

# Joseph council continues work on housing issues

By Steve Tool  
Wallowa County Chieftain

Housing and zoning questions again were at the forefront during the Joseph City Council's Oct. 6 meeting.

The council vote to approve a short-term vacation rental exception while nixing an application for a conditional-use permit for use of a recreational vehicle as a living space in a commercial zone.



Steve Tool/Chieftain

An audience addresses the Joseph City Council during the Oct. 6 meeting.

## RV request denied

Craig and Kathleen Yaw, new owners of the laundromat and car wash at 204 S. Main St. had requested permission to live part-time in an RV at the location. Joseph ordinances prohibit living in an RV in a commercial zone without a conditional-use permit. After Mayor Dennis Sands explained that proponents for the change had the right to speak first, it was noted the Yaws did not attend the meeting to speak on their own behalf.

Councilor Pearl Sturm said the laundromat had a multi-room apartment upstairs and wondered why the Yaws weren't living there. Sands echoed the sentiment. Councilors Rodd Clark and Tyler Evans said they had spoken with the couple, who said that property purchase snags had precipitated the family's permit request, and they only wanted to temporarily use the RV as a living space.

Councilor Teresa Sajonia asked city recorder Donna Warnock if the Yaws had indicated they intended to use the upstairs as an eventual vacation rental (permitted in a commercial zone such as the laundromat). Warnock replied that the apartments were currently being used as a vacation rental in which it is advertised as a four-bedroom apartment.

Sands said the issue sounded similar to a previous business owner who rented out their home and petitioned the city for an RV conditional-use permit because they were now "homeless."

"They brought it on themselves," Sands said. "If it's an overnight rental, they can cease having it be an over-

night rental."

The council temporarily found itself stonewalled to pursue the matter without the Yaws' being in attendance, although Sands read several letters from nearby residents who opposed the permit and several others publicly testified their opposition.

City attorney Wyatt Baum advised councilors that they could make a decision on the permit without the presence of the applicants as long as it used the permit criteria to make a determination. Sajonia made a motion to deny the permit based on both the written and oral public testimony. Councilor George Ballard seconded the motion. The council voted 6-1 to deny the petition, with Evans casting the dissenting vote.

The council also considered the vacation rental application of Joseph resident Peter Barry. The application was a holdover from the previous meeting, in which concerns over parking, neighbor objections and property management led the council to postpone action.

After Barry said packets he provided the council would contain proof he had met the requirements, Sands said that according to the records Barry provided, he had started running his residence at 801 Ingleside St. as a vacation rental three months before applying for a permit.

Barry said he had noticed a neighboring rental and received permission from city hall for his own rental. City Recorder Warnock denied that claim. Barry then said he had received permission from Janice Brust, Warnock's office assistant. Brust, who did not attend the meeting, later denied

Barry's claim.

When asked for proof of property management in case of tenant issues, Barry said he would personally manage the property once he resumed renting the property out. In the meantime, he said, he had contacted Cindy Aschenbrenner of Wallowa Lake Vacation Rentals to make sure the company could do it in his absence. Sands contradicted that claim, saying Aschenbrenner told him that her company does not manage residential vacation rental properties. Barry replied that he had talked to one of Aschenbrenner's staff members, who told him they did. During the council's previous meeting, Aschenbrenner refuted similar statements Barry had made.

Sands introduced five letters of opposition from Barry's neighbors and letter from one neighbor and two of the Barry's acquaintances who supported the permit. Barry argued that neighbor approval was not part of the application criteria. He also noted that another applicant's request had been approved despite the disapproval of one neighbor. He also produced several other letters from neighbors in support of the permit.

Evans motioned to approve Barry's permit, and Clark seconded. The motion carried on 4-3 vote with Evans, Clark, Sturm and Sajonia in favor and Sands, Ballard and Sharon Newell opposed.

Before leaving, Barry told the council he had worked hard to meet all the permit requirements and felt discriminated against by some members of the council, which had rattled his faith in the city.

## HAY SHED DOWN



Courtesy of Katherine Stickroth

Strong wind gusts on Thursday night brought down a hay shed on Steve Zollman's property outside of Joseph.

# Fire season ends on ODF land

East Oregonian

As of Thursday morning, fire season has come to an end on the Oregon Department of Forestry's Northeast Oregon District.

The district includes roughly 2 million acres of private, state, county, municipal and tribal forestland in Umatilla, Union, Baker, and Wallowa counties, as well as small portions of Grant, Morrow and Malheur counties.

ODF declared fire season June 28 in the district, which saw a total of 38 fires that burned 871 acres — well below the district's 10-year average of 7,500 acres. Fourteen fires were started by lightning, which is the lowest number since 1960.

Cooler, wetter weather is now in the forecast, though Mitch Williams, wildland fire supervisor in La Grande, cautioned that conditions can change quickly. Williams urged landowners to remain vigilant, especially when burning slash piles.

"If we have periods of warming and drying later in the fall, it's essential for landowners to go out and check slash piles for remaining heat that could cause a problem," he said. "It's not uncommon for us to be fighting escaped slash



inciweb.nwcg.gov via AP


In this Aug. 24 file photo a plane drops fire retardant near the northwest side of Owyhee Canyon south of Vale.

fires in late October and November."

Slash burns must be registered with the local ODF office at least seven days pri-

or to burning. Landowners should also check with their rural, city or tribal fire departments for further burning restrictions.

### Student of the Week




**Breanna Phelps**  
WALLOWAN HIGH SCHOOL

Breanna Phelps is the daughter of Jodie Weaver and step-daughter of Eric Weaver. Breanna has been involved in natural helpers, yearbook, basketball, cheerleading and Rotary Interact. After high school, Breanna plans to go to college and study early childhood education.

Breanna is mature and a level-headed thinker. She decides what she wants, makes a plan and then carries it out. She puts in 110% effort into everything she does. She is polite and helpful. She is able to advocate for herself in every aspect of her life. She currently has straight A's. She is great with kids and she will have a great future in early childhood education.


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