

County OKs workforce housing in newly amended zone

Zoning ordinance updated to support economic development

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Wallowa County has updated its rural service zone to allow a new type of workforce residential development with the approval Wednesday, March 16, of an amendment to its Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

The Wallowa County Board of Commissioners held a public hearing to approve two amendments to the Comprehensive Plan during the board's regular meeting. One amended Goal 9, Economy of the Area, by updating the Economic Opportunity Analysis. The other amended the rural service zone to support the findings of that analysis. "The short of this is you had a rural service zone where a dwelling was an outright use," Commission Chairwoman Susan Roberts said.

That made it primarily a residential zone instead of a zone to support economic development. Planning Director Franz Goebel noted that the Economic Opportunity Analysis stressed both a severe lack of workforce housing and a need for more commercial uses allowed. This amendment includes a provision to help address these needs.

The Economic Goal 9 update was deemed necessary following the 2019 Legislature's approval of Senate Bill 2 relating to employment opportunities



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Wallowa County Planning Director Franz Goebel reads findings accompanying an amendment to the county's Comprehensive Land Use Plan before the county commissioners adopted it at their meeting Wednesday, March 16, 2022.

in eastern Oregon, according to the Legislature's website. The bill allows listed eastern Oregon counties that undertake economic opportunity analysis to designate up to 50 acres outside urban growth boundaries for industrial and other employment uses notwithstanding statewide planning goals related to agriculture, forest use or urbanization.

The bill excludes high-value farmland and requires county coordination with the state forester and nearby cities. The County addressed the next step by amending the rural service zone to allow more comprehensive commercial uses including workforce housing.

During their discussion March 16, the commissioners agreed there are properties near Joseph, Wallowa and Enterprise that

might benefit from the uses allowed in the newly amended zone.

Commissioner Todd Nash recused himself from discussion and voting upon the new ordinances. He said later that because of property he owns in the county, there's the potential for a conflict of interest.

Commissioner John Hillcock said he also owns a "small piece of property that could potentially be affected by this zone, but it's completely developed," so he saw no conflict of interest for himself.

The changes

"The rural service zone is presently an option for any nonresource zoned property and will continue to be," Goebel explained to the commissioners. "To utilize the rural service zone, a

landowner would first apply through the public hearing process for a zone change. If approved, zone permits would be required prior to any development."

But in amending the old rural service zone, the Planning Commission wanted to be more specific as to what uses are allowed. Goebel said the commission wanted to make sure the zone is focused on commercial uses and that it does not "become a de facto residential zone. It was a commercial zone; it just wasn't very fleshed out in the types of commercial and light industrial uses."

During the public comment portion of the hearing, Joseph resident Milley O'Callaghan asked if grazing and timber harvest would be allowed in the new version of the rural service zone and if bed and break-

fasts would be allowed.

"Timber and grazing uses are still allowed in this zone," Goebel said, but added that no short-term rentals or bed and breakfasts would be.

He emphasized that the old version of the rural service zone has been viewable on the county's website for several years and the amended version has been available in the Planning Office for a couple of months for the public to review.

"This amendment will not affect any existing property owners upon approval," Goebel said.

Property owners still need to apply for a zone change prior to taking advantage of proposed allowable uses.

"Updating the rural service zone also provides new conditional uses to address the shortfall in available workforce housing as identified in the EOA (economic opportunity assessment)," he said.

Unanticipated revenue

The commissioners also voted to accept nearly \$360,000 in unanticipated revenue for the county. They voted to:

- Accept an anonymous donation of \$19,000 from the city of Enterprise to be used for a sound system.

- Approve receiving \$40,000 from the Oregon Department of Transportation Surface Transportation Program Funds and transferred it to the Public Works Department for roads.

- Approve receiving \$30,000 from the Community Bank credit line.

- Approve receiving \$112,747 from the Wallowa County Fair fat stock

sale. After deducting the \$108,782 spent on the sale, that left \$3,965 to transfer to the fair.

- Approve receiving \$16,925 from ODOT Surface Transportation Program discretionary funds.

- Approve receiving \$16,000 from the county Public Works Department for assistance with the Grande Ronde River Road Project.

- Approve receiving \$110,000 from the state in Federal Highway Administration funding for the Grand Ronde River Road that was affected by flooding.

- Approve receiving \$15,000 from the state Department of Environmental Quality in a Mobile Recycling grant.

Other business

The commissioners also:

- Approved a resolution to appoint members to the Wallowa Lake County Service District Budget Committee. Appointed were Wade Esvelt, Jean Story and Terence Sykora. County Commissioners Roberts, Hillcock and Nash also serve on the committee.

- Approve a resolution to appoint members to the Wallowa County Budget Committee. Appointed were John Lawrence, Kathy Casper and Les Carlsen. The county commissioners also serve on the committee.

- Accepted the resignation of Annarose Landers as a 911 dispatcher because she is relocating.

- Accept the resignation of Winifred "Annett" Conner from the Wallowa County Fair and hire her as grants manager/IT support. She replaces Chrystal Allen as grants manager.

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IN BRIEF

Wallowa County students to take part in service project in Baja Sur

Ten Wallowa County students are taking the opportunity to spend five days from March 28 to April 1 doing community service projects in Baja Sur, the southern state of Baja California, as part of Interact Clubs, which is sponsored by Rotary.

The participants, from Wallowa High School, are Willie Gibbs, Cecilia April, Taluah April, Amelia Durning, Emma Durning and Kellan Knifong, and from Joseph Charter School are Colbi Cunningham, Lauren McBurney and Camdyn Weer. WHS graduate Shanna Rae Tillery is also going on the trip.

Teachers Terah April, Colby Knifong, Dani Weaver and Maria Weer, and Rotarian Jennifer Olson, will accompany the students on the trip.

According to a press release, the local Interact Clubs were invited by the Club Rotario Los Barilles and its Baja Sur Interact Club. The trip is funded by Rotary Club of Wallowa County, individual rotarians and through fundraisers.

Program offered to start small business

ENTERPRISE — The CO.STARTERS Core program is being offered by the Northeast Oregon Economic Development District for small business entrepre-

neurs interested in successfully launching a small business idea.

CO.STARTERS Core, offered in partnership with Reinventing Rural, equips entrepreneurs of all kinds with the insights, relationships and tools needed to turn business ideas into action.

CO.STARTERS walks small business owners or those with a business idea through lean, effective business modeling methods in a simple, visual, and intuitive way, while connecting them to a supportive community of peers and mentors.

Entrepreneurs will meet virtually on Thursday evenings from 5:30-8:30 p.m. starting April 7 for 10 sessions. Sessions will be led by facilitators Lisa Dawson, NEOEDD's executive director, and Bryan Tweit, Launch Pad Baker's executive director.

For more information, contact Dawson at 541-426-3598 ext. 1, 541-432-1056 (cell) or www.neoedd.org

Learn to grow microgreens at Enterprise Seventh-day Adventist

ENTERPRISE — An opportunity to learn how to grow food in minimal space at home is available Sunday, March 27, at the Enterprise Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Learn how to grow healthy microgreens at a minimal cost and without taking up much space, and learn the benefits microgreens offer.

The lesson starts at 3 p.m., and is open to the public. To RSVP, call 541-263-1789.

— Chieftain staff



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