

## COUNCIL

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the process for recruiting and appointing her successor. The deadline for applicants for the position is this Friday, Dec. 18, and by Monday evening, the City had received two applications. It was decided that the absence of one councilor for the Council's Jan. 11 meeting, in addition to a packed agenda that night, should prompt the Council to interview the candidates prior to its Jan. 25 meeting, with the possibility of appointing the new councilor during that meeting.

Later, Cottage Grove's Fi-

nance Director, Bert Olsen, told the Council that the City was finally ready to move forward with accepting debit and credit card payments from water customers. The finance department replaced all of its software in 2013 in response to a case of embezzlement by a city employee, but Olsen said the City has only recently been able to entertain the acceptance of debit/credit payments, citing the difficulty with implementing the program following updates to the City's payroll and other financial systems, in addition to staffing issues, as reasons for the delay.

The change should be a welcome one for water customers, and Olsen said it's the number one request the City hears from the public. And there should be other benefits besides mere convenience.

"With the automated process, there is less opportunity for manual entry errors, reduced shutoffs, reduced calls from account holders and reduced customer service costs," Olsen said. "Benefits to our customers also include more options to pay. The customers see real-time payment processing with the account being updated immediately. There

is 24/7 account access, allowing the customer to view balances, usage history and the ability to reduce delinquency issues."

Olsen said the City is unsure how many customers will utilize the program to make card payments, though it "has become the industry norm to offer these types of options."

Olsen recommended implementing the program, with the City absorbing the transaction fees as the cost of doing business, and the Council heartily agreed. She said it will still take three to six weeks before the program is fully implemented.

## TSP

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and the recent adoption of the Main Street Refinement Plan — which is meant to guide the revamping of Main Street downtown between its historic buildings — have all led to a need for an updated plan, according to Dolata.

The plan breaks needed road projects down into two categories: projects that should be prioritized given the amount of funding the City can reasonably expect and projects that are needed but for which funding may not be readily available.

Dolata explained that projects aiming to bolster safety in problem areas in the City have been given priority in the TSP, and he spent a lot of time explaining the problems and possible solutions on Highway 99 between the Connector overpass and Woodson Bridge, an area with a high crash volume. The plan points to a roundabout as the best solution to revamp the intersection at the Connector and Highway 99, though the roundabout plan was met with some concerns by the Council.

"A roundabout should operate

well there," Dolata said. "It will prevent people from screaming down that stretch at 40 mph."

"The big issue with Highway 99 in that area is that people speed there," he continued. "That's the biggest factor contributing to collisions, so it's important to slow people down."

Dolata told the Council that a special package of projects has been identified as a possible source of grant funding. These include converting Highway 99 from four to three lanes near the Connector, examining driveway access to the highway, widening

the connector bridge, building sidewalks to span gaps where they don't exist and planning for the Connector/99 intersection. He said he was optimistic and the projects had a "reasonable chance" of being funded.

In addition to Highway 99, the plan includes several projects related to improving the network of routes for pedestrian and cyclists.

"We're including bike lanes where they're supposed to be and putting more wayfinding signs in appropriate places," Dolata said.

## WREATH

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wire to frame behind plants. Alternately, gather a group of plant clippings together in a clump like a bouquet. Wind wire around stems and twist ends together. Then secure each clump to the frame, overlapping stem ends to keep them from showing.

To create a second layer, slip stem ends into the first layer and wrap and attach wire the same way as the first layer. Fluff out small pieces of plant so wire doesn't show.

## JOYCE

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that everything good in our lives is by His grace, we open ourselves up to His help. First Peter 5:5 says that "God sets Himself against the proud... [and He opposes, frustrates, and defeats them], but gives grace (favor, blessing) to the humble" (AMP).

This scripture helped me see that when I'm frustrated, God is trying to show me that I need to humble myself and let Him help me. My prayer usually sounds something like this: "God, I am nothing without You and can do nothing without You. I need You. Please help me." The key is humility. The humble get the help, not the prideful.

For small, lightweight pieces of plant, slip snugly into wreath. If they feel wobbly, wire them on.

If using pinecones, wood and decorations secure a length of wire to them, leaving long ends. Wrap those ends around frame or piece of plant stem and twist tightly.

To make a hanger, cut a small piece of wire. Secure one end and then the other to the frame to form a loop. Be sure to position the loop so that you've got top of the wreath where you want it.

Whatever God calls you to do in life, He will equip you to do it. You will be able to fulfill His will for your life and live frustration-free as you humble yourself before Him and receive His amazing grace. And when you do, He will do amazing things through you!

Joyce Meyer is a New York Times bestselling author and founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries, Inc. She has authored 100 books, including *Battlefield of the Mind* and *God Is Not Mad at You* (Hachette). She hosts the *Enjoying Everyday Life* radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide. For more information, visit [www.joycemeyer.org](http://www.joycemeyer.org).



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