

Fire: Pipe-thawing project caused housefire



Ellen Morris Bishop

Enterprise volunteer firefighter Gary Gassett (right) prepares to help fight the fire at 107 Greenwood in Enterprise Thursday night, while Zane Anderson checks to make sure that his SCBA (self-contained breathing apparatus) is working properly.

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Both departments responded because volunteer firefighters are a vanishing breed in 21st century rural America. “We just can’t do it on our own anymore,” Karvoski said. “We don’t have the number of volunteers we need to be sure there’s an adequate number of firefighters who can respond when the call comes. We depend on mutual automatic aid.” So any fire in Wallowa County will trigger a response from two or even all three departments.

“The lack of volunteer firefighters is a national epidemic,” Karvoski said. Karvoski has followed the travails of rural volunteer fire departments across the U.S. for several years. “In Pennsylvania,” he said, “within the last decade, the number of volunteer firefighters has dropped by about 100,000.”

“In the last decade Enterprise has had between 16 and 26 firefighters,” Karvoski said. “Right now we are back at 22. We have

great volunteers, but people have to put their families first. So we tend to lose volunteer firefighters when families grow.”

While Enterprise’s equipment is in good shape, including two fire engines purchased in 1998, Karvoski is hoping that FEMA will come through with a \$350,000 grant. The funds would allow the department to purchase a new tender truck and replace their 30-year-old “extraction” equipment, AKA Jaws of Life. “If we get the grant, the city would have to provide a five percent matching grant,” Karvoski said. “But I think they can afford that.”

Hamilton is happy that the volunteers came to her aid so quickly, saving her house. The back wall is black, parts of the bathroom are scorched, the stairway to the second floor sustained damage and the house has a very smoky bouquet. But despite the damage, said Hamilton, “I am very fortunate that all these men cared so much.”

Council: Joseph rejects variance by unanimous vote

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Ginsel added that when the city came out to the site for a sewer and water question, it was noted that the setback was not compliant with the permit, which was why the variance was requested. He also said rectifying the problem would be a burden to the Saturnos, and he couldn’t see where it was harming anyone.

“We’re just hoping we can get this variance and move forward,” Ginsel said.

An employee of Lowell Lewis, the contractor, also testified that Lewis said he asked then city recorder, Sandra Patterson for the zone permit, and she said she didn’t have it. The employee said that Lewis staked out the foundation where it made the most sense to him and the ranch manager previous to Ginsel had approved it.

One audience member from Enterprise spoke in favor of the variance, saying the Saturnos were trying to provide valuable renting units in the city.

Fierce public opposition was then aired by seven residents in the area. Complaints ranged from concern that the Saturno parties hadn’t acted in good faith from the start, the smell of the mobile home and accusations that on-site workers had willfully driven equipment over and damaged adjacent properties and even attempted to illegally tap into a neighbor’s sewer line, which resulted in filing an incident report and the county issuing a cease and desist order. Also concerning for opponents of the variance was the restricted access for Emergency Services.

Monte Zollman, who lives next door, wondered why the contractor didn’t bother to find out the setbacks before he poured the foundation.



Steve Tool/Chieftain

Joseph City Council fireworks — An employee of contractor, Lowell Lewis, Doug Saturno Ranch manager, Bruce Ginsel, and attorney Rahn Hostetter listen to criticism and angry letters from Joseph citizens at a March 7 council meeting. Saturno requested a variance for a home that he placed on a lot he owns in Joseph. The city rejected the variance by unanimous vote.

He also said the original permit designates a new home and that the mobile home was clearly used and in poor a condition. He added that he knew of several land use laws that were broken and had provided explanations and photos to the city.

More than one person noted that the city does not allow for variances if the hardship is self-imposed. Also that the mobile home dimensions are larger than those applied for on the permit. Mayor Sajonia also read a number of letters in opposition.

Hostetter had nothing to add during the opportunity for rebuttal but Ginsel said that he wasn’t convinced that fire truck access was impeded and that the sewer line incident wasn’t germane to the hearing. He added that the mobile home would get remodeled. Lewis’s employee said the neighbor’s sewer wasn’t broken and the fire truck access was legal on the property.

Mayor Sajonia said that she noted the zoning permit cited a new home, which the

present mobile home was not. Also that the home did not match the square footage listed on the permit and the actual size of the lot also differed from the permit.

Addressing the applicants, Mayor Sajonia said, “this is a blatant question here. Is this an ‘ask for forgiveness’ issue? It does come across this way.”

Ginsel said they were asking for forgiveness, but it wasn’t pre-planned. He said he wasn’t aware of the setback issue and that Saturno wasn’t previously aware of the foundation problem.

“It happened,” he said. “We found out it was wrong, and we can’t change it.”

In response to a question from Pearl Sturm about the sewer line incident, city recorder Belinda Buswell testified that city worker Dennis Welch went to investigate after a complaint. He found that the contractor on site had dug a trench from the mobile home to the Zollman property and had damaged the line. Buswell went out to the site and took pictures around the property and asked how the home was

put there as it did not meet setback requirements. She returned to the office to file an incident report. She also mentioned that while talking to Ginsel of the incident, she noted that the Saturnos had not filed paperwork.” she asked. “Would you please present it to me?”

Ginsel only possessed the zoning permit.

The applicants failed to convince the mayor or the rest of the council as to the purity of their motives. After reading the requirements to issue a variance, the council wasted no time in shooting down the variance by unanimous vote.

In other council news:

Despite having received the most write-in votes in the November 2018 election for a council seat position, Joseph resident Garrick Asplund didn’t receive a single vote from council members for either of two open seats on the council. The body voted unanimously to place Kathy Zacharias and Lisa Collier to the seats. Collier is the daughter-in-law of council member Tanya Collier.

The council voted unanimously to spend about \$80,000 to purchase a software program to consolidate utility billing. The program also does payroll, direct deposit, legal consulting and will consolidate the city’s entire budget. The cost includes training for city employees.

The council members also unanimously approved an OLCC license for “The Gold Room,” a restaurant to be located at 100 N. Main St.

Sajonia also introduced newly hired city administrator, Larry Braden.



Ellen M Bishop

Rachael Nutter talks with a customer about the origin of this table at the center of the restaurant that is made from the long boards of a local cattle chute.

Restaurant: ‘Made from scratch’ is their credo

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held. “I wish they all could talk,” Nutter said. “It’s fun when people come in and say “wow—this plate is just like the one’s my grandmother had.”

Like the china, the tables all have past histories as well. The colorful, chrome-banded dining sets have all seen prior service—one in Lamm’s home. The gleaming dark wooden table near the restaurant’s center was hand-made from the boards of an old cattle chute by Lamm’s husband, Clayton. He also constructed the three “cricket” tables, each of which sequesters a 2-foot-long Steve Arment cricket carving that supports the polished wood table-top. The Blythe Cricket’s dome-like ceiling is made of blue pine sourced from Wallowa. The shingle-siding came from a small mill in Idaho.

Why the name Blythe Cricket? “Blythe” is actually my middle name,” Lamm said. “But it also means ‘happy.’ We want to be happy, and we want our customers to be happy. The Cricket part? Both Lamm and Nutter started using the word “cricket” as a verb when they ran their catering business. “You know, Nutter said, “to cricket means to be really active and get things done. We called ourselves the Cricket Sisters because we were always busy.”

In the future, The Blythe Cricket plans to offer wine, beer and cocktails, as well as possibly music on the patio or inside their spacious restaurant. They may expand their “by reservations only” Italian dinner offerings, which are proving popular as well. Happy and active seems to be their destiny as well as their name.

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SHADOW DAY

THANK YOU

The Rotary Club of Wallowa County wishes to thank the following businesses, agencies, and individuals for their help in making its March 5, 2019 Shadow Day another huge success. Through their cooperative efforts, 57 high school juniors were able to explore a local career in an area of interest.

Schools

Enterprise High School, Joseph Charter School, Wallowa High School

Businesses/Agencies

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Tim Newton • TLC Hair Care • USDA Forest Service • Wallowa County Juvenile Department
• Wallowa County Sheriff/Enterprise Police Department • Wallowa ESD Technology Center
• Wallowa Head Start • Wallowa Memorial Hospital • Wilson Saddlery
Winding Waters Clinic • Winding Waters River Expeditions

Drivers

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John McColgan • Mike & Linda Koloski • Ralph Swinehart • Rich Wandschneider • Sherri Kilgore