

to do some wiring and upgrades and it's in a lot better shape than their other La France."

The "new" '93 Pierce custom pumper was paid for out of the Sinking Fund, a savings account the city has specifically for purchasing fire engines.

There was enough money in the account to pay for an even newer truck, Karvoski said, but not enough for a brand new truck. And, the

Pierce should give the city a good 10-15 years of service while the fund keeps growing until it can support the purchase of a brand new truck.

It will have been 56 years between new trucks if it works out like Karvoski plans; the 1974 La France was purchased new by Enterprise City back in '74 for a cost of approximately \$32,000.

The truck has been out on hundreds of calls. Karvoski

estimates his department answers 50 to 60 calls a year, though most of those don't call out an engine.

The city began discussing replacement of the truck when wiring repair and other issues started adding up, Karvoski said. "We were spending between \$1,000 and \$2,000 a year on repairs, it didn't have the safety upgrades (such as seatbelts) that a newer truck would have, and I asked, 'do we want to

spend \$10,000 to upgrade a truck this old or do we want a newer one?'"

Once the decision was made to look for a better truck, former Joseph fire chief Tom Clevenger took the flight back to Pennsylvania and spent a day with the fire department there testing the engine and determining if it was right for Enterprise.

"We owe Tom a big thank-you for that," Karvoski said. Once the Pierce passed

the Clevenger inspection it was loaded on a low-boy and shipped out. Then, the trainings in Enterprise began. It's all good-to-go, now, Karvoski said, complete with such modern features as seatbelts and an eight-man enclosed cab.

If Enterprise gets that 15 more years of good service out of this one, it will be 37 years old when some other small fire department receives it as a gift.

BANK HONORS LONGTIME ACCOUNT HOLDERS



Steve Tool/Chieftain

As part of Community Bank's 60th anniversary celebration, Community Bank President Tom Moran (white shirt) awarded 10 oz. silver ingots to several of the bank's longest-term customers who appeared quite thrilled with the gift. From left: Jean and Malcom Dawson, Gracy Gray and Ann Hayes.

BUDGET: PERS payouts increase

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The legislative move was intended to allow school districts to keep teachers and programs and in larger counties it added up to millions in savings for districts for the 2013-2014 fiscal year: money in.

The move was immediately challenged, however, and individual school districts had to gamble on which way the court would go.

Enterprise chose to spend their "savings."

"We budgeted the savings into our school budget or we would have had to use cash reserves," said Enterprise School Superintendent Brad Roysse.

Now the Supreme Court has reinstated the PERS cost of living increase. The new bill for that comes due in the 2017-19 biennium: money out.

The four school districts of Wallowa County will now pay out an estimated additional \$350,000 in PERS payments in the 2017-2019 biennium.

"A statewide group of business managers came out and told us to anticipate a 5.5 percent impact to our 2017-19 budget," said Karen Patton, superintendent of the Wallowa County Education Service District (ESD).

"We hit Wallowa County Schools with the news as schools were in the process of passing their budgets of next year. There's not much they can change for this year, but for the following year they'll be thinking, 'How can I brace myself for this?' It's a big impact. That's a lot of teachers we may lose."

Local superintendents are betting that losing teachers won't be necessary; certainly not for this coming year.

"We have enough budgeted to where we won't be making budget cuts," said Joseph Charter School Superintendent Rhonda Shirley. "We don't know yet how much this will be costing us, we'll probably have that number by the end of June."

Enterprise's Roysse had made a similar decision.

"We're guessing the impact will be about \$115,000," he said. "That won't be an all-at-once hit, it's going to be significant. But we have a year to plan and haven't met with board on this, yet. It won't hit us till 2017."

Which doesn't mean superintendents are free from the gamble nature of school

funding this biennium. The big gamble for the recently passed budget, said Roysse, was whether or not the state would have enough money in the budget to provide additional support to school districts in the current biennium.

There seems to be a good chance the cavalry, or at least the neighbor's threshing crew, will arrive to help.

Gov. Kate Brown signed the Education Funding Bill (HB 5017) in April. The budgeting process outlined in that bill included "a trigger that will send 40 percent of new revenue to the State School Fund if the economy shows improvement in the May economic and revenue forecast."

The economy did show improvement and Brown subsequently announced another \$100 million would be added to the education budget.

It sounds like the cavalry, but when the bills are stacked

and the money counted, that amount may only pay cost of living increases.

"What I understand is that \$100 million would be provided in the second biennium (2015-2017) for roll-up costs (increases in payroll and insurance benefits)," said ESD Superintendent Patton. "It's an inexact number, a moving target, it doesn't necessarily mean new teachers could be hired. Many districts will need their share of the \$100 million just for roll-up costs."

So, money balanced? Perhaps.

Roysse and his school board chose to gamble on balance. "Our current budget assumes some assistance from the state," he said. "We'd gotten a lot of indications that this money was going to come through. It won't be much once it's parceled out, but we decided to budget a bit high and not cut any programs."

SHIRLEY: Retiring super leaves mark

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Other JCS staff members voice similar sentiments.

"Rhonda has been the backbone of the Joseph School District for many years," another teacher, Marla Dotson, says. "Her financial expertise, ability to access and manage funding sources, knowledge of educational programs and ability to manage people has made Joseph Charter School an exceptional school. She is a wonderful teacher, administrator and person, and we will miss her very much."

Reflected Principal Sherri Kilgore, "To leave a 36-year career and still have everyone love, respect and admire you is amazing. I am happy Rhonda can retire on her terms, but I'm selfishly sad. Rhonda has been my boss, mentor, friend and mom. Her leaving will affect me greatly." Kilgore added, "She is leaving us in a state of financial stability, along with building a charter school and developing the most amazing staff. For her to leave on 'top

of her game is the biggest accomplishment that any superintendent can hope for."

Shirley is a Wallowa County native who attended first and second grade in Enterprise before attending school in Joseph, where she spent the rest of her school years before entering college. Shirley is a graduate of Whitman College in Walla Walla. She started her Joseph career in 1979, teaching both computer science and mathematics to grades 7-12.

After about 15 years in that capacity, Shirley took advantage of a half-time position as school counselor while still teaching math half-time, and it was Shirley's entrance into an administrative position. She also started taking administrative classes with the encouragement of the school's administrators and eventually obtained certification.

Shirley's other positions included high school principal, athletic director and elementary school principal.

Shirley still kept her hand in at teaching even while per-

forming full-time administrative duties. She occasionally taught calculus classes. "Just to stay in touch with it," she said.

Shirley does not consider her climb to the rank of superintendent as the major achievement of her JCS tenure. "I guess it's just being a part of the school for as long as I have and seeing the positive changes. Also, having an influence on students' lives is something I'm also proud of," Shirley said.

Although Shirley looks forward to retirement, she'll miss aspects of JCS. "I'll really miss the people I work with, and the students," she said.

What will she do with all the spare time on her hands? Not to worry, Shirley has that covered as well. "I've got two grandkids and another one on the way to spend time with, and I've got a little farm to spend time on, too," she said.

At least for a time, Shirley will make herself available to answer any questions incoming superintendent, Lance Homan, may have.

COPS: Some progress made

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"George gives me a schedule a week or two ahead of time and we cover for them," Rogers said. "These guys (various law enforcement agencies) cover each other all the time on emergency."

Nevertheless, "It's been pretty tough on our officers," said City Administrator Michele Young. "They've been holding up and doing a great job. The council has nothing but praise for them and the work they've been doing."

Praise, and overtime, will have to do for some time to come. The council expects to

take several more weeks to fully examine the preliminary document produced by the agency review team from the Oregon Association Chiefs of Police (OACP), Young said.

That document was submitted in mid-May and city council intends to work on the issue in the coming weeks. OACP team leader Chief Stuart Roberts of Pendleton continues to communicate with the city, providing

clarification of points as required. A finalized, public document is still in the works.

The council has made some progress since receiving the preliminary report — following through on a recommendation to get a job description for a chief written up and submitted to law enforcement publications. It has not significantly changed from that used to hire former chief Wes Kilgore, Young said.

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