

Program receives grant from BOC

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

FALLS CITY — Amy Houghtaling received a pleasant surprise Tuesday morning.

The director of Falls City School District's after-school program Family Academic Community and Enrichment for Success, along with Lynn Bailey, the program's sustainability coordinator, had planned on giving a grant presentation to the Polk County Board of Commissioners.

They did not know they would leave with the money is on its way.

The board approved the \$28,100 grant request for FACES' Student Workforce Readiness Project, which will employ five students over two trimesters, working approximately 14 hours per week, earning class credit, and developing job skills they can use later. The funding is awarded through the county's economic development program.

FACES began nine years ago, and has employed teens to work with younger students in program classes. Fifty part-time positions have been offered to students, 93 percent of which graduated and many moved on to post-high school edu-



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer file

Students conduct experiments in roller coaster physics.

cation or work.

The workforce readiness project is targeting a different demographic: at-risk teens.

Students will work in the district on landscaping in the spring and fall trimesters, working on projects at the schools and city parks and cemeteries.

"We believe it is important for the students hired by this project to stay in Falls City because we are hoping to hire some of our most alternative and at-risk students," the grant application

said. "These kids tend to be from homes where neither parent works, where people in authority are not trusted, and where a vision of a 'way out' is limited."

Bailey said this program will help students develop confidence by working with people they know and trust now.

"That will help them branch out," she said.

Students who want to participate in the program must apply like they would any other job. They will be required to submit a resume

and go through an interview process. According to the grant application, participants must be passing all classes and be "demonstrating positive behavior in the classroom and community in order to maintain employment."

Commissioner Jennifer Wheeler said she's seen the difference FACES programs have made in students and made a motion to award the grant.

The motion was approved unanimously.

"I appreciate what you do every day because these kids are our future," Commissioner Mike Ainsworth said.

The program will begin in April at the start of Falls City's spring trimester.

In other business, FACES: • Is looking for sponsors for its this spring's Roller-coaster Physics Class.

Houghtaling said the class is looking for \$10,000 in sponsorships to improve the class and pay for its end-year trip to a yet-to-be announced amusement park.

"If not, we have enough money to go to Idaho and do the same trip we did last year," Houghtaling said. "We are just trying to broaden horizons."

For more information about the sponsorship program, call 503-787-3521, ext. 303.

Monmouth OKs marijuana zoning

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

MONMOUTH — Marijuana retail, processing and production facilities have been added to the Monmouth zoning code through a legislative amendment passed unanimously at the Feb. 7 council meeting.

Recreational marijuana in Monmouth sparked an outcry by some residents and business owners upset that the council didn't advertise the fact that a ban could have been initiated by a ballot measure in the November 2016 election.

Measure 91, which legalized recreational marijuana in the state, passed in Monmouth by a 136-vote margin. Bodie Bemrose, business owner and author of a petition against marijuana businesses in Monmouth, said the voter turnout in Monmouth was small, 2,968 out of 4,534 registered voters.

"A very small minority of people, which represented only 15 percent of our community, supported marijuana recreational sales for Oregon Measure 91," he said in a statement.

Bemrose laid out additional restrictions for the council to consider, including prohibiting marijuana business in the Main Street District, Commercial Highway Zone, all residential zones, and increase distances allowed from any government building, including schools and day care facilities.

State law prohibits a marijuana business within 1,000 feet of schools. Bemrose's proposal would increase that to 2,000 feet.

The council discussed including one of Bemrose's suggestions, prohibiting marijuana business in the Main Street District. Councilors did not entertain all of the suggestions because it would limit marijuana businesses to the south end of town in the industrial area.

Attorney Lane Shetterly said he would defend whatever the council adopted, but it "would be a steep hill to climb" if Monmouth limited access that much.

Councilor Royal Johnson said that the council was not voting yes or no on whether or not marijuana businesses could operate, but where they could locate.

"If we did a no vote on this ordinance, we would make it where businesses could basically come in wherever they could based on our current zoning, which is less restrictive than our amendment," he said. "If we don't pass it, they could still come open business here."

Councilor Byron Shinkle wanted to amend the amendment to prohibit sales in the Main Street District, which would still leave spaces for marijuana businesses in city limits.

"When the statute and the court say be reasonable, they mean it, be reasonable," Shinkle said.

Shetterly said he would have to come back to the council with the appropriate language in the ordinance, and further public meetings would have to be held including property owners on Main Street.

Councilor Tom Steinke said it would have to go through the entire planning commission process again, potentially delaying any decisions for a few months.

In the end, the council decided to reject the idea of prohibiting sales on Main Street and approved the suggested ordinances, declaring an emergency, which put the new rules into effect immediately.

Sewer billing to change costs

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

MONMOUTH — Sewer bills in Monmouth will likely increase, though a few customers will see a decrease, because the way bills are calculated are set to change.

Sewer accounts are assessed a flat monthly fee based on water consumption during the winter months, said Mark Dunmire, finance director, in a memo to the council.

The charges have been calculated using four

months — November, December, February and March — and throwing out the highest charge. From that, the average remaining three months multiplied by 12 is how the city has determined a resident's rate, Dunmire explained.

The city's new finance software could not calculate the bills using this formula, but can use a similar formula using consecutive months.

The council came to a consensus at its Feb. 7 work session to begin using December, January, February and

March for sewer calculations. This will increase some bills by about \$9.24 and decrease some by about \$9.42.

The new method will increase the sewer fund by about \$37,277.44 annually, Dunmire said. Making the switch will save time, he said.

"The city's current process to update sewer charges requires pulling all consumption history from Caselle (the city's finance software) and manipulating it manually in Excel," Dunmire said in the memo. "The process takes about two

weeks to complete, and multiple staff are involved. It is an extremely tedious and technical process, and not only requires manipulation in Excel, but an upload to Caselle with a manual verification after."

With the calculations being done using the software, the entire process can be completed by one person in a couple of hours, Dunmire said.

City employees will bring a resolution back to the council to implement the change.



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