

CON

Library district proposal is too big

In a few weeks, we will receive ballots for the May 15 election. Ballot Measure 32-41, if approved, forms a library district with a permanent tax rate of 65 cents per thousand of assessed value.

Despite rumors, our city libraries will not be closing if this doesn't pass. They are fine financially. After speaking to library board members and city officials from all three libraries, one member expressed anger that the study commissioned by the library foundation said they were "struggling." It simply is not true.

This district levy would raise \$169,000 more in the first year than the total cost to run all three city libraries and the county library combined. The budget for the district climbs from \$490K to \$535K in three years and continues to grow by as much as 3 percent every year due to rising assessed property values.

The district tax would be an immediate and permanent raise on everyone's property tax bill. A property with an assessed value of \$200,000 would pay an addi-



GUEST EDITORIAL

Rebecca Wolfe

tional \$130 in taxes.

A statement in the March 28 edition of the Chieftain has a quote which appears to refer to the rural residents of the county "... a no vote ... means we are choosing which people have access." In fact, although they state on the foundation website that rural residents will have to pay \$70 for a library card, the cost is much cheaper than the tax increase. For our taxes, more than 12 times cheaper. Rural residents are disproportionately affected by this huge tax proposal.

The proposed district will be the largest tax bite on our property tax bill after schools, the hospital and the county fund. Our cities and the county must provide and pay for the buildings, maintenance, utilities and insurances.

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MEASURE 32-41 Permanent Tax Rate for Library District

Shall District be authorized to impose \$0.65 per \$1,000 assessed value as a permanent rate beginning July 1, 2018?

If approved, this measure would form the Wallowa County Library District as an independent, public County library service district with a permanent rate dedicated to library services, programs, and materials, effective July 1, 2018. The district would have the powers granted to library districts and public libraries under state and local laws. An elected five-member, at-large, District Board would serve as the governing board of the district to provide oversight and accountability. The permanent and dedicated funding source for library services would be up to \$0.65 per \$1,000 assessed value. The Library District will include all of Wallowa County except the city of Lostine.

Formation of a Library District would do the following:

- Increase library service hours;
- Retain books, summer reading, student and jobseekers support services, and outreach to children and senior citizens;
- Provide a permanent and dedicated funding source for library services; up to \$0.65 per \$1,000 assessed value

In the first year of imposition, the proposed rate would raise approximately \$490,313.

PRO

Healthy libraries good for everyone

"I have often thought that nothing would do more extensive good at small expense than the establishment of a small circulating library in every county, to consist of a few well-chosen books, to be lent to the people of the county under regulations as would secure their return in due time."

— Thomas Jefferson in a letter to John Wyche, 1809.

I certainly appreciate Thomas Jefferson's vision of library and I think it informs my own vision. I think of a place that contains materials for reading, viewing, listening, studying, referencing or borrowing and a place that is accessible to a defined community.

When I think of "defined community", I think of the unique qualities that define Wallowa County — our "secret sauce." As a community, we share diverse characteristics but we pull together at times of need, in times of celebration, in times of support, in times to be social and in times to share common goals. Although we may approach situations from different perspectives, it almost feels like library and community are joined



GUEST EDITORIAL

Chantay Jett

at the hip.

Public libraries are often overlooked by the relatively recent surge of eBooks, online periodicals, blogs, YouTube and all things your favorite search engine can procure for the inquiring mind.

However, public libraries can be vibrant and serve as multipurpose community gathering centers.

According to Forbes, more than half of young adults and seniors living in poverty in the United States used public libraries to access the Internet to find work, apply to colleges, learn about health and wellness treatments and secure benefits.

Evidence indicates that when people can access a library and use a computer, they develop digital skills, connect with family and friends, educate themselves and participate in a variety of other

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Making a silk purse out of Facebook

If you aren't a regular visitor to our Facebook page, I encourage you to check it out.

We did something unique last week — at least for us — and it was wildly popular. We created a moderated discussion thread.

It actually began on Thursday with "Throwback Thursday," asking Facebook visitors to recall some of things Wallowa County used to have (bowling alley, penny candy, creamery and such). Around 8,500 readers saw the post, another 125 or so posted 225 responses.

Friday we used "Facing Reality Friday" to talk about what of those things will never be coming back, what things could be brought back with some effort and what things are still here in forms other than they took 20 years ago.

Both sessions were predominantly upbeat and civil. I would especially encourage our community leaders to take a look at the posts. I think they would find it extremely helpful as background whenever the future of Wallowa County is discussed.



WAHL TO WALL

Paul Wahl

For years, I have been totally disgusted by most of the so-called discussion posted on Facebook. The insanity level escalates instantly and before you know it, you've got a crowd mentality going. It hardly ever results in anything positive.

Since shutting down our Facebook presence was not an option, I determined there had to be a better way. Last week was an experiment, but my thinking is we will do this again this coming Thursday and Friday with different topics and ideas.

The goal is two-fold. First, to make a silk purse out of the sow's ear that Facebook has become. Second, to engage folks who have an interest in Wallowa County allowing them to have a voice in determining its future.

Not having a voice — things just happen and we don't get to have input — is among the most common complaints I've heard in the past year. Open and transparent local government is important for everyone, including elected officials.

Without it, those folks tend to rely on a tiny cadre of folks they encounter regularly and who generally agree with them on every topic. What's worse, if average citizens get fed up with the behavior of elected officials, the next election no one stands up to run against them. Their conclusion is "well, I must be doing a great job."

Speaking from experience in this realm, I believe we do our best work when we have someone shouting in our ear and banging the counter at least once a week. Anyone who's short of a person of that type in their life, call me. I'll share some of mine!

The best thing you can do for yourself and your community is to become informed. Yeah it takes time commitment that most people believe they simply don't have. But an influencer always seeks information. Then make sure it's truth before you disseminate it. That's my other big pet peeve with most of what's on Facebook. It's made up without a shred of fact behind it.

If you want to be part of the fun, stop by facebook.com/Wallowa this week.



"HEY, DON'T FORGET TAX DAY IS ALMOST HERE! HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO FUNCTION IF YOU DON'T DO YOUR FAIR SHARE?!"

Nice to go, great to come back

I left our beautiful county for a couple of trips this winter to thaw out, one to Florida and one to Arizona. Had a great time on both trips but couldn't wait to get back.

Big cities are the loneliest places in the world. You're surrounded by all kinds of people, all unapproachable. Everyone is in a rush or have their noses stuck in their cell phone.

In an airport you have a lot of time to kill but no one to talk with although surrounded by people. In large parking lots, you avoid most of the people you see and escape to the safety of your car as quickly as possible.

Diversity is highly overrated. In Dallas/Ft Worth airport, I saw every ethnic group possible, and they all seemed to have a chip on their shoulder toward any other ethnic group, and I don't think it was me.

Then you have the diversity within ethnic groups. Most people are OK, but then you have the nuts that have to have a service animal because they are so neurotic they can't function without it. I don't mean seeing-eye dogs. The fact that this is a big problem for the airlines and anyone seated next to them is of no concern to these weak-minded inconsiderate idiots.

If they are so neurotic they can't



OPEN RANGE

Barrie Qualle

fly without their service peacock, they should stay at home or be institutionalized. When did the population of this country become so weak minded and tolerant of nuts?

Here's something that is underrated. Adversity. That may be the wrong word. The old expression "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger" is true to a degree. The current population has had it pretty easy.

In cities like Bend, you have derelicts working corners for drug or booze money. One guy has been on the same corner for three years with a gas can and a sign wanting you to give him gas money. He is still out of gas today.

The kids that were teenagers when I was all worked in the summer. Most of it was hard work in the fields harvesting fruit. The money was good in that a kid that worked hard could make as much as an adult.

You were paid 12 to 15 cents a box

to pick peaches, four cents a pound to pick cherries or you could work for one dollar to a dollar and a quarter to swamp peaches or prop trees. When we got home after work, we were all delighted just to be home and not at work in a humid orchard when it was 100 degrees.

Having nothing you had to do was a luxury. Piece work really teaches a kid a work ethic and gave all of us a sense of pride since, through hard work, we could make about \$500 in the summer and buy our own school clothes.

We learned responsibility working outside the family and set our own alarms and found a way to the job. A lot of us worked like a man, and if harvest was late, opening of school was postponed till harvest was done.

None of us were forever emotionally scarred for life by the experience. In fact it was a huge part of our education. Another bonus was we rarely got into trouble and realized we didn't want to have to do that kind of work the rest of our lives. I don't think kids have changed, parents and schools have.

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