

Turn library support into funding mechanism

It was heartening to see support for public libraries in Wallowa County crescendo last week as the announcement of budget cuts began to filter out. Due to the loss of a federal funding program, the county commissioners were forced to trim just about every department. The county library was targeted for closure.

That decision has since been temporarily shelved while the county pursues the mandatory public hearings to take that step.

Clearly, the leadership in the county is not anti-library or anti-literacy. The choices are tough when a significant portion of revenue is carved out of a budget, particularly after it has been in place for decades. The crunch left them between Scylla and Charybdis.

Since much of what the county spends is mandated — usually by the state — libraries are an easy target. It’s difficult to make the case that a library is more important than the sheriff’s office, for instance.

The silver lining in this dark fiscal cloud is the obvious support for libraries and their role in the individual communities. Perhaps it’s time to ask county residents to put their money where their mouth is.

There are roughly 25 library districts in Oregon, funded primarily by dedicating a small portion of property taxes for that purpose.

It’s a fairly straight-forward process spelled out in Chapter 357 of Oregon statutes. Districts are run by a governing board elected by taxpayers, much like a cemetery district or any other similar entity.

We recently reported on the efforts by the Associated Ditch Company in Wallowa County to become a water district. That move would open avenues of funding to make needed improvements to the Wallowa Lake Dam.

A library district would likely bring similar added revenue and provide centralized direction for the county.

A library district is one idea. There are no doubt others utilized by the 225 libraries in the state to survive and thrive.

Eastern Oregon University might serve as a partner to unify library services and funding in the county. A number of public libraries across the region have partnered with colleges and universities in this fashion.

Perhaps there are library synergies that can be leveraged by partnering with surrounding counties, many of which are likely facing the same prospects as Wallowa.

Don’t like any of those ideas? Come up with another one.

Most importantly is the need to strike while the iron is hot. Judging from the comments floating around the county, this is a fiery issue that is going to require the best minds to find the most reasonable workable solutions.

Yay? Nay? It doesn’t matter. We’d like to hear what you have to say on this topic. You may email letters to the editor at editor@wallowa.com, send them to the Chieftain at P.O. Box 338, Enterprise OR 97828 or drop them by the office.

EDITORIAL

Voice of the Chieftain



Late branding season a concern

As if winter didn’t have enough bad weather, the end of April has been unusually wet and windy. Winter spawned bad humor, cabin fever and not a lot of domestic tranquility. Spring isn’t doing much better. The biggest problem I have with the spring weather is that local ranchers have been running out of hay and are itching to brand the calves that are destined to be moved to their permits.

Because the cows and calves can’t be moved until the calves are branded, the ranchers are pretty panicked. We had one day of possibly decent weather the middle of April, and six ranchers scheduled brandings. That is like having six prom dates, and you can only take one.

I went to Todd Nash’s branding because I always do, and he invited me first. I wasn’t invited to all of the other five (probably an oversight), but I still feel as though I have been cheated out of five.

I am considering filing a grievance with the United Drovers Union steward. I know it was all weather-related, but this is the kind of behavior that leads to government regulation.

Having worked as a civil servant and a damn good one too, I have some ideas how the bureaucracy would be set up. Every county in the west will have a range czar with an assistant czar to do the work. The ASS (assistant abbreviation) will set



OPEN RANGE

Barrie Qualle

a branding season for the county and by drawn lot assign dates and permits for ranchers to brand.

Branding out of season will not be tolerated and appropriate fines will be assessed. Ranchers will be able to trade dates with other ranchers or sell their date provided they notify the agency and pay a fee. If the county has ranges with different conditions, each range will have a range monitor who will report to the assistant czar.

Ranges that cross county lines will require hiring a consultant to negotiate the dates and require czars from affected counties to travel to Salem for the meetings or if federal land is involved, Washington D.C.

Other requirements will be that the available cowboys be graded and numbered so one rancher doesn’t get all the top Number 6 ropers while another is stuck with 2s and 3s. Racial and gender diversity will be encouraged but not mandatory yet.

When filing for a branding permit, ranchers will have to have proof of OSHA

approved corrals along with dust control plans and a questionnaire completed. This will describe the type of branding, the choices will be drag and drop, drag and hold, head and heel and for an extra charge calf table.

Ranchers will have to file a notice of intent to brand and inspectors will make spot checks to determine if proper procedure is followed.

A tax levy will need to be approved to support the new Department of Branding Regulation and Enforcement since the branding permit prices will only cover part of the expense. If the new deal crosses state lines, a federal bureau formed at the cabinet level will be required.

So as you see, it’s not just this county involved. Part of the problem is that when this becomes entrenched, a lot of the people running it will be from Connecticut with no knowledge of local conditions and traditions. I know this was an unusual year with unique conditions, but the fact remains that I am 76 and have a finite number of brandings left. I can’t afford to miss any more.

Please be more careful in the future and avoid forced regulation. You won’t like it.

Barrie Qualle moved to Wallowa County in 2005 from California and writes a monthly column for the Chieftain.

Little libraries can have big impact



WAHL TO WALL

Paul Wahl

All of us are hoping for the best where the future of the Wallowa County Library is concerned. Libraries are an important part of the fabric of our community.

Did you know our county has two “little free” libraries? While these would never be a substitute for the county library and all its many services, they are unique symbols of the importance of reading and literacy.

Mike and Linda Koloski erected their library last fall in the 100 block of Hyland Drive in Enterprise. It’s a two-room model with a main hall and a smaller one dedicated to children’s books.

Koloski, who is retired from the U.S. Coast Guard, found his second love in education and his third in art. Providing reading material was a natural outgrowth.

If you look left as you proceed north out of Lostine, between the post office



Paul Wahl/Chieftain

Mike Koloski of Enterprise is one of two Wallowa County residents who have built and offered to the community little free libraries. There are more than 50 000 little free libraries worldwide.

and the store, you’ll see Janice Bird’s version of the little free library.

She spotted the idea in a magazine shortly after she retired from teaching and decided it was perfect for Lostine.

It was built to look as much like the store as possible. Janice and her husband Keith owned and operated the store when the library went up. Children’s books have also been a priority for the Birds.

The idea behind the Little Free

Library movement is simple: patrons take a book and leave a book, or take a book, read it and bring it back and leave another one. It’s about as grassroots an idea as you can find.

Books in a variety of genres are featured, including the famous Sue Grafton “alphabet” series and works by famous and not-so-famous authors.

See LIBRARY, Page A5

Tell the truth and the law will protect you

In his letter last week about David Van Doozer’s case, Bob McFaul rightly asked, “What changed?” How could a grand jury have indicted over something that the criminal jury rejected in 50 minutes? How could a civil jury have then found Van Doozer a victim of malicious prosecution by his accusers, Larry and Judy Willis? Some of the answers follow.

The District Attorney presented this matter to the grand jury. She has a regular practice of having the chief investigating police officer testify before the grand jury when seeking an indictment. In this case, no police officer testified to the grand jury; only the Willises.

The investigating officers of the Willises’ complaint against David were then-Undersheriff Steve Rogers and then-Sheriff Fred Steen. After their investigation, they each always believed that no crime had been committed. They explained that the scene did not look like criminal mischief case scenes typically look, with smashed-in walls and broken glass.

Instead, Sheriff Rogers observed that

LETTERS to the EDITOR

it looked like someone had just removed from the bakery the things, which the bakery’s first owner had added at his own expense. As a result, Judge Russell West held at the civil trial that the Willises lacked probable cause to have pursued a criminal case against David. Judge West also noted that David had only removed from the bakery items he was allowed to remove.

Why did the DA pursue a case against David that she lacked probable cause to pursue? Well, for the civil jury to hold the Willises responsible for maliciously prosecuting David, that jury had to conclude that the Willises lied to the police or DA, intentionally omitted key facts from what they told the police or DA or exercised undue influence over the DA in getting her to pursue a case that should never have been pursued.

With evidence of the Willises having done all these things, and also evidence

that they had committed perjury at the criminal trial and committed insurance fraud in their property damage claim, why did the DA testify at the civil trial in favor of the Willises? Was it their continuing undue influence over her?

So, what changed? The DA could keep Rogers and Steen away from the grand jury but not from the criminal and civil juries. And the criminal and civil juries each subjected the Willises’ testimony to careful scrutiny, while the DA apparently never has.

As for Lori Schaafsma’s concerns, everyone should know two things: If you tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth to the police and the DA, the law protects you, just as it should; and that duty of truth applies to business and property owners just as much as it applies to employees and renters, just as it should.

Carl Kiss
Enterprise

Kiss represented David Van Doozer at his civil trial.

WALLOWA COUNTY

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