



Polk County Itemizer-Observer

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POLK COUNTY PUBLIC SAFETY LEVY DEBATE



Polk County Sheriff's Office, Polk No. 1 and Salem Fire, and OSP clear an accident on Highway 51 near Independence.

PHOTO COURTESY POLK COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT NO. 1

HELP NEEDED

County's 24-hour public safety team missing key player

Editor's Note: This is the third in a series of stories looking at issues and topics that surround the Polk County public safety levy, Measure 27-117, that will appear on the May 19 vote-by-mail ballot.

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

POLK COUNTY — Firefighters and EMTs from Polk County Fire District No. 1 responded to a car accident late at night a few weeks ago on Highway 51 outside Independence.

They arrived to find the driver of the truck involved in the accident asleep in the cab, intoxicated, but not injured.

It was after Polk County Sheriff's Office patrols ended for the night, so the emergency responders had a de-

Learn More

Two community gatherings have been scheduled where Polk County officials will present information about the current budget situation and its effects on the sheriff, district attorney, jail and community corrections departments.

- Tuesday, April 7, 7 p.m., Salem Electric Building, 633 Seventh St. NW, West Salem.
- Tuesday, April 14, 7 p.m., Grand Ronde Community Center, 9615 Grand Ronde Road, Grand Ronde.

Additional meeting dates and locations will be announced in the future.

cision on their hands. "What do we do with him?" asked Polk County

Fire District No. 1 deputy chief Neal Olson. "We can't transport him if he's not injured. We can't just transport him home."

Non-law enforcement first responders can't prohibit an intoxicated driver from getting behind the wheel, but they may also be liable if he does drive after they leave and hurts himself or others. That is just one example of the sticky situations fire and ambulance crews face the 14 hours per day that sheriff's deputies are unavailable to respond to calls.

The county has placed a five-year, 45 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value property tax levy on the May ballot to restore full patrols, add more staff to the Polk County District Attorney's Office and Polk County Jail, and add

more juvenile detention beds and staffing for Polk County Community Corrections' community service program.

Local firefighters say there haven't been too many calls where the lack of response has been an issue, but when they do happen it puts more stress on ambulance crews and staff from mostly volunteer fire agencies.

Dallas Fire Training Officer Sean Hoxie said firefighter/EMTs — including himself — have had to conduct traffic control on accident scenes, something that had not been done before.

"We are taking on roles traditionally performed by law enforcement," he said, adding his crews can't investigate accidents. "That is obviously delayed or doesn't happen."

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Hospital's new boss is on the job

Jim Sapienza takes over at West Valley for retired Bob Brannigan

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Health has always been a fascination for Jim Sapienza, West Valley Hospital's new administrator.

"As a young person I was very interested in the fact that people had the opportunity to eat well, get enough sleep, get daily exercise and they could be healthier," Sapienza said. "We all have the opportunity to be healthy. I always thought that was important, not just at an individual level, but for families and communities to be healthy."

That led to him pursuing a career in health care, at first

considering health research or becoming a doctor.

"It just ended up becoming a health care administrator was more in line with my skills and my interests," Sapienza said.

Much like in his youth, Sapienza will be focused on the health — and the health care — of the Dallas-area community.

Sapienza started work at West Valley a little more than a month ago, taking over for Bob Brannigan, who retired at the end of last year. Sapienza moved to Dallas from Washington's Puget Sound area.

See **BOSS**, Page 14A



Jim Sapienza started work as West Valley Hospital's new administrator a little more than a month ago.

IN YOUR TOWN

DALLAS NEWS

Monica Foster, the former owner of more than 90 malnourished animals seized last month off a Dallas farm, has been indicted on 61 animal neglect charges.

Foster, 41, a Dallas resident, appeared in Polk County Circuit Court Thursday morning for arraignment on 10 counts of first-degree animal neglect and 51 counts of second-degree animal neglect, both felony charges.

Foster pleaded not guilty to all charges Thursday. She was originally cited on animal neglect on Feb. 18.

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FALLS CITY NEWS

The city of Falls City will soon begin searching for a permanent city manager, but that person may be working part time.

Falls City Interim City Manager Jon Hanken was asked Thursday to prepare a request for proposals (RFP) for the job that would consist of a 20- to 24-hour work week and pay an estimated \$25,000 to \$30,000 annually. The Falls City City Council will approve a final RFP at a future meeting.

"To me this seems the only way we can go," said Councilor Tony Meier. "We can't afford a full-time administrator."

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INDEPENDENCE NEWS

In honor of Capt. Tom Kistler, a Polk County Fire District No. 1 firefighter who died on duty, a stretch of road in Independence has been "adopted."

Once Lori Albert, who used to work for Polk County Fire, decided to adopt the road in his honor and keep it clean, she said it took a while to get things sorted.

The city of Independence didn't have an established program for Adopt-a-Road, so Albert had to make a lot of calls to different agencies — including the Oregon Department of Transportation and Polk County — before a new program was adopted in Independence in August 2014.

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MONMOUTH NEWS

Students in the Community and Family Health Organization club at Western Oregon University are asking: Should WOU be smoke- or tobacco-free?

Right now, smoking is allowed in designated areas on campus, but, according to polls conducted by students, 80 percent of students, staff and faculty are in favor of eliminating smoking, or of getting rid of tobacco use on campus altogether, said Matthew Stevens, Polk County's tobacco prevention and education program coordinator.

Stevens said it is exciting to see students, rather than administrators, shaping future smoking policies.

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POLK COUNTY NEWS

Looking at the numbers in the 2015-16 Polk County budget that will be proposed Monday during the first meeting of the county's budget committee, it seems like the budget is growing at a healthy rate.

In some places — namely behavioral health, which receives most of its money from the state — it is growing, and fast.

But in the general fund, the figures proposed may or may not be real — depending on the outcome of the county's public safety levy on the May 19 ballot.

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THE NEXT 7 DAYS PLANNING FOR YOUR WEEK	wed	thu	fri	sat	sun	mon	tue
It's the final Wednesday of the month, and that means yoga in the hopyard at Rogue Ales Farm near Buena Vista. 6 p.m. Free.	"Spring has Sprung" is the theme for this month's Dallas Area Seniors Community Music Jam at the Dallas Senior Center. 6:30 p.m. Free.	Bring an instrument or just sit back and listen to the tunes during the Guthrie Park Acoustic Music Jam Session. 7-10 p.m. Free.	Dolls of all kinds can be found during the Wagon Wheel Doller's Spring Doll Show and Sale at the Polk County Fairgrounds. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. \$4.	Sample wines, spirits, brews and food during the Spirit Mountain Spring Wine & Spirits Fair at the casino events center. Noon to 5 p.m. Free.	The Willamette Valley New Horizons Orchestra welcomes new musicians to its weekly sessions at Central High School. 6:30 p.m. \$25/month.	The Dallas High girls softball team opens Mid-Willamette Conference play by hosting Woodburn. 4:30 p.m. \$5.	
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