



Norman Scott and Harry Stalnaker (front) wait their turns during an elimination round on Sunday.

Longtime Independence gun club survives financial issues

By Emily Menzter
The Itemizer-Observer

INDEPENDENCE — Norman Scott remembers the days when he worked as a trap boy at the Independence Elks Gun Club.

Now, he is a regular participant of the club, which was formed in the mid-1940s. The range is shotgun-only, and open to the public.

For people on the north side of Monmouth and Independence, shotguns going off on Sunday mornings is old hat, but the club was briefly in jeopardy of silencing those sounds, said Scott, 83.

"There was a funding issue," said Rusty Poage, president of the gun club. "We got it all straightened out."

The club was sold to the Independence Elks Lodge for \$1 during the Korean War with the understanding that the Elks would be the governing body, but the club would be open to all shooters, not

Pull the Trigger

What: Independence Elks Gun Club.

Where: On the north side of Hoffman Road, just west of Gun Club Road.

When: Second and fourth Sundays of the month, 10 a.m.

Cost: \$1 range fee; \$3 for 25 clay targets. Shells and ear protection are available for purchase, or bring your own.

Of note: Often, people will have extra shotguns that they will let people borrow, making this something even the non-gun owner can participate in.

For more information: Rusty Poage, 541-231-9662; email to rustypoage@gmail.com.

just those who were members of the Elks.

Through the years, the Elks has not made much investment in the

gun club's facilities, from the old building to the trap throws, Scott said. Recently, the gun club's money was in jeopardy of being absorbed into the Elks' general fund.

With the gun club's future again feeling stable, about a dozen men came out to shoot Sunday morning, a small crowd for the gun range sitting on Hoffman Road at the end of Gun Club Road — a coincidence, Scott said — the road was not named after the club.

Before the action started, John Miller of Salem dug through empty, used shotgun shells. He is looking for a particular shape in the hull, straight rather than tapered.

"This would be a very expensive hobby if you didn't reload," Poage said.

"It's a very fun sport," Miller added. "It's expensive, and it's habit-forming. If you want to learn, come out here and we'll show you."

Safety levy is more than a patrol issue

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

FALLS CITY — Polk County's public safety levy proposal isn't just about patrols.

That was the message both county officials and city residents tried to send at a public hearing in Falls City regarding a possible five-year, 45 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value tax levy to pay for public safety services. That comes down to about \$90 per year on properties with an assessed value of \$200,000.

"I think that sometimes we don't think about that piece when we are thinking about this levy," said Falls City resident Amy Houghtaling, who is the Falls City School District's after-school program director and the former mayor. "We are only thinking about patrol."

For patrol officers to do their job, the county needs fully staffed district attorney's and community corrections offices to prosecute criminals and supervise them once released from jail, she said.

At the Jan. 6 hearing held at the Falls City Community Center, drawing about 20 people, the system as a whole was characterized as an "umbrella" requiring all parts to work together. The Polk County Jail, district attorney's office, community corrections and juvenile department serve the entire county, not just rural residents covered by Polk County Sheriff's Office patrols, said Polk County Sheriff Bob Wolfe.

District Attorney Aaron Felton said compared to other similarly sized counties — Polk's population is approximately 77,000 — his office is the smallest with only four criminal prosecutors.

"If this levy were to pass, just on numbers alone, that would be significant — I call it transformational," Felton said of the levy's potential to add more prosecutors. "The three additional deputies, criminal prosecutors, in this office would make a remarkable difference in what we are not able to do right now."

Limited patrol does remain the most visible example of the decline

Learn More

The Polk County Board of Commissioners is continuing its tour of the region with several more public hearings on the proposed public safety local option tax. Upcoming meetings are scheduled:

• Wednesday, Jan. 14, 6 p.m., Dallas Civic Center, 945 SE Jefferson St., Dallas.

• Wednesday, Jan. 21, 6 p.m., Monmouth Public Library, 168 Ecols St. S., Monmouth.

• Thursday, Jan. 22, 6 p.m., Chemeketa Viticulture Center, 215 Doaks Ferry Road, West Salem.

in public safety funding. Wolfe said his department is down 14 deputies, resulting in just 10 patrol hours per day.

That has a direct impact for Falls City because it doesn't have its own police department.

Falls City residents asked what would change if the levy passed.

Houghtaling asked if the sheriff would be more responsive to problems like those that arose over the summer, with noise and gun-toting in the city park next to the falls. Most of those issues are addressed in the city's code, which the sheriff's office doesn't have the authority to enforce.

Wolfe said if he had more officers available, they would spend more time in Falls City checking in on those situations and talking to residents, but they still wouldn't be able to address code issues.

Mayor Terry Ungricht asked if an intergovernmental agreement giving the sheriff authority to enforce city code, including park curfews, is possible.

"I think that would go a long way to getting support for the levy," Ungricht said.

Wolfe said an agreement is possible, but it all comes down to whether deputies are available.

"It doesn't do me any good to have the agreement if I don't have the resources to enforce it," Wolfe said.

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Dallas on Fridays from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. seeing patients at the clinic and performing gynecological procedures in the West Valley Hospital surgical suites. New patients are welcome! West Valley Surgical Specialty Clinic is located at 591 SE Clay St., Dallas. Call 503-831-0784 for an appointment. Visit westvalleyhospital.org/specialtyclinic. (UPDATE W/ONLINE APPT URL WHEN AVAILABLE.)

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