

Joseph rejects deer-kill bill

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

Joseph deer will not be killed by ODFW after a draft bill that could have allowed that was rejected Dec. 8 by city council.

Despite a Facebook furor over possible killing of deer, only about a dozen people attended the council meeting to voice their opinions.

Sen. Bill Hansell’s draft bill included a population control plan that said ODFW could kill deer, after live trapping and moving them, if the department concluded the animals were overpopulated in Joseph city limits. The city would have been required to pass an ordinance that banned feeding deer in the city.

Mayor Dennis Sands said Hansell’s bill had “less than a zero (percent) chance of passing the legislature” and that citizens were worried armed men would march through town shooting deer.

Denise Clevenger, wife of council member-elect Tom Clevenger, testified she did not want the situation to escalate into killing deer. She said that although she heard of deer being aggressive toward humans, neither she or her pets experienced such actions.

“It may be because I’m never aggressive toward them,” she said.

However, council member George Ballard said he encountered an aggressive deer that approached him and gored his dog while in Ballard’s yard.

“We’ve got a problem here and we need to address it,” he said.

Denise Clevenger said that district biologist Pat Matthews reported hearing of three complaints of aggressive deer in Joseph in 2016. She suggested local citizens wrap their trees and fence their yards to protect their homes from deer, “like the rest of us do,” she said.

Denise Clevenger said the city could fine people for feeding them in town, have the ODFW trap and remove the deer or tranquilize and inject birth control medication, all of which she said were cheaper than killing deer, and would be more humane and be better public relations for the city.

But Angie Lunde said three deer died in her yard from health reasons in the past 18 months, and this year’s fawns looked unhealthy.

“You can come to my yard and see that the deer are not healthy. I think we’ve got a deer population problem and a deer dying problem,” she said. She also questioned how humane it is to let unhealthy deer die an agonizing death. Resident Kathy Bingham also said deer had died in her yard as well.

After more discussion, Sands motioned to send a letter to Sen. Hansell thanking him for his efforts while politely declining the solution offered in the draft bill. The motion passed by a margin of 6-1, with Ballard casting the dissenting vote.

Councilor Teresa Sajonia, who owns Embers Brew House on Main Street, said she had revisited the suggestion that supply trucks back up the alley behind the coffee shop.

Sajonia stated she measured the alley and found it was wider than the one behind her business, which semi-trucks use.

“Alleys were put into place to serve the businesses, and that alley can be used for that,” she said. “It can be a solution — it is wide enough.”

- In other agenda items, the council appointed city recorder Donna Warnock as budget officer.
- And the Maxville Heritage Center, Wallowa County Farmers Market and the Josephy Center applied for grants from the city’s hotel/motel tax.
- The council also decided to close Main Street for four hours on Jan. 18 for the Eagle Cap Extreme dog sled race.
- Retiring councilor Sharon Newell was thanked for her years of service to the city.

Joseph moves away from Main Street loading zone

By Stephen Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

Joseph City Council moved ahead Dec. 8 on several subjects from the previous month’s meeting, including commercial trucks traveling on Pine Street.

Pine Street residents Mark and Kathy Drake brought up the problem to the council during its October meeting, saying semi-trucks supplying Red Horse Coffee, 306 N. Main, parked in front of their home and idled for long periods of time instead of using the alleyway behind the establishment.

The council, which had considered a designated loading zone on Main Street, reversed course on the matter. After consulting with business owners, mayor Dennis Sands said he learned the action would take up too many parking spaces, particularly needed during the tourist season.

On Thursday, Sands said the council continues to consider a city-designated truck route, but little progress was made to resolve the loading issue.

Hessel new district forester

East Oregonian

A new leader is in charge of the Oregon Department of Forestry’s Northeast Oregon District.

Joe Hessel, who has worked in the district for more than 30 years, was promoted to district forester Dec. 1 following the retirement of John Buckman.

Most recently, Hessel had served as the unit forester for the La Grande and Baker units. Now he will oversee management of the entire district, which spans approximately 2 million acres of private forest lands in Umatilla, Union, Baker and Wallowa counties, as well as small portions of Morrow, Grant and Malheur counties.

“I am very excited about my new role,” Hessel said. “I am honored to have the opportunity to work with a great group of professional and very dedicated employees.”

Hessel also acts as operations chief for one of ODF’s incident management teams, responding to wildfires and other emergencies in the woods. Part of his new position, he said, will be continuing to address the challenges in fire and forestry across northeast Oregon.

“Continuing the strong tradition of providing a high level of service to private landowners and the Oregon public is at the top of my list,” Hessel said.



Hessel

GIVING TO THE ANIMALS



Steve Tool/Chieftain

Gary Bethscheider, owner of the Stubborn Mule restaurant in Joseph, hands a \$400 check and \$100 worth of grocery store coupons to Carol Vencil (L) president of the Wallowa County Humane Society as board member Denise Clevenger (R) looks on. Bethscheider donated the checks with proceeds from the Wallowa County Thunder Run in August. “I just wanted to help our little furry friends,” he said.

Input sought on cattle fence

Wallowa County Chieftain

Public input is sought on a proposed seven mile fence that would keep cattle off Big Sheep Creek within the Marr Flat Allotment.

The area is listed as critical fish habitat. The U.S. Forest Service and Wallowa-Whitman National Forest are spearheading the project. For more information visit www.fs.usda.gov/projects/wallowa-whitman/landmanagement/projects and click on the project name.

The Forest Service expects planning and analysis for the fence to be finished by April.

You can submit comments until Jan. 14. You can email those comments to sitkapence@fs.fed.us, or you can do it by telephone by calling 541-426-5689.

Comments provided as well as the name and address of the person providing the comments, will become a matter of public record.

Navigation locks closure extended

EO Media Group

All navigation locks on the lower Columbia and Snake rivers will be out of service for 14 weeks as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers conducts extensive maintenance.

The closure, which began Dec. 12, was announced in May 2015, and will affect 359 miles of river from Portland to Lewiston, Idaho.

“Aging infrastructure sometimes requires extensive, non-routine repairs and improvements that cannot be completed within the traditional two-week annual routine maintenance outages,”

said Hal Thomas, navigation business line manager for the Army Corps of Engineers Walla Walla District. “This work will improve the long-term functionality and safety of these locks, as well as the overall reliability of the Columbia-Snake river navigation system as a whole.”

Extended closures are unusual, Thomas said, and carefully coordinated between districts and industry. Recreational boaters, meanwhile, can choose from more than 50 shoreline launches managed by the Corps. For more information, visit www.nww.usace.army.mil.

Man sentenced for killing landlord’s dog

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

Glen Ashe Riley, 71, formerly of Enterprise, pleaded guilty Dec. 7 to first-degree animal abuse in Wallowa County District Court.

The charge stemmed from an Aug. 11 incident in which Riley shot and killed the dog of his landlords, Bill and Kyomi Koike Oliver, who live on the Lewiston Highway. The crime is a Class A misdemeanor.

Riley rented a cabin in the Oliver’s back yard and obtained a pet dog without their permission. Riley’s dog did not get along with Cha-Cha, the Oliver’s dog, and Riley was asked to find another home for his pet.

Some time later, the Olivers came home from a trip to find Cha-Cha dead in the yard. Riley claimed to know nothing of the dog’s demise. A subsequent autopsy showed two pellet gun wounds, one through the lungs and aorta. Riley then confessed to shooting the dog for excessive barking, claiming he only tried to scare the dog and did not intend to kill it.

Riley, who now lives in Chicago, appeared by telephone and was represented by public defender Thomas Powers. Judge Russell West presided.

The hearing got off to a rocky start. Riley, who had said he would accept the plea deal he had been offered, balked at

the stipulation that he not be allowed to own a pet for five years. West asked Powers to confer with his client while the court recessed. Powers reappeared with his client ready to plead guilty. West then rebuked Riley for his treatment of court staff before accepting the plea.

As West handed down the sentence he told Riley he didn’t buy his story about trying to scare the dog. “You planned and shot it in cold blood — a cruel act,” he said.

Riley received three years of bench probation, a \$1,000 fine with \$750 suspended, 80 hours of community service and \$1,560 in court costs including \$410 restitution fees to the Olivers.

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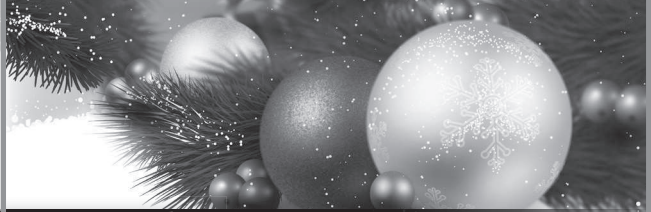
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