

STORE: More business opportunities with new law

Continued from Page A1

"There's a 20 percent tax on the sales, and the state gets 17 percent, which leaves only 3 percent for the municipality. We feel that's problematic, and if we could change that to where the local community gets more than the state, we could get behind it. Let us keep our own money so we can be self-supporting," Kramer said.

The couple has received very little negative feedback from the community. One person actually complained because the couple doesn't let anyone under 21 in the store, even though the law bans only those younger than 18. "We choose to serve only those over 21, because we don't want someone 18 coming in here to buy accessories for their 15-year-old friends. We don't want high school parents get-

ting angry with us, so we eliminated that option," Flanagan said.

The store mainly sells smoking accessories imported from other areas but the couple hopes products from local artisans will eventually make up a good portion of their wares. One local artist has already sold several pieces through the store. The couple is also working to establish a website to make their goods available for

purchase in a broader market.

The store is very clean and well-lighted. The accessories, which include dozens of pipes and even a hookah, are artfully arranged in an appealing variety of colors in their display cases. Art from New Orleans, Flanagan's native town, decorates the walls, giving the shop a down-home appeal.

The couple intends to eventually offer bulk boutique tobacco for discriminating

smokers, as to expand current offerings. Kramer and Flanagan are currently gearing up for the Christmas season with orders for holiday-themed smoking accessories.

During the tourist season the store is open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. seven days a week with the possibility of reducing the hours during the off season.

"We've always looked around for something we can do to better ourselves and our

families. With this, we can say 'Hey, we did this, and it's ours,'" Flanagan said.

Gratitude was very much on Kramer's mind as she described the couple's Joseph experience. "We're grateful to the city for allowing us here and grateful to our customers who support us being here and we're grateful for the moral support that we've gotten from the community. It's been amazing," she said.

MERGER: Combined chambers contemplated

Continued from Page A1

"People search for Joseph, not Wallowa County," Rushton said. "They often haven't even heard of Wallowa Lake and are surprised when we ask, 'Have you been to the lake?' You'd be amazed how many people drive in on Highway 39 and only know of Joseph, have never even heard about the rest of the county."

Mike Lockhart, president of the Wallowa Lake Tourism Committee, agreed that most tourists do not understand the many attractions of the county.

"We started re-branding as The Village at Wallowa Lake three years ago because people didn't understand what was there," he said. "A lot of people would never get past Joseph if not for the (visitors information) booth. The booth is not just representing Joseph, but the county as a whole."

"We do trip planning and route people through Imnaha and everywhere," said booth employee Michael Maslach.

In addition to keeping the booth open for most weekends and holidays when tourists are most often in town, the Joseph Chamber manages a Facebook page and a website. Both sites are dependent on the WC Chamber to fill the needs of the potential tourist for hard-copy brochures and magazines and for detailed information needed to plan their trip.

"We're a team player," said Rushton. "We can't afford the staff answering the phone so we redirect folks to WC Chamber."

Maslach, who has worked the Joseph booth for three years, seconds the notion that it's a team effort.

"WC Chamber makes our copies for us, they put magazines and brochures on the bus for us if we call, they have the storage space for all that paper. I just love working with them. Without them it would be impossible to operate."

But despite the sense of team playing with regard to serving the visitors, there was a decided lack of team playing with regard to funding, Rushton said.

Currently Joseph Chamber of Commerce is paying for operation of a tourism booth that serves an estimated 10,000 tourists per season, and costs approximately \$13,000 per year to manage. That \$13,000 comes partly from WC Chamber (\$2,600); \$4,000 in motel/hotel tax money (which they didn't get this year); and membership fees (\$50 per year per business).

Joseph Chamber had applied for a \$4,000 grant for operating expenses from the hotel/motel tax fund in February and hadn't received a reply from the county.

WC Chamber, by contrast, has a budget of \$120,000 per year to promote the entire county.

Although the commissioners assured Rushton the lack of funding was an oversight and immediately remedied that by pledging \$5,000 from the video poker fund now and again in January 2016, Rushton felt the time had come to address the problem of consistent funding.

If the WC Chamber were located in Joseph, Rushton argued, the tourism booth could be absorbed into WC Chamber responsibilities and duplication of fees, such as workman's comp payments, could be eliminated. Nor would there be a need to limit the amount of business representation — provided the WC Chamber either financially support the

booth or remain open during peak tourism hours.

Right now, the WC Chamber is not open on weekends or holidays.

Nor is the Forest Service, and the Joseph booth fields a lot of questions about trails.

If the office was relocated, Rushton proposes that the two full-time employees of WC Chamber expand duties to man the booth on weekends and holidays, or that the WC Chamber pay for the additional employee to man the booth.

Rushton pointed out that unless tourists were served on weekends and holidays, they were not getting the service their hotel/motel tax dollars were meant to support. "The tourists are paying for a service and this is what they're getting — closed on weekends, closed on federal holidays," she said.

After providing the \$5,000 support, the commissioners advised that the issue was best discussed by the two boards of the chambers.

COUNTY: Commission looks at opting out

Continued from Page A1

After July 2017, half of the 10 percent will be distributed as above, but the other half will be distributed based on each city's portion of licenses issued — more dispensaries means more money.

Also in the benefits column would be the 3 percent tax that cities and counties could impose. This is a change from the original language of Measure 91, modified in HB3400.

The reason cities and counties are both mentioned is that even if the county opts out, an individual city may opt in — or vice versa.

In any case, this 3 percent can be a significant tax boon when added to the city/county's share of state tax, or it may only be "six dollars," commissioner Hayward quipped.

The benefit of opting out is that a city or county no longer has to deal with the issue.

County commissioners have until Dec. 27, 2015 to decide.

A county may choose to negotiate the issue; there are

six licensing categories and a county may choose to keep a few and opt out of the rest.

Even if a county chooses to opt out, the decision is not necessarily permanent. Judging by the wording of HB3400, a local government or municipality may be able to opt back in at a future date. The precise process for the "opt-back-in" has not been specified, but HB3400 hints that it would most likely involve repealing the ordinance against pot and notifying OLCC of that action.

Opting out does not change the law with regard to personal growing and use. As of July 1, 2015 adults may grow up to four plants and eight ounces per residence.

Use of medical marijuana is also allowed in a city or county that has opted out, though

those with prescriptions may have to travel a significant distance for their medication.

The Wallowa County Commissioners have other input to consider beyond the raw voter opinion. If they opt out they lose two potentially significant sources of income for local law enforcement — the 10 percent (of 10 percent) that the state will give for local police forces,

and the 10 percent (of 10 percent) it will give the county for county law enforcement.

"Both the Wallowa County Sheriff Department and Wallowa County District Attorney want input on this," said Commissioner Hayward.

Next week: How much money are we talking? What other counties in Oregon have opted out and why?

CLOUD 9
BAKERY Cafe
LUNCHES SERVED DAILY
Now serving
breakfast burritos & biscuits!
105 SE 1st St. • Enterprise • 426-3790

COME PEDAL THE RAILS WITH US!

All Day or Two Hour Guided Adventures
Open Thru Oct 4th
Fri - Mon, 8am to 4pm
304 N Main, Joseph Oregon 97846.
Departures at 9am, 12pm and 3pm
Reservations advised.
Call 541-910-0089
Email jbrailriders@gmail.com
www.jbrailriders.com

We have what you need to get your projects done!
Lumber • Moldings
Laminate • Windows Doors
Siding • Roofing • Paint & Stain
And so much more!

1917 LUMBER CO.
JOSEPH, OREGON
Main Street, Joseph
541-432-1917

WHEATLAND
INSURANCE CENTER, INC.
301 W. Main, Enterprise • 541.426.3177
BIRTH
A daughter,
Chloey Marie Tippet,
was born August 26, 2015,
in Enterprise to Cody and
Kasha Tippet of Wallowa.
Grandparents are Loretta
and Jerry Wallace,
Patricia Goebel and
Jim Tippet.

Catch the Bus!

- **Intercity Transportation to La Grande** Monday and Thursday Weekly ~ Cost \$5.00 each way. Free access for veterans medical appointments in La Grande.
- **Mealsite Bus** ~ providing transportation to Senior Center for lunch ~ Cost \$1.00 round trip.
- **Tuesday & Thursday Shopping Bus** provides transportation for shopping and errands throughout Wallowa County ~ Cost \$3.00 from Wallowa/Joseph, \$2.00 Enterprise only.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION OF WALLOWA COUNTY

Wallowa County CHIEFTAIN

Ready to be an editor?

Want to put your journalism experience to use for a family-owned weekly newspaper in a stunningly beautiful Oregon community? This is your opportunity.

The Wallowa County Chieftain is seeking an **Editor** who believes in the value of community journalism. Topics include outdoor recreation, forest health, water supply and wildlife habitat, in addition to coverage of small-town life.

The Chieftain is located in Enterprise, Oregon, just an hour away from La Grande and four hours from Boise. The community has deep agricultural roots and a growing arts community. The location offers year-round recreational opportunities, including backpacking, camping, fishing, hunting, snowmobiling and horseback riding.

We seek an energetic, creative, outgoing and hard-working Editor. This is your opportunity to join a company that believes in community journalism. The Chieftain is a weekly newspaper in Eastern Oregon and is part of EO Media Group, an award-winning and innovative news organization with active family of owners.

We seek a journalist who is passionate about local news, excited about the opportunity to publish in print, on line and with social media. You'll manage and mentor two newsroom employees and work with a professional page design team. Your journalistic integrity is a must. Leadership, budgeting, multi-media and mentoring experience are a plus. This is a hands-on position that edits and writes stories; takes photos; posts daily to our web site; and uses social media to engage readers. Along with the Chieftain's Publisher, you will need to be involved in the community.

EO Media Group owns 11 newspapers and 17 websites that provide accurate, fair and timely reporting about the people and issues impacting the communities we serve in the Pacific Northwest, reflecting the responsibility and spirit of a free press.

Competitive pay plus paid time off, 401(k) /401(k) Roth retirement plan and insurances.

Candidates with an education in journalism or a related field, plus leadership experience should send resume and letter of interest to **EO Media Group, PO Box 2048, Salem, OR 97308-2048,** by fax to 503-371-2935 or e-mail hr@eomediagroup.com