

COTTAGE

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square footage; they measure approximately 30 x 110 feet. Zone requirements for homes have swollen along with expectations. Today lots are 5,000 square-feet.

Although there is a minimum 1,000 square-foot requirement for trailer homes or modular homes in Wallowa, there is no minimum square-footage required for a stick-built home.

“We’re very happy,” Dennis said. “If I’d had to build a 1,000 square-foot house with average costs at \$140 per square-foot, I wouldn’t have been able to afford to build a studio.”

Reinke’s work has captured the attention of Wallowa City Council.

“We’ve entertained the idea of allowing tiny houses and container houses, but we haven’t had formal discussions,” said Mayor Vicki Knifong. “We don’t have enough information, but the more you dig, the more information you find.”

Like many — particularly retired — Reinke and his wife both work part-time and each needed a studio. In addition, they wanted a garden shed. As their immersion in the community continued, Dennis also discovered he needed a “power shop” for his sculpture and cast bronze work.

With a small house, their three-lot property can accommodate other structures, and



Dennis and Nancy Reinke of Wallowa stand outside their new 670-square-foot cottage.

they were able to build those over time, spreading the construction cost.

“We built the house and my little painting studio the first year,” Dennis said. “We built the garden shed out of recycled material the second year. This year we expanded a shop already on the property into my ‘power shed’ sculpture studio and shop.”

The Reinkes have roughly 1,000 square feet of workspace outside of their home. Neither the “power shed” or the garden shed required a building permit.

Dennis said initially he was advised not to build in Wallowa County because of the cost and zoning codes.

Although there is no minimum size for a stick-built dwelling on the books in Enterprise, a single-family dwelling must sit on 10,000 square feet in a prime residential area and 6,600 square feet in others.

Joseph requires new buildings be at least 1,000 square

feet of living space and sit on lots measuring 5,850 square feet.

Although the Reinkes could have purchased an older home with a smaller footprint (there are plenty in Wallowa), the shortage of remodeling contractors and the high cost of remodeling were deterrents. Renting proved impossible.

“If rent was reasonable, we would have preferred to rent,” Dennis said. “We couldn’t find a suitable rental in the county.”

The county’s loss has been Wallowa’s gain. The Reinkes are a welcome addition to the community. They participate in numerous projects and are consistent volunteers. Despite their small footprint, they estimate they spend up to \$3,000 a month in the county.

“We’ve got to be open to today’s requirements,” said Knifong. “People are going smaller, and what Dennis did was fantastic.”

JOBS

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Evans argued that as the city wasn’t paying for Lewis’ retirement and other benefits, the position’s current salary didn’t reflect what a new hire would cost the city. Sands said that he favored keeping the positions as-is.

Calculations showed that the position with full benefits would cost the city \$73,000 per year. Lewis made around \$52,000 annually.

The council voted Sands as the liaison between the public works employees and the city until the public works supervisor post is filled. Evans and Sajonia were the two dissenting votes.

Sands also led the charge to keep the two positions with the same job descriptions. He said that someone with qualifications for both a city manager and with the sewer and water certification required for the public works supervisor would be difficult to find.

After some discussion, the

vote saw most of the council voting with Sands. Sajonia cast the lone dissenting vote.

The council decided to streamline the job descriptions and decided on salaries. The public works supervisor position will post for a salary range of \$41,600 to \$55,000 annually plus retirement and health insurance benefits, depending on experience.

The city settled on a recorder/administrator position salary of \$33,000 to \$43,000 with the same benefits package.

HOUSING

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demographic shift away from the middle class.

According to information from a Harvard Joint Study for Housing that Daggett shared with the group, the picture isn’t expected to improve.

“Affordable housing shortages will persist,” Daggett said. “More and more working poor are choosing to live in recreational vehicles. Thirty percent of older Americans already pay half of their income on rent.”

More localized information included the fact that 35 percent of the houses in Enterprise are rented. Daggett, who is a property manager, has an average of five applicants for every rental in the county; and since there aren’t enough to go around, some are living in sub-standard housing.

About 40 people gathered to hear Daggett and discuss the housing crisis in Wallowa County. The information presented may have shocked them but it didn’t surprise them.

Brown Bag director Rich Wandschneider knew that conversations on how bad the housing situation was were being held informally throughout the county. He hoped Daggett’s presentation would move the discussion toward solutions.

“I invited people I knew could talk on this point and were interested,” he said. “I knew we’d get a lively conversation, and we did.”

Those invited included long-term residents, property managers and community activists. Some fit all three categories.

Among the many hats Daggett has worn or continues to wear are property manager for Daggett Properties; Realtor with Wallowa Mountain Properties; former county planning director; member of the 1997 American Leadership Forum; and a fourth-generation Wallowa Countian with grandchildren living here.

The fact that Daggett introduced the Wallowa County discussion with a Harvard study underlines the extent of the issue.

Officials agree that solutions to housing problems must be found at the city and



county level and supported at the state and federal level. Portland’s solutions to the shortage of rentals will not suit Wallowa County.

“One thing you’ll learn as you start making your calls looking for solutions is that if someone tells you they have the solution, hang up,” said Jim Long, Affordable Housing Manager for Bend. “There is not a single solution. You have to try everything.”

Bend, the fifth-largest population center in Oregon, is probably 10 years ahead of other smaller Oregon cities with regard to tackling complex housing issues because of the Bend Boom, Long said.

“Our population is nearly twice what it was 12 years ago,” Long said. “We grew from 50,000 to around 90,000.”

Although there are significant differences between Bend and Wallowa County with regard to population size and housing market, those differences may be more a matter of scale than particular.

Wallowa County is dealing with a housing shortage sufficient that employers have difficulty filling positions because applicants cannot find housing.

Bend’s experience highlights key steps that Wallowa County has yet to take. “You need to have a target,” Long said. “Your county and cities might have housing needs analysis studies to look at.”

They don’t.

No city in Wallowa County is large enough to have commissioned a “housing needs analysis.”

All the cities had a review of their zoning from 6 to 20

years back. That told the cities and county whether they had sufficient buildable land within standard zones. Most had plenty of land available. Enterprise, with six apartment complexes accepting HUD qualified renters, is considered saturated with low-income housing.

There are also plenty of lots available for single-family dwellings. More than three subdivisions accounting for more than 50 lots are in development in Enterprise, and another 40 lots are available in Joseph and at Wallowa Lake.

Although the city of Wallowa has no new subdivisions, there are buildable lots available. It’s important to note that when one talks about a subdivision in Wallowa County, it’s generally not a ready-made “just add owners” 30-home development.

“The subdivisions that we see built in Wallowa County are the kind where the owner does all the improvements, and then people buy the lots and build their own homes through local contractors,” said Enterprise City Administrator Michele Young. “There’s no developer that will build a pre-built home subdivision in our county. In a little community like ours, a six-lot subdivision is a lot, but a big developer wouldn’t touch anything that small.”

According to the 2016 Harvard State of the Nation’s Housing report, the typical American homeowner household has annual income of \$70,800. The typical renter household income is \$25,000 to \$37,900.

As of the 2010 census, the median income for a household in Wallowa County was \$32,129, less than half the “typical homeowner household.”

The average cost for construction in the county is \$140 per square foot, plus the cost of the lot (\$30,000 per buildable lot in Wallowa and up to \$60,000 in Enterprise and Joseph). The average new home costs \$250,000.

The reality for all of America and for Wallowa County as well is needs have changed and the focus is on smaller single-family dwellings.

Existing zoning regulations may be the obstacles preventing more creative housing.

WALLOWA COUNTY FAIR

Having a Ball with 4-H and All

Enjoy a Meal at Our Food Booth!

Schedule of Selected Events

SAT. AUGUST 5
► 9am - 4-H Dog Show

SUN-TUES AUGUST 6-8
► 8am - 4-H Horse Show

MON. AUGUST 7
► 4-H Exhibits to Cloverleaf
► Open Class Non-Perishable to Cloverleaf

TUES. AUGUST 8
► Open Class Perishable to Cloverleaf

WED.-SAT. AUGUST 9-12
► 10am - Cloverleaf Hall Opens

WED. AUGUST 9
► 2pm 4-H/FFA Livestock Entries

THURS. AUGUST 10
► Benny Beaver Day

THURS.-FRI. AUGUST 10-11
► 8:30am - 4-H/FFA Livestock Show
► 7pm - 4-H/FFA Grand Champion Classes

FRI. AUGUST 11
► 4pm - “Bessie Bingo”

SAT. AUGUST 12
► 8am - Small Animal Show
► 10am - Pee Wee Showmanship
► 11am - Games on the Grass & Balloon Scramble

4-H/FFA LIVESTOCK SALE 6PM

FREE ADMISSION

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THE REACTIONS

WALLOWA COUNTY ALUMNI DANCE

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8 pm - 11 pm
Joseph Community Center
Admission - \$8 per person
Must be 21or older
Bar by Leo of El Bajio

COME DANCE THE NIGHT AWAY OR JUST SIT AND LISTEN

PLAY THOSE TUNES OF 50 YEARS AGO