



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

M Thrive Organics, the only marijuana dispensary in Wallowa County, is expected to be the sole business affected by the city of Joseph's new 3% tax on marijuana sale.

Use of marijuana tax proceeds up in the air

Joseph has wide latitude on how to use it

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH — The recent voter approval of a 3% tax on marijuana in the city of Joseph leaves some questions to be answered, including just what the proceeds will go toward.

City Administrator Larry Braden said the measure allows several ways it can be spent: on infrastructure, parks, education of the public and city staff, education at the schools if school officials desire it and “enhancing the livability of the community.”

This latter item is quite open for interpretation, Braden said Thursday, Nov. 12.

“It’s pretty general on

the purpose, so the city has the freedom to spend money how it sees fit,” he said. “That could mean sky’s the limit under that language.”

Although the ballot measure 32-004 said the 3% tax will be imposed on “marijuana items,” that only includes consumable items with marijuana such as straight marijuana or marijuana extracts, edibles and tinctures, said Mark Pettinger, a spokesman for the Oregon Liquor Control Commission in Pendleton, which regulates marijuana in the state.

“It applies to anything in which the marijuana flower has been turned into a value-added item,” he said.

The only marijuana dispensary in the county is M Thrive Organics in Joseph. Owner Getty Pollard did not respond to several email requests for comments and employees at the

dispensary said they are not allowed to comment to the media.

The “marijuana items” language brings to mind drug-related paraphernalia, such as pipes and bongs sold at the Peace Pipe, also in Joseph. Owner Sean Flanagan agreed that his products are not covered under OLCC regulation.

“They never have been in the state of Oregon,” he said Thursday.

The tax levy passed on the Nov. 3 ballot with about 73% approval. The City Council had previously approved an ordinance authorizing the tax and designating the previously mentioned uses. State law requires such an ordinance.

“The City Council was adamant about keeping the funds from the tax to benefit the citizens of Joseph,” Joseph Mayor Teresa Sajonia said in October.



Wallowa Valley Health Care Foundation/Screenshot

Wallowa Memorial Hospital CEO Larry Davy speaks during the first virtual Healthy Futures Dinner Auction, which was broadcast online Saturday, Nov. 14, 2020.

Healthy Futures Dinner Auction goes virtual

By **RONALD BOND**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — For the first time in its existence, the 25th annual Healthy Futures Dinner Auction took to an online format when it was held virtually on Saturday, Nov. 14, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

There wasn’t an auction as in years past, but instead a raffle. There also was a message of optimism for the future, one that showed the Wallowa Memorial Hospital in a good financial position and that was full of gratitude to those who had donated more than \$1.35 million to the Wallowa Valley Health Care Foundation during the previous 2½ decades the event had been held.

“It’s amazing as you look back 25 years, the impact this event has had over the years,” Larry Davy, Wallowa Memorial Hospital CEO, said during his pre-taped State of the Hospital address, which was part of the Saturday night event.

Many who spoke praised the efforts of those who raised money through the years and talked about what the funds had helped to bring to the hospital, including new equipment such as a medication dispenser, imaging equipment, a bone-density unit and an ultrasound machine, among others.

“The goal of the foun-

ation is to provide quality health care for Wallowa County,” said Terry Jones, foundation board member.

Many of the purchases have enabled patients to receive care in Wallowa County that they otherwise may not have been able to.

“Your support has made the difference. Over 25 years, giving generously, each and every year had meant the difference between adequate equipment and no equipment at all in some cases, to state of the art equipment that comes with anything you could find in a much larger hospital in an urban or suburban area,” said Stacy Green, Wallowa Valley Health Care Foundation director.

Davy spoke of a hospital in increasingly solid financial shape, noting that in 2014, the hospital had \$19.5 million in mortgage debt.

“As of today the hospital is now under \$4 million on its mortgage...with plans to have that paid off in the next 2-3 years,” Davy said.

Davy also said the hospital had received several high accolades from national companies.

“In 2020, the iVantage company did announce that Wallowa Memorial Hospital for the third time in four years is named as a top 20 critical access hospital in the county with a percentile ranking of 99.7, which put us approximately No. 4 in the

nation,” he said.

The hospital also received a five-star ranking in patient satisfaction from the Centers of Medicare & Medicaid Services, and in employee satisfaction, it was ranked No. 8 as a health care employer and No. 1 for millennial employee satisfaction by Modern Healthcare. The hospital also received a new accreditation from the federal government.

Davy said that in spite of the challenges provided in 2020 and the uncertainty of what lies ahead, he believes the future of the hospital will remain solid.

“Our finest hour is still in front of us, and I think a reminder, we have stood on the shoulders of giants to get to where we are in health care in this community, but also the remainder of the responsibility we have to hand the hospital off to the next generation even better than we found it,” he said.

The COVID-19 pandemic and fallout wasn’t far from minds on Saturday, and a moment was taken as a remembrance for those who had been impacted by the coronavirus.

And rather than an auction, the event posted ways to donate to the foundation, either by mailing a check to WVHCF, P.O. Box 53, Enterprise, OR 97828, or online at <https://wchcd.ejoinme.org/hfda2020>.

IN BRIEF

Joseph Center plans book group meeting Dec. 1

JOSEPH — The first November book for the book group at the Joseph Center for Arts and Culture is “Indian Horse” by Richard Wagamese, to be previewed at 7 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 1.

The book is about Saul Indian Horse, a child when his family retreats into the woods. Among the lakes and cedars, they attempt to reconnect with half-forgotten traditions and hide from the authorities who have been kidnapping Ojibway youths. But when winter approaches, Saul loses everything: His brother, his parents, his beloved grandmother — and then his home itself.

Book group members receive 15% off “Indian Horse,” available for purchase at the Joseph Center

now. Call 541-432-0505 or visit online at <https://joseph.org/book-group/>.

Lostine council meets after skipping October

LOSTINE — The Lostine City Council met for the first time in two months, Thursday, Nov. 5, having skipped the October meeting due to illness, city Recorder Toni Clary said.

At the November meeting, Clary reported Tuesday, Nov. 10, the council agreed to continue to seek a new location for the local post office. The owner of the current building has declined to renew the lease, which expires in August since the owner wants to reclaim use of the property.

Also at the meeting, two residential complaints — filed by the Zimmerman and Lathrop families — were read

and dismissed as unfounded. Clary did not elaborate on the nature of the complaints.

The next regular council meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Dec. 2.

Rotary names Kinzie as Peace Fellow

ENTERPRISE — Seth Kinzie, of Joseph, has just been named as a Rotary Peace Fellow and will study at one of seven Rotary Peace

Centers around the world, according to a press release.

Each year, Rotary International names about 130 Peace Fellows and finances their fellowships.

Kinzie is a pianist, composer, web designer and longtime advocate for peace. His candidacy was sponsored by the Rotary Club of Wallowa County.

Local Rotarian Judy Allen was the head of a two-year-long campaign to have Kinzie named a Peace Fellow.

— Chieftain staff

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