

# Residents urge Joseph council to steady the ship

By Steve Tool

Wallowa County Chieftain

Citizens of Joseph are beginning to wonder if anyone is steering the municipal ship.

During the city council meeting Sept. 7, Gary Bathseider suggested that the city hire an administrator because of the recent DEQ fines for water treatment infractions.

“With all these things happening, it doesn’t seem like we have a functional city right now ... I’d like to see what it would entail to make that happen.”

He also suggested raising the city’s water rates to pay for an administrator and fix other problems.

“Somehow, we have to get back on track,” he said.

His viewers were echoed by

a much subdued Raider Heck, who had been recently sung down from commenting on the performance of Joseph Mayor Dennis Sands by a rousing audience version of “My Country ‘tis of Thee.”

Heck suggested that the city take a hard look at what the status quo had brought the city over the past eight or nine years.

“It’s a system that worked in the ‘70s and ‘60s but doesn’t work today,” He said. “Judging by the mess that the city is in through many different departments, it should become obvious.”

Heck said that one or two grants should pay for any additional costs for the city to hire a business administrator.

“The number of people

who’ve been offered jobs and haven’t shown up should tell you they’re not going to come to work for this mess,” he said. “They’re not going to answer to this kangaroo council.”

He noted that other cities worried about expansion, new homes and where to put people, but that after 18 months, the council still hadn’t completed the work of a zoning ordinance review task force.

“There’s a leadership problem,” he said. “There needs to be a single individual in charge of this city that every staff member answers to that answers to the council.”

Since the comments were presented during the comments phase at the beginning of the meeting, the council was not obligated to respond.

## Support sought for library plan

Wallowa Valley Library Foundation board members Kirsten Rolha and Kay Sawin addressed the council on the subject of creating a county-wide library services tax district. The district would also include the Joseph, Wallowa and Enterprise city libraries while preserving the child and shut-in services previously offered by the county library, which were severely curtailed due to a lack of funding.

In order for the proposed library services district to appear on the May 2018 ballot, the paperwork and citizen signatures would be required to be in the county clerk’s office by Nov. 6. The foundation

asked the council to vote on a resolution that would define the boundaries of a proposed library district.

Sawin said that the city would be included in the district if Joseph adopted the resolution. Council member Pearl Sturm asked that if the county was cutting off library services to the homebound, why not keep the service district strictly for those expenses? Sawin replied the county library did much more than that with offering after-school children’s activities, pre-school story hours and even deliveries to daycare centers.

In response to a question from council member Teresa Sajonia, Sawin said that the city would no longer have to use its tax dollars to fund

the library if the district levy passed, although she hoped the city would let the library district use the current building.

Council member Rodd Clark said he thought the council should vote for the inclusion of Joseph in the levy so that its citizens could decide if they wanted a library.

Sawin said if the May election results were in favor of the district, Joseph would be included whether the city as a whole voted for the levy or not.

Sajonia moved approval of Joseph’s inclusion in the library district resolution while Sturm seconded. The council approved the motion unanimously.

The regularly scheduled council meeting for next month is Oct. 12.

# Lower bail allowed for Enterprise man charged with sex crimes

By Steve Tool

Wallowa County Chieftain

Tye G. Pieper, 27, Enterprise, appeared in Wallowa County District Court through a video link with the Umatilla County Jail for a preliminary hearing on charges of four counts of using a child in display of sexually explicit conduct, six counts of encouraging child sexual abuse in the second degree and a single count of luring a minor, all felonies.

Pieper sat huddled against the wall of the jail with his arms folded tightly around him through most of the proceedings. His attorney, Rick Dall, asked that Pieper’s bail be lowered from the state minimum of \$50,000.

Dall argued that the bail was too high for his client’s financial circumstances. He added that the Pieper’s mother was prepared to act as a third party release for her son as her home was in a rural area that had no phone, Internet or access to minors.

Dall also said his client suffered from mental issues and that being jailed posed a significant burden to his client and argued he was not a danger to the community.

Judge Thomas Powers asked if Pieper had a previous criminal history. Deputy DA Rebecca Frolander said she had found previous convictions of harassment, resisting arrest, menacing and that he had also failed to appear for court, although he was not prosecuted for the last offense.

Frolander pointed out the seriousness of the alleged crimes, four of which were Measure 11 offenses.

She also noted that during a recorded Sept. 9 conversation from the jail, Pieper told his mother that if he’d had two minutes, he could have wiped the computer clean, and when his mother said he would not be allowed near a

## COURT BEAT

computer he said:

“To hell with them. They can kiss my ass, and don’t worry about it.”

When his mother said it would be part of his release agreement, he said he would have someone take him to a social media place where he could use a private server or satellite server and hack into the system. Because of the conversation and the seriousness of the crimes, Frolander said the state opposed the proposed release.

Powers said he would not support a conditional release, but would entertain release upon a prescribed amount of bail. Dall replied that Pieper’s mother could not pony up a significant amount of bail.

Powers said he thought the defendant a flight risk because of the seriousness of the crime, the amount of jail time involved and the conversation Frolander mentioned and Pieper’s criminal record.

“I am going to stick with the mandatory minimum, \$50,000 bail,” Powers said. He added the state would accept \$5,000 as bond.

He also told Dall that if he supplied additional information about the family’s financial circumstances and the ability to pay, the court would entertain a new motion to reduce the bail.

At that point, Pieper, who had attempted to interrupt Powers twice, said that the jail conversation was essentially a psychotic episode and he would obey the rules if released. Powers replied it would be taken into consideration if another release hearing took place.

## Greenwell pleads guilty

Eric Greenwell, 31, Joseph, pleaded guilty to

giving false liability insurance to a police officer stemming from a July 29 incident. The DA’s office dropped the original Class A misdemeanor down to a Class A violation. According to testimony, the officer ran a check on Greenwell, which indicated he hadn’t had liability insurance since 2010. Greenwell denied he’d given the officer false information. Greenwell disputed the officer’s statement but did not change his plea.

Judge Thomas Powers wasn’t satisfied with the minimum \$435 that Deputy DA Becky Frolander asked for and increased the fine to \$750 because of the false information initially given to the police.

## Rogers case will go to trial

Laura Rogers, 33, appeared before Powers on two cases that included charges of felon in possession of a firearm, delivery of methamphetamine, delivery of methamphetamine within 1,000 feet of a school and possession of methamphetamine — all felonies — and four counts of endangering the welfare of a minor.

Rogers’ attorney Rick Dall told the court his client was ready to accept a plea deal that included a global offer on both cases. Later, while Powers advised her of her rights, Rogers told the judge she hadn’t had a chance to thoroughly review the plea agreement and was unhappy with Dall’s efforts on her behalf.

A surprised Powers said he couldn’t take a guilty plea after Rogers’ statements. DA Mona Williams said that the offer from her office that would have kept Rogers from serving prison time was revoked. The cases will go to trial.

## LIBRARY

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the ballot is a certified resolution from each city and the county saying they are willing to allow their citizens to vote on the issue. Metz has been in front of three of the four city councils.

The City of Joseph and the county have already indicated that they will sign a resolution and answers from Enterprise, Lostine and Wallowa are pending. Given the Nov. 6 deadline to have all the moving parts (petitions, resolutions, fees, feasibility statement and more), those answers must be received soon. If resolutions from those cities are not received, members of those cities will have no vote and will receive no direct benefit should the district be approved.

A district is essentially a new unit of government, Metz explained. There are three questions on the ballot: Should there be a district that encompasses these boundaries? Will you approve this tax rate? And then, voters elect their board.

Under the proposed operating plan (staffing, collections,



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— Ruth Metz  
feasibility consultant

salaries and possibly utilities), should Lostine find space in a building for a library, the district would provide the librarian for the open hours.

Another benefit to cities is that money they are currently channeling to library operations can be used on other projects on their “to do” list, Metz said.

Metz’s interviews and research have led her to believe that the libraries county-wide were at a crossroads.

“I think you’re at the tipping point,” Metz said. “Resources are being pinched and there is no guarantee that the situation that impacted the county

library won’t affect city libraries. It’s happened to other libraries in Oregon.”

Nine other Oregon counties have created special districts to save their libraries, she said.

“You have the opportunity to be the Phoenix rising,” Metz said. “Public libraries are anchors for our communities. We all know we have a lot of challenges in our lives and libraries help people come to terms with this. They are more important than ever.”

Public meetings will be arranged to address all questions after the ballot measure is written.

## FESTIVAL

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shops, and we want people to be eating at restaurants and at the Joseph Center.”

He added that events such as the En Plein Air competition, last year’s added events such as the Youth Art Showcase and the Ruby Peak Film Festival all contribute to the festival’s appeal. Focused advertising and the fact the festival is a juried show also played a role, according to Costello.

“By requiring artists to jury in, we’ve stepped up the quality of the art that comes in, and people are beginning to see this as a premiere Pacific Northwest juried art show,” he said. “We’re now the largest art show in eastern Oregon, so premiere artists are wanting to get their art into the show, and we’re very grateful for that.”

Costello said that although

the show mainly features artists from the Pacific Northwest, artists from as far away as Kansas and the Great Lakes area also participated. He added that the pieces are juried by five to seven artists who do not participate in the show, thereby insuring impartiality.

Costello said that the number of pieces sold at this year’s festival indicate it’s one of the show’s better years for art sales. Thanks to generous sponsors, this year’s artists also won \$5,400 in prize money.

The director said the 2018 festival may have a new wrinkle or two, but he likes what the festival currently offers.

“We’re going to keep doing

what we have been doing. I think we have a formula that works,” Costello said.

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