

# Polk County Itemizer-Observer

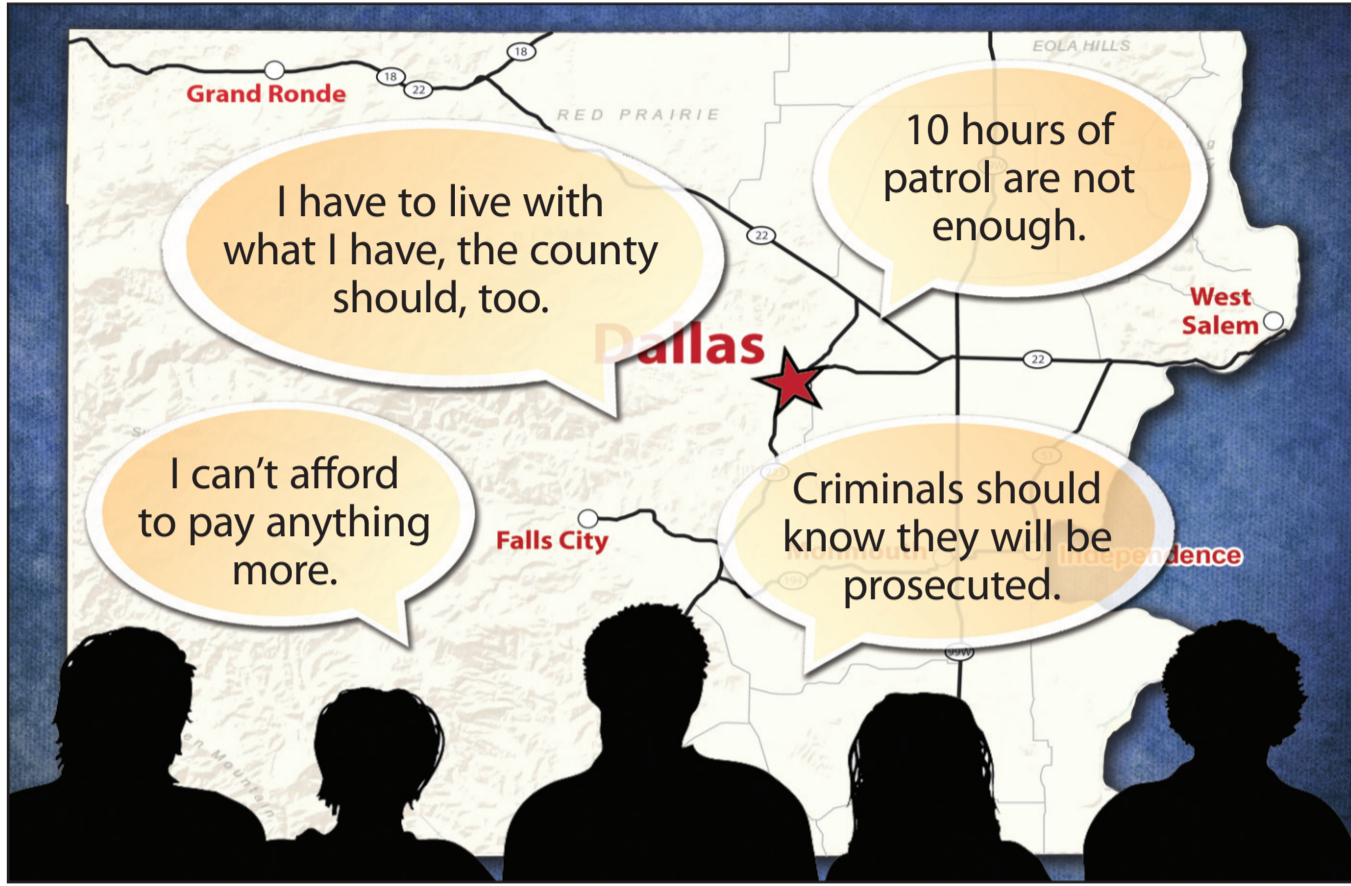
Volume 140, Issue 17

www.Polkio.com

April 29, 2015

75¢

## POLK COUNTY LEVY COVERAGE



Voters in Polk County consider factors such as safety and their own wallets when it comes to the public safety levy.

# YES OR NO?

How people will vote on public safety levy is complicated

By Jolene Guzman  
The Itemizer-Observer

POLK COUNTY — The Polk County general fund has been characterized as a “two-income household” that has had one of those paychecks severely reduced. Property tax revenue remains the constant, while federal timber subsidies have become unreliable and have fallen to an amount that is a shadow of what they were seven years ago.

Cuts to make up for lost income have reduced the Polk County Sheriff's Office to 10 hours of patrol per day and has forced the District Attorney's Office to prioritize cases.

When Polk County voters begin receiving their ballots this week or early next week for the May 19 vote-by-mail election, they will be asked whether that “second income” should be replaced for five years.

The county has placed a five-year 45 cents per \$1,000 assessed value public safety levy on the ballot — enough to restore 22 positions in sheriff's patrol (12) jail divisions (5), and DA's Office (5), pay for extra support in Community Corrections community service program and rent two additional juvenile detention beds.

Choosing between yes and no on Measure 27-117 will come down to a matter of

safety for a portion of voters, while for others it will boil down to dollars and cents.

For those who support the levy, they hope to prevent what they see as the possible failure of the countywide law enforcement system.

Commissioner Jennifer Wheeler described current service levels as “inadequate at best.”

Wheeler said the levy won't restore all that was lost, but it will bring back 24-hour patrol coverage and prevent the DA from having to decide which cases won't be prosecuted solely due to staffing shortages.

“It will definitely make us functional again,” said Sheriff Bob Wolfe. “Right now, we

are not functional. You can't patrol just 10 hours a day and expect the county to remain safe.”

He added he has already spent twice his overtime budget to cover shifts in the jail because of severe staffing shortages, a problem that will likely get worse with two more recent departures.

Likewise, with just four prosecutors, including himself, District Attorney Aaron Felton said his office will have to continue to prioritize serious crime cases above others if more funding doesn't come through.

“Now my office is struggling to get the basic (tasks) done,” he said.

See VOTE, Page 5A

## MINET committee struggles

Finance advisory group disbanded after accusations fly

By Emily Mentzer  
The Itemizer-Observer

MONMOUTH/INDEPENDENCE — After months of fighting, the Monmouth-Independence Network (MINET) finance committee was disbanded on March 26.

The committee may be reinstated with a new charter — created in a work session on April 14 — and with new direction from the MINET board of directors, pending a decision to be made at the board's meeting on Thursday.

At the March 26 MINET board meeting, then-finance committee chairman Ben Meyer said the committee could not function.

He said communication between three of the five committee members — a quorum — was made via email about committee business — replacing him, the committee chairman.

Meyer said replacing that position seems to be the No. 1 priority of the committee.

“To me, (the committee) has become politicized,” he said on March 26 during the MINET board meeting. “If you want to select a chair, there's a proper way for that to be brought up.”

The finance committee was tasked with looking at MINET's budget and how to help it succeed financially, such as increasing rates to keep it viable and competitive, and reviewing audits.

Also, Independence City Manager and MINET board chairman David Clyne sent an email to finance committee member and Independence Finance Director Gloria Butsch with di-

rections for the finance committee.

“At today's finance committee, I would like you to raise two issues as amendments to the committee agenda from the city of Independence,” Clyne stated in an email to Butsch, 35 minutes before the finance committee was scheduled to meet on March 24.

“First, the committee was asked by consensus of the MINET board to consider selecting a new chair since Ben (Meyer) was appointed as provisional chair,” he said.

Meyer and Monmouth City Manager Scott McClure say Clyne was acting alone in this email request, and not “by consensus of the MINET board.”

See MINET, Page 6A



Clyne



McClure

## IN YOUR TOWN

### DALLAS NEWS

The Dallas School District's proposed 2015-16 budget will include full-day kindergarten, music at Lyle and Oakdale elementary schools, and additional staff and technology.

The district's total budget is about \$49 million, including \$9.4 million in maintenance bond proceeds. The district's general fund is about \$32.2 million, about \$3 million more than in the current budget.

Of that increase, \$869,000 is because a new charter school, Dallas Community School, is planning to open in the fall.

»Page 15A

### FALLS CITY NEWS

If all you are seeing in Oregon's forest are trees, you need to dig a bit deeper. Seriously, dig.

That is what six men in the Falls City area do for a living as truffle hunters, and The Discovery Channel is premiering a show Friday, “Unearthed,” that examines the secretive world of black truffle foragers in Western Oregon.

The show, produced by Zodiak NYC for the Discovery Channel, actually came about not because of the mysterious — and potentially lucrative — nature of black truffle industry, but because of the landscape where the delicacies are found.

»Page 2A

### INDEPENDENCE NEWS

When Central High School junior Trevor Whittemore took the phone call, he couldn't believe his ears.

Whittemore, a member of Central's golf team, had not quite been expecting a call — more like hoping for one.

He lost his Nike Tiger Woods golf shoes at Oak Knoll Golf Course after practice a few weeks ago.

“I just left them outside a friend's car because I'm a teenager and was just thinking about going home,” he said Thursday.

He placed signs around the course asking if anyone found them to call him.

»Page 15A

### MONMOUTH NEWS

The Monmouth City Council approved an additional \$96,000 at its April 21 meeting to complete the renovations to the new Monmouth Police Station, located off Highway 99W.

“For whatever reason, we didn't have the best estimate for the station from the architect for the bond,” said City Manager Scott McClure.

The council had already approved \$375,000 in July 2014, but it wasn't enough to complete the project, McClure said.

The original estimate was \$3.785 million to renovate the old Boise Cascade building.

»Page 2A

### POLK COUNTY NEWS

Highway 99's intersection with Clow Corner Road, always a concern for its rate of fatal and serious crashes, may not see safety improvements for some time.

Oregon Department of Transportation recently informed the county that the funding for the project may be pulled due to budget concerns.

The intersection was one of six ODOT included in a 20-year plan for safety fixes between Rickreall and Monmouth. No final decision has been made on the intersection yet.

»Page 3A

<b>THE NEXT 7 DAYS PLANNING FOR YOUR WEEK</b> 	<b>wed</b> Take advantage of the late sunsets with Yoga in the Hopyard at Rogue Farms. Bring your own yoga mat. <b>6 p.m. Free.</b>  Partly Cloudy Hi: 63 Lo: 39	<b>thu</b> Need a new handbag or wallet? Swing by West Valley Hospital during its leather and purse sale. <b>7:30 a.m. Free.</b>  Sunny Hi: 67 Lo: 41	<b>fri</b> Listen to excellent a cappella music during a benefit concert for Central High choir teacher Jeff Witt at CHS. <b>7:30 p.m. \$10.</b>  Mostly Sunny Hi: 71 Lo: 42	<b>sat</b> Find books — and plants — at two separate fundraising sales for great deals at Monmouth Public Library. <b>9 a.m.-2 p.m. Free.</b>  Sunny Hi: 70 Lo: 40	<b>sun</b> See what kind of interesting things you can find at the Polk County Flea Market at the fairgrounds in Rickreall. <b>6 a.m.-3 p.m. \$1-\$5.</b>  Sunny Hi: 72 Lo: 42	<b>mon</b> Join in the fun on Star Wars Day at Independence Public Library as they celebrate “May the Fourth be with you.” <b>10 a.m.-6 p.m. Free.</b>  Sunny Hi: 69 Lo: 41	<b>tue</b> Learn who your target market is and how to reach out at MI Chamber's PEP talks series, “Writing a Marketing Plan.” <b>Noon. \$15-\$20.</b>  Partly Cloudy Hi: 63 Lo: 41
---	--	---	--	--	--	---	--