

Commissioners mull road vacation, tipping fees

Decisions may come Dec. 15 on landfill

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — An increase in the tipping fees at the Wallowa County Ant Flat Landfill will be on the agenda the next time the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners meet — likely to be Dec. 15 — the commissioners agreed at their Wednesday, Dec. 1 meeting.

Commissioner Susan Roberts suggested she and her fellow commissioners consider the increase based on a presentation by Solid Waste Manager Ed Gomes.

Commissioner Todd Nash agreed to put it on the agenda for the next meeting as an action item.

“The recommendation there is a slight increase on the per-ton rate,” Nash said.

Wallowa County currently charges \$50 a ton.

He said Gomes offered comparisons with landfills in Northeast Oregon. He said Baker charges \$57 a ton, Union County charges \$64.40 a ton and Pendleton charges \$66.30. The proposal is to increase Wallowa County’s tipping fee to either \$55 or \$60.

Gomes’ recommendation, Nash said, “goes on to describe some of the needs and reasons for the increase,” including a shortfall in the money needed for maintenance and equipment replacement and the “eventual closure of the Ant Flat facility.” Nash also noted that the recycling center in Enterprise is subsidized by the tipping fees.

He recommended an increase to \$60 a ton.

“When I look at the other rates around Eastern Oregon, we would still be in the low portion of that at \$60 a ton,” he said. “The circumstances that we’re in suggest maybe we go to \$60 rather than \$55. But that’s a point of discussion we can have next time.”

Roberts suggested they may want to increase the fees in a two-year step: \$55 a ton next year and \$60 a ton the year after and give notice of



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

From left, Wallowa County Commissioners John Hillock, Todd Nash and Susan Roberts talk to Sage DeLong, a new field representative for U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ore., during the commissioners’ meeting Wednesday, Dec. 1, 2021.

the plan.

Commissioner John Hillock also suggested notifying cities and disposal services that use the landfill.

Road vacation

In another matter, the commissioners discussed a petition to vacate a road near Wallowa Lake. County counsel Paige Sully had some comments on it.

“It’s a petition for not necessarily a road vacation, it appears to be a public easement,” she said.

Sully recommended the board schedule a public hearing on the matter because a property owner in the area has objected to it.

“The petition was not signed by all of the affected property owners,” Sully said, adding that since one landowner objects, “It’s not subject to summary review.”

Roberts said she had talked to the landowner who was objecting and asked when they could attend a public hearing. The landowner said they wouldn’t be back until after the first of the year. Sully recommended scheduling a hearing next year.

“There’s no time frame

in which you have to do this,” she said.

Commissioner John Hillock wanted more information about the action landowners want the commissioners to take on the road in question.

“I’d like to view these sites from now on before we work on any of these road closures,” he said. “The last time we talked about a road closure, I was never provided with a map and I wasn’t able to preview the road closure. With this particular one, I would like to view the site and look at the map and also talk to a representative who works with the Wallowa Lake County Service District to find out if that easement we would want to use at a future time for something else.”

Sully said that in the process for the last road closure, a map was available, but she opposed Hillock’s idea of taking a solo trip to view the site.

“I’m going to recommend to you folks, where you’re sitting there in a quasi-judicial position, that I really encourage you to not go out and do independent investigations in which you will be

receiving facts and evidence that will not be available to the remainder of the board and, for that matter, won’t be in the record,” Sully said. “You’ll be going out and making factual determinations based on your own viewing, which nobody else involved in the process will have the ability to evaluate that. I’d discourage the Planning Commission from doing that, at least, in terms of individual commissioners going out because what you’re doing is you’re receiving information, it’s not going to be in the record, it’s not going to be available for review and it’s not going to be available ... to be able to refute. So, I discourage you from doing that.”

“I still feel it’s important before we act on it,” Hillock said. “Maybe all three of us should take a trip up on there and see it.”

“All I can say is in doing so, you’re taking extra-judicial information ... to include in the record, so it is a basis for a reversal,” Sully said, adding that she also discourages them from speaking to any other parties involved.

Nash encouraged Sully to

get together with administrative assistant Tera Elliott and schedule a public hearing.

Economic Opportunity Analysis

In another matter, the commissioners heard a presentation by Planning Director Franz Goebel on the Economic Opportunity Analysis conducted for the county. Goebel said the new EOA replaces one from 2003.

“This was an extensive permit process that went on over a year,” he told the commissioners.

But it appeared the document has little effect since it looks at population increases but cannot definitively predict where population numbers will be in the future.

“If we adopt as written, what difference does it make?” Hillock asked.

“I don’t think it makes much of a difference,” Goebel said. “This is a snapshot on time based on data that is required for us to use.”

“But it’s just opinion. It’s not really science,” Hillock said. “It’s somebody’s guess of where we’re going to be.”

“There’s a methodology for how it came about, but

it doesn’t take into account any envisioning of on-the-ground current trends,” Goebel said. “We’re just looking historically at what has happened.”

“That was the point I wanted to make is how many times have we actually looked at that when we were going to make a decision and it wasn’t very often.”

Other business

In other business, the commissioners:

- Accepted a document submitted by self-described land-use planning advocate Midred O’Callaghan of Joseph on the East Moraine Forest Management Plan. She has regularly come into conflict with the commissioners over her opinions on people vs. wildlife on the moraine. The commissioners said that the plan, which was originally supposed to be ready in September — and then delayed until December — is now expected to be ready in June.

- Visited briefly with Sage DeLong, who introduced himself as the new field representative for U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ore. DeLong said he was just traveling around Bentz’s district meeting the county commissioners.

- Tied up loose ends from more than two years ago when they agreed to withdraw 154.8 acres belonging to Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Stonebrink from the Wallowa School District and join it to the Enterprise School District. The board has the authority to do so as the school boundary board for the districts. Roberts said some loose ends were not completed at the time and made a motion to complete the business started in June 2019. The motion was approved.

- Hired Jessica Teeny with the District Attorney’s Office.

- Accepted the resignation of Wallowa County Sheriff’s Deputy Wes Garth.

- Approved an easement for Jesse Micka for a water line on Lathrop Road.

- Approved an interfund transfer to the Public Works Department for vegetation.

IN BRIEF

Enterprise man dies in single-vehicle crash

WALLOWA COUNTY — An Enterprise man died in a traffic crash at around 5 a.m. Sunday, Dec. 5, according to Oregon State Police.

OSP and emergency personnel responded to a single-vehicle crash on Highway 3 near milepost 13 at about 4:51 a.m.

The response team found that a northbound pickup driven by Christopher Thacker, 36, of Enterprise, drifted across the highway and eventually crashed into a tree about 200 feet from the road. Thacker was pronounced dead at the scene.

OSP, Enterprise Fire, Wallowa County Emergency Medical Services and Oregon Department of Transportation responded to the crash.

Youth ceramics classes to be at Josephy Center

JOSEPHY — Ceramics classes taught by Pamela Beach will be held for youths ages 7-17 next month as part of the Youth Art Fridays Winter Session at the Josephy Center for Arts and Culture, according to a press release. Reg-

istrations are being taken now.

Two sessions of the drawing and painting workshops will be run by Mary Ambrosion. Youths ages 12-17 will meet from 10 a.m. to noon. Children ages 7-11 will meet from 1-2:30 p.m. All will meet from Jan. 7 to March 18. No classes will be held Jan. 14, 21 or March 11. Cost is \$90.

Young artists will create a wide variety of forms using handbuilding techniques. Class includes clay, glazes and firing. All classes are eight week sessions. Register online at <https://tinyurl.com/youthceramics>. For more information, call the center at 541-432-0505 or email director@josephy.org.

Plans underway for Enterprise Winterfest

ENTERPRISE — After altering the annual Winterfest in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the city of Enterprise is coming back this year for its traditional downtown event Saturday, Dec. 11 from 2-8 p.m.

Last year, because of the pandemic, there were no downtown events. Winterfest was limited to a drive-thru visit to lighted displays at the fairgrounds.

But this year, downtown streets will be closed by 10 a.m. for downtown shopping, Santa will arrive at Santa Central at 2 p.m. and the

Lighted Parade will begin at 5:20 p.m. The event is free.

For more information, call City Hall at 426-4196, ext. 2, email gbirkmaier@enterpriseoregon.org or go online to <https://www.enterpriseoregon.org/>

Create, learn, grow in kids’ art classes

JOSEPHY — Create, learn and grow are the themes for the Youth Art Fridays Winter Session at the Josephy Center for Arts and Culture starting Jan. 7, according to a press release. Registrations are being taken now.

Two sessions of the drawing and painting workshops will be run by Mary Ambrosion. Children ages 5-7 will meet from 9-10 a.m. Children ages 8-12 will meet from 10 a.m. to noon. All will meet from Jan. 7 to March 18. No classes will be held Jan. 14, 21 or March 11. Cost is \$90.

Students will be immersed in various media while exploring art at the center. Each week, students will embark on an adventure of celebrating art while learning drawing, painting and other disciplines. All classes are eight week sessions.

Register online at <https://tinyurl.com/josephyonlineart>. For more information, call the center at 541-432-0505 or email director@josephy.org.

— Chieftain staff

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