

Proposed library district an investment in our future

Libraries provide a foundation for all communities, but especially for small rural communities like Wallowa County. While many people think of libraries nostalgically, remembering a time when all they could do was check out a book, libraries today do so much more and are capable of growing with the needs of their communities.

It is time to consider the growth of the libraries of Wallowa County. The best way to do this is by voting for the proposed library district, which will be on your ballot in May, and by encouraging your friends and neighbors to do the same.

The main opposition argument to creating a library district is the proposed 65-cent tax per thousand of dollars on the assessed value of your home. To be clear, the assessed value is not the price you get when you sell your home. It could easily be 50K less.

For example, even if you sell your home for 150K, the assessed value may be 100K. This means under the proposed tax, you would pay \$65 per year, which comes to only \$5.42 per month, per household. To calculate your own household's yearly tax, multiply .65 by the assessed value of your home, then divide by 1,000. Divide that number by 12 to get the monthly cost.

There is a lot that \$5.42 a month can do for you, your family and friends and your community.

First, the operating hours of every single library in the county will increase. Between the County Library and the libraries at Enterprise, Imnaha, Joseph, Troy and Wallowa, there are only 96 operating hours per week, with very limited evening and weekend hours. With the district in place, that number is proposed to go up to 174, nearly double.

Next, services and programs will increase. Our libraries have an incredible range of services and programs, and with the increase of hours and personnel, they will only get better.

One such program is the addition of community classes for things such as learning new technology like the Kindle or iPad.

Without a library district, however, all current county library services will end. The two most well-known services are the Deliver-Me-A-Book program (for seniors, the homebound and daycares) and the Training Wheels program for children, which has 11 different sub-programs, such as children's storytimes, newborn baby book bags, free children's books and the Read 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten challenge.

Without a library district, people who live in one city will no longer be able to go to another city's library without paying a substantial fee for services and activities.

In addition to maintaining and increasing current services and programs, the library district will change the way you view libraries. Libraries are not simply a place for children's storytimes, for the booklover to check out the newest book in a series or for a community member without a computer to use the Internet.

With the new district in place, the library will be better able to serve additional populations, such as creating spaces and activities for teenagers and adults who don't currently utilize the library. It is an investment in the community, in the future of our children and in our own personal lives.

If you are interested in volunteering or otherwise helping create a successful library district, please visit, like, follow and share our Facebook page Wallowa County Citizens to Save the Library. Information will be posted for volunteer opportunities.

In the meantime, please discuss the possibility of a library district and what it can do for our county with your family, friends and neighbors. When we help one, we help all.

Kirsten Rohla of Joseph serves on the board of the Wallowa Valley Library Foundation.



GUEST COLUMN

Kirsten Rohla



Football ain't what it used to be

Baseball was my first love, but by high school it was football. I was not a "natural," but I played in hundreds of practices and games and read hundreds of books and magazines looking to improve my game.

I've been to only a handful of college games since, and only one pro game. But I have watched decades of local high school football.

When my son Matt was a senior at Joseph in 1992, they brought former pro player and coach Leonard Younce in to energize a failing program. Some will remember Leonard's smiling face at Safeway or on the golf course or over a bridge table with his wife, Zel.

A few will remember a summer Forest Service work camp at Billy Meadows for local students in the early '70s. Bob Palmer at USFS helped arrange that camp and Elizabeth Oliver — before her teaching days — was the girls counselor in what was probably a landmark co-ed work camp. Most didn't know — and Leonard never advertised — that he had played football at Oregon State and for the New York Giants.

Leonard took over a Joseph team that had won one or two games the previous year, taught fundamentals and provided inspiration, and Joseph went on to win six and lose a close one to powerful arch-rival Enterprise.

For me, it also opened the door to Len's football past. We talked. He said more than once that he and his Giant teammates of the '40s could play with and beat modern pro teams with one rule change — no free substitution.

"Those 300 pound linemen wouldn't make it through a half if they had to play



MAIN STREET

Rich Wandschneider

both ways," said Younce, who had been a 215-pound offensive guard, defensive linebacker, place kicker and punter and could still hurt your hand with a handshake at 75.

My flagging interest in pro football tumbled, and about 10 years ago, I wrote a piece for a magazine quoting Len and chronicling my own football career, from 165-pound high school center to 190-pound college center and linebacker, from helmets without face guards to college practices that taught us to use the helmet as a weapon.

"Spear" blocking and tackling, they called it, before it was outlawed. I wrote that football had become a game of size, specialization and using equipment — helmets especially — as weapons.

The magazine piece traveled and landed with a guy named Marcus Koch, who had played special teams in the NFL for a few years and was then a players' rep. He wrote to say that I didn't know the half of it, that things were about to explode with helmets and concussions, and that the only way to make football safe would be to follow Leonard Younce — make players stay on the field both ways. Oh — he added — "leather helmets would be safer too."

I started following and liking eight-man football watching Terry Crenshaw's teams in Wallowa, when Enterprise and Joseph were still playing 11-man. It

occurred to me then that eight-man, with a vigorous junior varsity program, should be extended to bigger schools.

In order to play 11-man and field a JV program, you need enough student body to turn out 40 plus for football every year — the 100-pound freshmen should not be banging with 200 pounders, even in practice.

Although there are a few 200-plus pound players, eight-man football rewards speed, quickness and execution. And overall athleticism: most of the kids play offense and defense, and stay in for the kickoffs.

You cannot legislate against all danger, but I applaud the rules against spearing and refs for calling it. I am also convinced that young kids should not play tackle football — even in my day we played flag in junior high. The leading neurologist on the current concussion studies say that it's all dangerous, but kids under 14 just should not play tackle football.

Me? I'm back on the football sidelines, watching my grandson and his teammates at Joseph. It's been a disappointing season — injuries, freak plays, missed opportunities and being underweight on the line have conspired to rob them of wins. But a few good tackles and touchdown catches have got my grandson in love with the game.

And I've come to think that the eight-man football that he loves is more like the game I played and loved 60 years ago, even the game Leonard Younce played 20 years before that, than it is the college, pro or big high school football of today.

Rich Wandschneider lives in Joseph and writes a monthly column for the Chieftain.

The joy of discovering 'the system'

It was disappointing to hear last week that Lostine had opted out of the proposed library district boundary. The council voted 3-2 against the idea after surveying its citizens.

A number of folks called the Chieftain to express dismay and wondering what could be done to reverse the vote.

The short answer, of course, is not much.

The council is a duly elected body, and as long as they follow state law as it applies to meetings and votes, it is their call.

We had received word that Lostine was planning to take its vote in a closed session, which we believe would have been a violation of state law. The meeting was held in open session.

It amazes me how little is known about the work of city councils or county commissions. Unless and until there's an overwhelming reason to engage, most folks don't even know they exist, which is a sad commentary and frustrating to local elected officials.

Knowing the system is the first rule of getting things done. The government may belong to the people, the system belongs to the elected officials.



WAHL TO WALL

Paul Wahl

Since the discussions between the library foundation and the cities has begun, I have been asked several dozens times, "can they do that?"

It began when the county voted to close the county library, eventually agreeing to keep it open on a scaled-down basis. There's significant power within the system.

Since the cities are being asked to partner with the proposed library district, it is essential that councils in their fiduciary rolls take a close look at all aspects.

Lostine examined the proposal and turned it down.

Enterprise will vote on the matter Wednesday night.

HEADING INTO La Grande Saturday, we came across a cattle drive with hundreds of cows crossing the highway. It was a scene right out of the movies for most people who aren't ranchers, every-

day experience for those who are.

We were fourth in a line of cars patiently waiting as drovers pushed the cattle across the road into a holding area. Individuals had been posted at both ends of the drive to keep motorists informed.

A few minutes had gone by when a car pulled up behind us, and you could see the driver waving his arms and beating the steering wheel in disgust at being delayed. He took the ditch on the right and drove right up to the moving cattle and made like he's going to plow through.

One of the cowboys on the scene approached him and informed him a break was coming and cars would be let through shortly, but that wasn't enough for this idiot. He eventually pushed right on through the herd while the rest of us watched in disbelief.

I have no idea who this driver was or his motives for being so obnoxious. Clearly, there are aspects of rural living that require occasional adjustments. Maybe he was a doctor rushing to a hospital to perform emergency surgery. Maybe not.

We never caught up with the vehicle after we were let through. That's probably a good thing.

Divide Camp deserves our support

There has been a thread on Facebook regarding Divide Camp. It has become somewhat nasty in its tone.

There was a slight inaccuracy in a recent Chieftain article about the upcoming NRA banquet that sparked the discussions. From there, it has snowballed to an attack on this very special local nonprofit. Many have questioned its mission, why the name "divide" (named after location in the Wallows) and why it only serves post-9/11 veterans.

It would behoove these people to do the research on Divide Camp. Read the mission statement. Contact the director, Julie Wheeler, directly and ask questions. I am passionate about what the camp

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does for our veterans. It serves men and women from all over the country, not just local vets. It serves as a way for these young men and women to find some peace of mind and healing through the power of Nature.

Read the testimonies on the website as to their experiences after a stay at the camp.

There are many nonprofits across this country that serve veterans of all types ... no matter the rank or years served. Again, do the research. Find that organization that

has been set up to fit your criteria. Donate to them, help them in a way possible with your time and energy.

Stop complaining and judging Divide Camp if you truly do not know what their mission is and how they serve. Better yet, volunteer. It is a total volunteer organization, no paid employees whatsoever.

Christina Kecht
Joseph

Editor's note: The story said that NRA had donated \$40K, meaning over a period of years and not in the past year. That is an accumulative total. Obviously a donation of that size would have received considerably more attention. NRA donated a small amount this year.

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