

City mulls Airbnbs, water wells, skate park

Enterprise council urged to ban B&Bs in residential areas

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Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — The future of bed and breakfast establishments, residential water wells and the previously discussed skate park came up as issues the Enterprise City Council plans to deal with in coming months, after discussions Monday, April 12, during the council's regular meeting.

Local resident Stacy Green said she was concerned that more Airbnbs are moving into residential neighborhoods and with them come unknown users of the establishments.

Stacy Green, a 25-year Enterprise resident of Grant Street, submitted a letter to the council expressing concerns over Airbnbs in residential neighborhoods.

"I have become concerned that there are four Airbnbs on my street," she told the council, adding that there are many more in other parts of town.

"My concern is what has happened and what is happening all over the country in communities where Airbnbs are becoming more and more popular," Green said. "I'm not criticizing people



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

The Enterprise City Council met Monday, April 12, 2021, for the first time with its new Police Chief Kevin McQuead, far left, at the table.

who have an Airbnb on their property when they're living there full time. I don't think that's an issue. It's people who are purchasing homes and turning them into full-time Airbnbs and having a revolving door of strangers. There is a host of problems that are well-documented."

Among those are skyrocketing housing prices.

"This week, in Joseph, there was a perfectly average house listed for \$357,000. They had nine showings on Saturday, four offers and it went for \$50,000 above the asking price," Green said.

"We're starting to see that come here. ... When you've got families or young couples, average people cannot afford these. They're becoming out of reach for virtually everyone. If we do not have housing, what happens to our employers?"

She emphasized that she does not represent the Wallowa Valley Health Care Foundation or Wallowa Memorial Hospital, both of which she has ties too. She just represents herself and her husband, Mark.

There's also the issue of safety.

"You feel less safe when there's a house across the street with a revolving door of strangers," she said. "It changes my sense of safety."

"This is not the first complaint I've received," agreed Lacey McQuead, city administrator. "There are a lot of people in different neighborhoods who are upset about the Airbnb issue. ... People who live near Airbnbs don't want their children to play outside because they don't feel like their kids are safe."

"We don't have the

answers," Green said, but asked that the city look into the matter.

However, McQuead said a solution would best come through the Planning Commission, which meets in May, and she'll invite city attorney Wyatt Baum to be present to advise the commission. Councilor Jeff Yanke recommended reaching out to current owners of Airbnbs and asking them to attend the May meeting.

"I will recommend to the Planning Commission that Airbnbs not be allowed in residential neighborhoods; we have enough commercial property downtown," she said. "We are definitely seeing more and more concerns."

During the work session preceding the council meeting, city Public Works Supervisor Ronnie

Neil asked the council to consider an ordinance that would forbid the drilling of any future wells to deliver potable water to residences that have the ability to connect to city water.

"One thing I've discussed with my previous committee is making an ordinance not allowing any potable water inside the city for wells because if they drill a well, they can go off the city system," he said. "We're still maintaining the system, but they're on a well."

He said that the primary motive in such an ordinance would be to continue the flow of revenue into the city's water fund.

"We can't take away people who are already on it, but would be something new that they'd not be allowed to drill a well for potable water inside the city limits," he said. "That's not saying you can't drill a well and put an irrigation system in."

Neil had other suggestions to boost water revenue, such as boosting the \$1,400 connection fee and charging partial-year residents who have their accounts turned off for part of the year.

"We're trying to come up with ways to help out with the budget," he said.

Also during Monday's meeting, Ron Pickens, the alternative high school teacher at Building Healthy Families who has been spearheading pro-

posed changes to the skate park, brought new information and a new plan to the council.

He said that after a Chieftain story on the park, a community member stepped up with a donation of \$51,500. Now, they're looking at a \$60,000 project to totally revamp the skate park that would involve replacing everything there.

With the recent donation, another \$5,000 already pledge by BHF, the project is just \$3,500 short of its goal.

"So you're asking the city for that \$3,500?" McQuead asked.

Pickens said that was his hope.

The council agreed to provide the needed money from the city's Opportunity Fund.

But that leaves the question of what to do with the current ramps at the park. They're 20 years old, but still have much life left in them, Pickens said.

"I'd love to see them moved to Wallowa," he said. "I live in Wallowa and I see a lack of opportunity for the kids there and it breaks my heart that we're not actually doing this project for those kids in Wallowa. I feel like they're so underserved there."

Pickens agreed to take the idea to the city of Wallowa to see if and where the ramps could be set up there.



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Kim Hutchison, president of the local post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, presents new national and Marine Corps flags to World War II and Korean War veteran Lee Cutler on the front porch of Cutler's hom in Joseph on his 96th birthday Thursday, April 8, 2021. The U.S. flag is one that flew over the U.S. Capitol. The presentations were to honor his service and his birthday.

WWII: 'I would go through the Marine Corps again'

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day and said, 'Did you shave this morning?' I said, 'No.' Big mistake," he said. "I was told to shave and I didn't do it. I didn't need to. So he made me get a razor and sat down for a whole hour shaving both sides of my face — a dry shave. My face was so damned sore. I learned the hard way to take orders. ... I remembered that when I was told to do something, to do it."

He believes the military has lightened up in recent years.

"These guys nowadays never went through what I went through. When we went through boot camp, we went through boot camp," he said.

While the MCRD was tough, he quickly learned to appreciate it.

"Those first two weeks, I'd have given anything to get out of there. If I wasn't so scared to, I'd have probably walked out," Cutler said. "It took about two weeks of training, then I thought it was the greatest place."

After boot camp and rifle training, he was assigned to the Marine Air Wing.

"I was just lucky," he said.

The first plane he was in was a Curtiss SBC Helldiver, two-seat scout bomber. Considered obsolete before the outbreak of the war, it was kept well away from enemy fighters. The pilot took the front cockpit, with the gunner/radioman in the rear. That's where Cutler got his first ride.

"The guy just stuck me in there and said, 'We're going to see if you can make it or not. Here's a bag.' He strapped me in and said ... 'If you get sick, throw up in this bag.' So I got in the plane and we got up there and he started to roll the plane, and I was just thrilled to death," Cutler said. "I enjoyed it. Then he went right, straight down and I started calling out (the altitude.) But looking back, that was all fun."

After it was determined he could handle flying, he was sent to aerial gunner school and qualified among the top of his class. But radio school in Hawaii tripped him up.

"I flunked, so I didn't get my wings," he said. "So I went over as a spare aerial gunner and went to Midway."

His arrival three months after the crucial June 1942 Allied victory was as one of the replacements sent to the island where much of the Japanese Navy had been destroyed. He handled bombs at the airfield there and machine guns he was familiar with.

After a quick return to Hawaii, he was shipped to Green Island near Bougainville in the Solomon Islands, the site of another important Allied victory. But again, it was after the island had been retaken from the Japanese. There, he flew again, but spent most of his time disrupting Japanese supplies and equipment.

"We kept their food line and their ammunition line

down," he said. "We'd just go out there and put gasoline on their rice fields and shoot up all their boats."

Cutler believes his failure to get his wings may have saved his life, since about half of the radiomen/gunners he was aware of didn't survive the war.

"I just lucked out," he said. "I was in the right place at the right time."

Cutler also recalled amusing — or not — incidents from his time in the Pacific. He said fellow Marines wanted more than their rationed one beer a day.

"They made this 'torpedo juice' from berries or I don't know what," he said of the fermented and highly intoxicating rotgut.

"A guy said, 'Here, try a sip.' I didn't want to, but eventually I did. The guy got me to take another and another and that's the last I remember until I woke up after having passed out in the middle of a runway on my way back to my tent. ... I'll swear to this day that the tent flipped over. Every time I'd get in my bunk, I'd end up falling on the floor."

After that, he swore off hard liquor. He has a beer now and then, but no hard stuff.

Just before the war ended, he was shipped stateside. It was at a Marine base in California he married his first wife, Betty. After getting mustered out as a corporal, the couple moved to Ohio where she was from. They had two sons and a daughter

and were married for about 40 years before Betty died of cancer in the 1980s.

The family had moved to the Portland area in the early 1950s, where Cutler got a job with the Army National Guard, first as a civilian and later enlisted in the Guard. He worked with the Army Corps of Engineers and was a technical sergeant in charge of building airfields and equipment procurement.

When his National Guard unit was mobilized for the Korean War, at first Cutler wanted to go. But he didn't want to be separated from his family.

"They said, 'They can't go with you ... they're going to Japan. ... We'll just get them there and they'll live on the base. You'll get to go over there once in a while.' So I decided I didn't want to go," Cutler said.

He met his current wife, Kate, in Sandy, where she used to swim in a pool he cleaned.

"It was the bathing suit that caught his eye," she said.

In retrospect, Cutler highly values his time in the service and thinks it would be valuable to all young people.

"I think it was fantastic. I would go through the Marine Corps again. They don't teach them now like we got taught. They taught us to follow orders and help one another," he said. "Every young man — who can — should serve his four years — to learn something, to learn to be a man."

Funding:

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should tell the state, 'We can't process this; we don't want to be responsible for this.' These are certainly necessary services ... but we don't have the resources to monitor this contract."

Commissioner Susan Roberts noted that such a contract wouldn't be the first that had put the county in an untenable situation.

"Some years ago, this very thing happened with another agency and the county was in contact with the state, who said, 'You will return this money; you have to pay it back.'" Roberts said. "At that time, we spent a lot of time traveling to Salem to make sure that the county did not have to do that. It came from the funds that were dispersed to the entity that had not done its reporting. It took a lot of time and a lot of work ... to get that done. The money was then reduced from the payments received that the county was still on for having to monitor all of that going forward and make sure that reduction was done. ... That's when we started insisting that we have the reporting documentation prior to make the payments. There was no way then, either. And now they're slipping back into that and not giving any money unless we do the work."

Commissioner John Hillock agreed that the current system of requiring documentation prior to the release of funds works best. "I've worked with Chrystal on these and she will not release funds until she has the proper documentation," Hillock said. Roberts noted that under the proposed new contract, the state wouldn't have to follow procedures the county has in place.

The commissioners initially considered tabling the matter until state officials and those from the Center for Wellness could be consulted, but Sully said the state wants an answer quickly so it can open negotiations with a contractor if the county rejected the proposed contract.

Hillock said he wanted to discuss the matter with representatives from the Center for Wellness to assure them the county is not rejecting what they do or their funding.

"We don't want to dis-

rupt this," he said, adding in a motion that he wants the commissioners to "consult with our subcontractor on what we're doing."

The commissioners voted to reject the contract, authorize Sully to write to the state explaining why it was rejected and to consult with the Center for Wellness.

In another matters, the commissioners heard two complaints from Grouse Flats resident Jon Mallory, who said county Road Department crews caused or allowed damage to occur to his gates across cattle guards on his land when they graded or plowed snow from roads in the area.

The commissioners said they would discuss the damage with the Road Department to see that the problems ceased.

Mallory also asked if the county could straighten an "ess" curve in a road in the area. However, Roberts said to do so would require using Bureau of Land Management land. She said that in the past, the BLM has been reluctant to allow such changes. Mallory offered to help with equipment, labor and materials, but Roberts didn't give much hope with the BLM.

In other matters, the commissioners:

- Approved a request from Rick Bombaci, with Wallowa Mountains Hells Canyon Trails Association, for \$3,500 to be used to maintain trails since U.S. Forest Service has ceased such work.

- "We rely more heavily on volunteerism," Commissioner Todd Nash said.

Hillock made the motion to approve the request.

"I think this is a valuable service they're offering since the Forest Service isn't doing it anymore," he said.

In seconding, Roberts asked from what fund the money would come. Nash said it would come from the Video Lottery Fund.

- Approved employee actions of hiring Sharon Newell as reserve deputy with the Wallowa County Sheriff's Office and the retirement of Rebecka Friend as a 911 dispatcher.

- Approved permit applications for easements by Dustin Larison, Chester Freeman and Jeffrey Weeks. Two more were approved for the Flora and Wallowa Prairie areas that were added to the agenda later.