

Gazette Times

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Motel-hotel tax ordinance to be drafted

Facing a budget shortfall and reduction of funds earmarked for the Heppner Chamber of Commerce manager's salary, the city council directed administrator Gary Marks to draft an ordinance for a city hotel-motel tax.

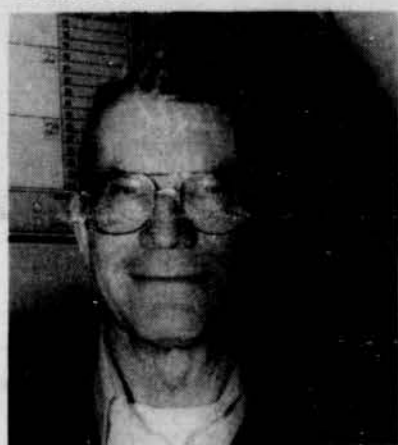
Rollie Marshall, on behalf of the chamber, proposed a five percent tax that would eventually be passed down to customers at the Northwest Motel, the only motel in town, and Penland House Bed and Breakfast.

Tom LaRusso, owner of the Northwest Motel and RV Park, protested the tax, saying that

neither he nor his partner Dolores Cooper had been consulted about the tax. "We shouldn't be singled out," said LaRusso. "We're an easy target." LaRusso said that the ordinance would place tax collecting burdens on him and would pre-empt any increases in motel rates he and Cooper might have planned. He said he feared that with additional charges the motel would not be competitive with other motels in the area.

A small portion of the tax monies would be returned to LaRusso and Cooper for administrative costs, according to the chamber plan.

LaRusso said that he suggested that all businesses be charged for a city license to offset the chamber manager's salary. All the businesses benefit from the chamber of commerce, LaRusso added, so they all should contribute.



Bob Jepsen

In other business:

-Bob Jepsen was sworn in as city council member replacing Kay Robinson, who resigned to become mayor. Jepsen's term will expire Dec. 31, 1992;

-held public hearings on three city properties designated public nuisances.

Lamb cook-off

Entries are now being accepted for the second annual St. Patrick's Day Lamb Cook-Off to be held at the Farley Motor Company in Heppner on Saturday, March 14. Deadline for entries is Wednesday, March 11. Entry forms are available at Heppner TV.

Grand prize for the lamb cook-off will be two nights lodging at the Driftwood Shores in Florence, donated by Lee Babcock and 3-K Livestock in Brownsville. Prizes will also be awarded for the best lamb recipe in three categories: barbecue, conventional and miscellaneous. Students grades 10 through college senior, will compete separately for two scholarship awards: \$100 for first and \$50 for second.

Interested cooks may request an entry form or submit a copy of their recipe (serving 4-6) with their name, address, phone number to Maureen Krebs, event coordinator, Cecil Star Route, Lone, OR 97843. Contestants should indicate any special equipment needed for on-site cooking or whether their entry will arrive already prepared.

After a successful first year, the Oregon Sheep Commission agreed to join the Oregon Sheep Growers Association and Heppner's St. Patrick's Day Committee in sponsoring the 1992 Lamb Cook-Off. The lamb cook-off is a promotional activity of the Oregon Sheep Growers Association to showcase the variety, taste and healthful nature of today's lamb.

Formation of pool district for Heppner not possible

Heppner City Council members learned Monday evening that formation of a pool district to fund construction of a new city pool is not possible.

Forming a district had been the most promising option in dealing with an ailing city pool, but officials say that a new district cannot be established because the Willow Creek Park District is already in existence.

Other options included operating the city pool as is for another year, but the pool's deteriorated condition and funding problems will most likely preclude this: raising funds through a city bond issue, but the city does not have enough allowable debt and puts new fire equipment at a higher priority; seeking funding through the school district, which is also facing Measure 5 budget shortfalls; or seeking funding through the Willow Creek Park District (WCPD). Spokesmen for the district said earlier that because of their involvement in establishing an RV park at

Willow Creek lake their next project would probably be earmarking for the Lexington-lone area and WCPD support of a Heppner pool was probably unlikely. City officials indicate, however, that they intend to approach the WCPD again, considering this latest development.

At an earlier pool committee meeting, committee members discussed community input they had received and discussed the possibility of opening the pool for swimming lessons only or busing children to the lone pool for lessons. Concern was voiced the pool would be closed for two years and that more children would be swimming at the dam.

The pool committee asks that anyone with comments contact committee members, Steve Dickenson, chairman; Bob Kahl, Barb Watkins, Cara Osmin, Jean Strange, Kay Robinson or Martha Doherty. A video detailing the problems with the old pool is available for viewing. Contact city administrator Gary Marks for more information.

Ranger district to have prescribed burn

The Heppner Ranger District of the Umatilla National Forest will have a large prescribed burning during the spring of 1992.

Prescribed burning in regeneration harvest cuts is planned for 34 separate units distributed throughout the district. The purpose of burning is to reduce the fire hazard and to prepare the areas for planting of tree seedlings.

An additional 9,450 acres of "environmental" burning will be under prescription and ready to burn. This type of burning is conducted to improve forest health, provide site preparation for natural tree seedling establishment, improve big game forage

and remove natural accumulations of fuels from the forest floor. These burns will be of low intensity and will burn with flame lengths from one to three feet in length, consuming needles, limbs and dead tree boles, said a forest service spokesperson.

Burning could start as early as late February and continue into the month of June. Locally heavy concentrations of wood smoke can be expected in and adjacent to the individual burns but should dissipate quickly, they said. Concerns or questions about the burning program should be directed to Gary Clark, Heppner District fuels specialist at 676-9187.

Plans aired for Main Street renovation



Main Street as it looks now with utility poles



Computer altered photograph of Main Street without utility poles

The Heppner City Council heard plans Monday night from Columbia basin Electric Co-op manager and Heppner Economic Development Corporation representative Fred Toombs to renovate Heppner's downtown area.

According to Toombs, CBEC plans include removal of utility poles from Main Street to improve service and decrease the co-op's liability. Extensive plans include reconstruction of Main Street with adequate storm drains, store front improvements, installation of permanent planter boxes with trees and benches, and improvements in water and sewer lines. The whole project is estimated to be around \$1.2 million.

The Bank of Eastern Oregon has set up a special loan program for local businesses for store front improvements.

Zero interest loans are available in Heppner through a grant from the Oregon Development Dept. which subsidizes interest on the loan.

A \$4,830 Oregon Department of Forestry grant has been approved for the planter boxes, trees and benches, but in-kind donations of labor and materials are needed to complete the project. Marks encourages volunteers of time and materials

to come forward. A buy-a-tree program is also underway.

The State Highway Department had plans to resurface Main Street as part of an extensive road project, but Toombs and Heppner City Administrator Gary Marks say they have persuaded the highway department to delay the project so that all improvements could be made at the same time. While the highway department has proposed resurfacing only, Toombs said that resurfacing would only make the highway's crown even higher and storm drains are not adequate now.

The highway department has not yet committed funds for the road project and has not specified the extent of work it plans to do on the road, but has committed some engineering for the project, according to Toombs. Marks said that reconstruction of the road

would make an ideal time to make improvements on city water and sewer lines, which may not be adequate for future development.

"It's a tremendous project with lots of hoops to jump through," said Toombs. "It may not fly." The project will require funding from several sources—including a bond issue or local improvement district, the highway department, grants, in kind work and donations and other sources. Toombs said that grants are available, "We've got to scrap for them." Tentative plans are to place a funding measure on the November 1992 ballot.

Former mayor and owner of the local Coast to Coast store, Cliff Green commented, "We have an opportunity to do a major beautification project to enhance our town. We must take hold of it and try to fix Main Street like it should be. This project is in character with

preserving our future in that all entities are working together. Tourism is the coming attraction for our small town economy, particularly since we have a major spot on the Blue Mountain Scenic Byway."

Enhancing the area has been a two-year project of HEDC, VISION 2000 committee, the city and the tourism committee.



Fred Toombs

Hughes honored by 4-H for LABO exchange work



Joyce Hughes (l) receives silver plate from Carol Bennett

Carol Bennett, OSU Extension agent, on behalf of the Oregon 4-H Foundation, presented Joyce Hughes with a silver plate in recognition of her time and dedication to the LABO/LEX program. Joyce is the local coordinator for the total inbound exchange in Morrow and Gilliam Counties.

LABO, LEX and UTREK

Japanese organizations and the Oregon Cooperative Extension Service of Oregon State University coordinate the 4-H/Japanese Exchange program. It is a two-way host family and cultural exchange. 4-H'ers are placed with host families. The stay is approximately four weeks.

Oregon has been hosting Japanese children since 1973.

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