

FIRE

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Enterprise City Mayor Stacey Karvoski told The Chieftain members of the council who had arrived early were organizing for their work session. Council member Dave Elliott left the meeting room to retrieve paperwork from City Administrator Michele Young’s office and found it filled with dense smoke. The council immediately vacated

the building and dialed 911. Enterprise Volunteer Fire Department firefighters, 19 in all, were on the scene within minutes and began to clear the Fire Hall of its equipment and use it to fight the fire. By 6:57 p.m., Joseph Fire Department was on the way with another five vehicles and 11 firefighters. According to Joseph Fire Chief Jeffery Weeks, by the time they arrived, fire was coming out of two small windows by the air conditioner in Young’s office and smoke was billowing out the doors. Councilman Micah Agnew had passed the building roughly 10 minutes before and had seen no indication of fire, but as he returned for the meeting, he said he also saw flames coming out the small windows near Young’s office. “It went from nothing to flames out the window in five minutes,” he said. “We caught it really fast,” Weeks said. “Enterprise did a really good job of containing it to one room.” Before dark, La Grande Rural Fire Department had

also been called to refill breathing apparatus tanks as firefighters continued to search the building for hot spots amidst dense smoke. No cause for the fire has been determined. Tuesday morning nearby East North Street and North East First Street were blocked by Enterprise Fire vehicles, parked outside for the time being. City Hall was constructed inside the aging Enterprise Fire Hall. Enterprise Fire Chief Paul Karvoski hopes the trucks will be

able to go back into the fire hall Tuesday. “The hall is smoke damaged but in as good a condition as you can expect from a 1952 building,” Karvoski said. City Hall, however, is “totaled completely. We still have the fire hall and the fire hall meeting room usable, because the fire was contained to the city hall.” City officials will come up with a plan to move forward with the work of city government. “We’ve got to get the city back operational,” Karvoski said. “They’re starting back from scratch — we’ve got to do our best to keep it functional. City council scheduled a meeting in front of the building at 1 p.m. Tuesday to discuss the next move. Councilman Agnew, who is a minister at Abundant Life Assemblies of God, has offered his old church, a block away from city hall, as a temporary meeting place. No estimate of the damage was immediately available.



Kathleen Ellyn/Chieftain

Hay is abundant in Wallowa County this year, with growers hoping for high prices and continued good weather.

HAY

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of their hay fields, so there should be good quality hay in the first cutting.” In addition to getting more product to the international market, hay producers rely on several other market factors to maintain prices. One is the carryover that hay growers were left with in 2015. If the carryover was fed down during last year’s bad winter, which it appears to have been, the market is clear of that obstacle. Another factor is the price of corn.

“There is a replacement opportunity with corn and other commodity grains,” Williams said. “If corn is down, those other markets are down and can drag hay prices down because cattle can be fed more corn and grain.” Another factor is whether the hay farmer has “tied” part of his production to a local cattle operation. “Hay is an international market tied to a national market tied to a regional market and tied to a local market,” Williams said. “I’ve been told for years, and I agree with it, that for a hay ranch to be successful, you have to have a

HOW MUCH HAY?

Wallowa County has 65,000 acres of crop land. Approximately 45,000 of that is irrigated and almost half of that is in hay. Around 13,904 acres is planted in alfalfa, 9,957 acres in grass, and another 5,106 acres in dry land grass for a total of 28,967 acres of hay in the county.

cow herd behind it. It doesn’t have to be your herd, it can be your neighbor’s herd. “That’s because there is always that hay that wasn’t put up the best, and it’s called cow hay for a reason,” Williams said. “There are a 100 reasons you might not be successful at putting up premium hay — in those years you survive on the cow herd attached to your hay.” The Wallowa County Haygrowers Association has helped growers and ranchers network and create those partnerships. “A prime example of how that works was one guy who got all of his hay rained on, and he had quality hay cus-

tomers he didn’t have the hay for,” Williams explained. “His neighbor cut and baled at a different time and got quality hay. Between the two ranchers they got quality hay for the customers and cow hay for both ranches.” Last winter may have been challenging in many ways, but heavy snowfall at high altitude, lots of spring water and warm and dry weather thus far have made for an ideal early hay season. “I think if we have problems with water its that we have a lot of it,” said Associated Ditch Company President Dan Butterfield of Joseph. “But, we’ve been managing, so I think we’re in good shape. We’ve had such good moisture that we’re having good crops.” Hot weather for days at a time has also meant farmers are actually making hay while the sun shines. “We haven’t had the untimely rainstorms,” said Williams. “Harvests happened pretty much at the right time.” And the future water situation looks good, too. “We’re full at Wallowa Lake. We’re seeing no problems for irrigation this year,” Butterfield said.

Joseph council tables pot issue

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

Sean Flanagan and his partner Michelle Kramer want to open a recreational marijuana dispensary in Joseph. They brought the idea to the Joseph City Council July 6 and came away disappointed. The request would have required the city to overturn a previous ordinance prohibiting dispensaries in Joseph. Flanagan and Kramer explained to the council during a four-hour meeting what they believed were benefits to the city, both from the three-percent sales tax as well as increased tourism. The cou-

ple also pointed out that other money from the state’s 17 percent share of the taxes would accrue for such things as mental health, alcoholism and local law enforcement. A Pendleton dispensary owner testified on the couple’s behalf also citing future marijuana tax revenue and lower crime rates in his city as well as his dispensary’s sponsorship of a number of children’s and music events in the community. Audience response to the proposal was mixed and emotional, both for and against. Concerns included the effect of a dispensary on the area’s children, the crime rate and the

city’s overall character. Others in favor of the dispensary reiterated points made previously, and touted the ready access to marijuana for those who use it for medicinal purposes. The council voted 5-2 to table the issue indefinitely. Council members Tom Clevenger and George Ballard cast the dissenting votes. Flanagan and Kramer are co-owner of The Peace Pipe, a Joseph smoking accessories and art shop on Main Street. They were planning to make a similar presentation to the Enterprise City Council July 10. However, that meeting was not held due to the fire at Enterprise City Hall.

DRUGS

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working informants. Stone also trained the others in writing affidavits and learning to implement a controlled buy. Controlled buys occur when a cooperating witness or an undercover police officer purchases a controlled substance, from a criminal suspect. “Once that happened, the ball really started rolling,” Stone said. “We became proactive to let the community see us being busy and doing the work we’re paid to do.” The team achieved results by expanding patrols at a Greenwood Avenue trailer park and other hot spots. Early in 2016, Stone said there were 157 cases on the books. He and the other team members worked to link crimes and suspects, and more than 300 cases were on the books by the end of 2016. The team has worked the case load down to around 120 today. Persistence has been a key. “We’re not backing down,” Stone said. “What we’re actually starting to see is a trend when things are slowing down. We’re hearing more and more often how drugs are getting

hard to get. At the same time, we’re still being proactive and targeting bad areas. Since we started, these places are quieting down because we’ve taken quite a few people out.” Stone cited the arrest and conviction of Matthew Brent Krogh, recently sent to prison for both DUIs and criminal mischief. Krogh broke into a home and stole painkillers from a man battling cancer. “From the time we got there until the time we found him, got him into custody and wrapped up everything, it was just over an hour,” Stone said. A number of people in jail or the court system are there because of the team’s efforts. “Since we’ve started this, what we’ve had is a number of people get out of the business of slinging dope,” Stone said. “They may not give it up, but a bunch of them just packed up and left.” Stone said that the team’s actions are completely lawful and do not violate suspect rights. “We’ve sat a bunch of them down and told them, ‘Listen. You’re here for a reason. You’re on the radar and you have a choice.’ We’ve been very open with these people about this,” Stone said. The team tells people they can stop what they’re doing and start living a decent life or, “we’ll be coming to your house, or where you’re living, maybe knock the door down because we have a search warrant and take you to jail ... or you can just leave the area. You can continue to do what you’re doing, but you won’t do it here.”

Stone said that although the crime team is serious about cleaning up the county, it understands many of the criminals are addicts in need of help. With the aid of the probation department, beds are sought at treatment facilities, and addicts can get away from bad influences and perhaps reform. “Whether it’s rehabilitation or just getting out of here and getting a change of scenery by shipping them off to family members, we’re working every avenue that’s available to us,” Stone explained. Stone said that meth is the most common link between drug use and crime. “The methamphetamine users are the worst,” he said. “I don’t know what it is about that drug, but the truth could save their lives and keep them out of trouble, and they will still lie to you. I think it messes with that part of the brain.” Stone credited the cooperation between the two law enforcement agencies and the probation department for the team’s success and sees a bright future for the area. “We’ve managed to get our agencies on the same page — something this county probably hasn’t seen in years,” Stone said. “We’re sharing resources because they are so few of us. “If the county calls, we run to back them up whether it’s in Wallowa or Joseph. If we’re undermanned, they’ll pull cases from the city for us. By sharing our resources and working together, we’re able to get things done because the manpower is there, so it continues to work out well for us,” Stone said.

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