

# Local couple still want dog park on South Main

By David Sykes

Ralph and Sally Walker of Heppner say they still want to establish a dog park on city-owned property near the old swimming pool at South Main Street in Heppner, even though local woman Kim Cutsforth says she wants to put a miniature golf course on that same property. To complicate the matter the city council has implied both parties might get the property.

"We are still pursuing the creation of an off-leash dog park on the strip of land that was offered to us by the city council back in June of 2020," the Walkers said in a letter received by the council at its monthly meeting Monday night. Only problem is the council last month gave Cutsforth tacit go-ahead to do a feasibility study locating a miniature golf course on the same land.

After talking to the Walkers last spring, however, the council had not heard any follow-up so last month told Cutsforth they liked her golf course idea, and she should move forward with plans. In their letter Monday the Walkers blamed the pandemic and "several surgical procedures" that kept them from doing much work on the project. However, they did say some progress had

been made. "In order to apply and receive grants," they wrote, "We must get a 501(c)(3) or a commitment of support from the city. We have the information on two, possibly three, dog park grants that we plan to apply for in the spring of 2022," they wrote. They said Ralph Walker has also been spending time removing puncture vine and spraying weeds on the property to stop any further infestation. They also contacted City Manager Kraig Cutsforth about the city donating a fire hydrant for the project. They say the city promised them one of the hydrants.

Knowing they had two different people looking at the property, the council last month went so far as to suggest another location for the dog park on property near Hager Park underneath the Willow Creek Dam. However, Monday this idea seemed not to be feasible. Monday the council took no action on the two proposals made on the same piece of property.

In other business following Monday's meeting some councilmembers went down and checked out progress of the new bathroom and information booth facility at the Thompson Food Court next to the Post Office. In addition to

the new structure the city plans on putting in cement part way back into the lot and then asphalt further back. The food court has become a popular place for people to gather, eat and visit with several covered picnic tables already installed there. Concession trailers are also parked at the food court selling various types of food.

In other business at Monday's meeting the council discussed what to do about the large amount of trash being left at the free hunter dump trash dumpsters on Main Street in Heppner. The dumpsters are there for use by hunters leaving the area with trash to dump. Hunting is a big part of Heppner's economy, and the city offers the dumpsters as a service to the hunters.

However, the service has become so popular more and more dumpings are required. Miller and Sons Disposal came to the council last month and said more pickups would have to be scheduled in order for them to keep up with the large amount of trash.

The city pays Millers about \$5,000 from August through October to pick up the trash, but Millers said they need more pickups to keep up. The council wants to keep offering the service

but needs more money to keep up with the expanded use.

It has also come to city officials' attention that some locals are dumping their trash there for free. The service is not intended for local use. After discussion the council decided to try harder to keep locals from dumping, put out a donation box for money from the hunters, and ask the city manager to write a letter to the Forest Service seeking additional funding of \$2,000 to keep up with garbage, since the Forest Service also has a stake in keeping the trash from being dumped in the forest.

In other business the council voted to raise base water rates from the current \$24.53 per month to \$25.78 and sewer rates from \$34.84 to \$39.84 for a total of \$6.25 per month.



Heppner City Council member Corey Sweeney inspects new water fountain being installed at Thompson Square Food Court. -Photo by David Sykes

Usage of water over 7,500 gallons is currently \$1 per 1,000 gallons and both this and the base rates will be raised over the next five years automatically based on inflation.

The city's accountants have recommended the increases so the city can keep up with replacement and repair costs to the water and sewer system.

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