

Commissioners Report

From the Bill and Herman Show....

The boys are concerned that Jackson County Republicans just shot themselves in the foot by passing a party resolution declaring the 2020 presidential election fraudulent. Herman says his advice to taking a position is “what’s the downside” and if nobody can come up with a good upside “I just kinda tend to stay away from it.”

Herman calls Democrats “cagey” for figuring out all kinds of ways “to filter taxpayer dollars through the system to support Democrats,” but that their “downfall” is pushing a lot of policies that “simply wind up not working.”

One of those things they think will end up not working is the Fire Risk Map recently released as part of SB 762 aimed at reducing wildfire risk in Oregon. The map, after creating some confusion, was taken back to the drawing board. Bill says it supports the “Gang Green” agenda, whatever that is. Bill talked to state Rep. Lily Morgan about SB 762 and she explained it to him, but that didn’t keep him from deriding it and claiming the bill was just an excuse for Democrats in Salem to get property owners to fund the Oregon Department of Forestry through higher fire fees, even though Rep. Pam Marsh says that is not true.

Bill Interviews Betsy Johnson August 8

Bill’s first question to Betsy is “Why run? Are you a spoiler?”

Betsy says she’s running because she believes Oregon is “hungry for change.” She says she started out as a Republican, then switched “when they got too far right” but calls herself a “business-friendly Democrat.” She told Bill she was all that’s standing between Tina Kotek and Mahonia Hall, the official governor’s residence in Oregon. Betsy claims she raised the alarm about SB 762 when the bill was being debated because they “didn’t look downstream and see insurance being cancelled.” (Rep. Pam Marsh says she consulted the Oregon Insurance Commissioner who assured her people’s insurance wouldn’t be canceled because of the map)

Bill accused Betsy of “collapsing” her reputation for defending the second amendment when she came out for gun background checks after the Uvalde school shooting. She said “We have to do something” but she opposes Measure 114 requiring permits issued only after a background check and payment of a fee. The Measure also prohibits magazines capable of holding more than 10 rounds of ammunition.

Bill asked Betsy if she would impose vaccine mandates. She said she voted against mandates because she believes getting a vaccine should be a personal choice. On the issue of choice, Bill asked her if she supports school choice and funding to follow the child. Betsy says she’d “take a look at it” and speculated that Kotek would lower standards for public schools although that hasn’t been substantiated.

Betsy didn’t defend walkouts as a way to stop a quorum. She said there wouldn’t be a need for a walkout if she were governor because she wouldn’t sign a bill without bipartisan support. She

denied she's a "climate denier" even though she voted against Cap and Trade and has opposed environmental legislation.

After the interview Bill said Betsy's "butt must be getting sore from riding the fence."

Interview with Jonathan Knapp, Josephine County Sheriff candidate

Bill asked Jon what he is doing now. Jon said he's the development director for Concierge Security. When asked why he's running for sheriff he said "because there's a lot not getting done."

Jon says after spending 20 years as a sheriff's deputy in Arizona he knows how a sheriff's department should be run, and the current sheriff, Dave Daniels, is running a sheriff's department more like a police department. His example of this was sending more than one deputy out to a call at a time. He said Daniels hasn't run things efficiently and has blown through his reserves, leading to the financial crisis he's in now.

Jon said he likes the 3 percent sales tax idea but thinks there's some "red flags" regarding the ordinance to be put on the ballot in November. He says the Commissioners' claim that it would generate \$18 million a year is "deceptional." Given all the tax exceptions, dividing between the cities, juvenile justice and the DA's office, the sheriff would probably end up with around \$3 million, which isn't all he says he needs. Voters have been backed into a corner with the sales tax, he says, because if it doesn't pass the sheriff will be out of money by June 30 and have to lay off his patrol.

As sheriff, Jon says he would look at how to generate more money, such as imposing impound fees for vehicles used during a DUII and use volunteers to do crime scenes. "Civilians don't have to be sworn deputies to take fingerprints," he said. Bill asked if that would get him "sideways" with the union.

"I can't hire people to do a union position but you can volunteer to do a union position," he answered.

August 9 Bill and Herman Show

Bill called the FBI search warrant to confiscate classified materials from Trump's Mar-a-Lago storage rooms "Gestapo tactics" that crossed a "Rubicon." Herman said the "raid" was the "worst hit on our republic that I can remember." (He must have forgotten about Jan. 6) He said Democrats really crossed the line and "are desperate and will do anything to prevail in 2024."

He then went on about how the Governor called him to discuss SB 762 and claimed they had a "long conversation." Then he blamed Sen. Ron Wyden for helping to pass Biden's Inflation Reduction Act that Herman said will increase taxes for people who make under \$400,000 (which isn't true). He also complained that money in the bill for forest cleanup won't help because in 5 to 7 years "we'll be back where we started."

After Herman signed off Bill interviewed a filmmaker named Joel Gilbert who has made such notable films as “Elvis Found Alive, The Trayvon Hoax, and Paul McCartney Really is Dead.” He talked about his latest work “revealing” that Michelle Obama has a shady history and is being groomed by deep state forces to run for president in 2024. Wikipedia calls Gilbert a “conspiracy theorist.”

Notes from Commissioners’ Week of Aug 16.

Herman was gone, presumably on vacation so he didn’t have to cast a final vote to put the Law Enforcement Retail Activities Tax, the official name of the 3 percent seasonal sales tax, or the measure asking voters if they want psilocybin service centers in Josephine County. However, Acting Chair Commissioner Darin Fowler and Commissioner Dan DeYoung were giddy with anticipation of finally putting the issues in voters’ hands.

Now they start their Selling of the Sales Tax, which will be the carrot and stick approach. The carrot is all the wonderful things the sheriff can accomplish once he gets stable funding. The stick is if this doesn’t pass Josephine County will become a lawless haven for criminals.

Their PR tactic is to convince as many groups of people as possible between now and November that making people pay a 3 percent sales tax between March and October of every year is an innovative and practical way to fund a sheriff’s department. They are still using the \$18 million figure as expected revenue from this tax, even though DeYoung has said he really has no idea how much it will bring in. The \$18 million figure came from the desk of a friend of Commissioner Herman Baertschiger’s in Salem.

“We need the support of organizations to help people get over the sticker shock of a sales tax,” said DeYoung. “Now other counties are waiting to see what happens in Josephine County. Curry is anticipating putting a sales tax on their May ballot,” he said.

Fowler said they want to fill people with enough information so they don’t turn away from the sales tax idea “with their hair on fire.”

During their Legal Update Workshop last Tuesday representatives from the deputy’s union showed up to listen to DeYoung and Fowler try to talk them into supporting the tax. DeYoung told them the tax would bring in \$18 million. They left saying they appreciated any effort toward finding stable funding for the sheriff’s department.

Fowler and DeYoung also discussed what to do if voters approve psilocybin service centers and psilocybin manufacturing in the county. They were advised to have an ordinance ready that establishes regulations for such businesses. Assistant County Counsel Allison Smith was directed to work on such an ordinance.

County Forester Dave Streeter showed up at this meeting with a proposal. He wants to go ahead with an analysis to find out if the county can get carbon credits for trees it doesn’t sell off county timber property. The analysis, done by a company called L&C Carbon. would cost \$7,500 but could possibly lead to about a half-million dollars a year for the county. The initial analysis doesn’t obligate the county to get into the program and can be funded by the Forester’s budget,

so Fowler and DeYoung approved of the initial analysis. This could help preserve the Pipe Creek timber stand, he said.

During their Weekly Business Session Aug. 17, final approval was given to the sales tax and psilocybin ballot measures. Because the City of Grants Pass opted to allow psilocybin service centers and manufacturing within city limits city voters will not have the option of voting against psilocybin inside city boundaries. However, they will be able to vote on whether or not to allow psilocybin in the county, according to Assistant Legal Counsel Allison Smith. It's a quirk, she said. Cave Junction is still pondering the psilocybin issue but Smith said they are considering allowing it after a two-year moratorium.

There were no public comments so they moved on.

Fowler and DeYoung publicly thanked those who helped the sales tax effort. Fowler thanked the city council members who voted to support it and, "boldly put in they would reduce their law enforcement levy by a dollar if the tax passes." (The city did give themselves some flexibility on the amount of reduction however, depending on the actual revenues they receive from the tax.)

DeYoung said he wanted to give a "shout out" to the city council and staff because they worked together with the county "for the sake of law enforcement."

"Josephine County has hit the mat after being kicked around for year after year," DeYoung said. He added that Josephine County will cause people in other counties to say, "how did you do that," if the sales tax passes.

Fowler launched into a sales pitch for the tax from the dais, saying "We have a chance to try and fix this permanently ourselves and not stick our hand out to anybody to help us but solve our own problem and we'll get some help from those tourists that come through and they'll help pay this. And from all those cash society folks whether you're on the druggie or on another side where you do jobs for cash, whatever that is. That tax will be collected when you go spend it at some retail place. And so it's a tough nut to swallow but let's have that conversation. It's that important. It's this moment in time of history when Josephine County can do something for themselves and have someone else help to pay for it. Which is what you've been asking for in essence when you say nor more property tax."

During Thursday's Administrative Workshop Eric Wade, Business Operations Supervisor for the City of Grants Pass, thought he was bringing a routine matter to the Board. He asked Fowler and DeYoung to enter into an intergovernmental agreement to raise the Construction Excise Tax for Grants Pass School District No. 7 from one dollar per square foot for residential to \$1.23 and from 50 cents per square foot to 61 cents for non-residential construction with a maximum of \$30,700. This would fall in line with what Three Rivers School District collects, he said. Wade added that the county's administration fee for collecting the tax would go from 1 percent to 4 percent if this agreement is approved.

Fowler threw a fit. "I don't feel I can agree to this for political reasons because I don't think the school needs any more money from us. They get enough from the state and they get backfilled by the state. I can't see limiting the affordability of housing with this tax to support schools. I

don't know why anyone would want to so I'm shocked we're hurting our housing market for this reason and I don't know how to politically get around that."

Wade said he wasn't advocating for the agreement. "I'm just kind of facilitating this."

But he did tell the Board the school district would probably say there is a disparity between what Three Rivers gets and what they get and they'd like to close that disparity.

"I'd love to have that conversation with them because I could just talk about bus and fuel and you get the same per student in the county as you get in the city so there's a disparity there. Why don't we get more in the county? I could talk all day about disparities. Commissioner DeYoung, cut me off here, would ya!" said Fowler.

"How about a continue on from Commissioner DeYoung," DeYoung said. "I gotta fully agree with Commissioner Fowler. This is paced wrong at the wrong time at the wrong table. Going from 1 percent to 4 percent, that's a huge leap for mankind and I had a complaint from a person building a house on Lower River Road a couple of years ago about the Construction Excise Fee and I believe I was told at the county level it was \$2 a square foot for residential. You know anything about that?" DeYoung asked.

Wade said he thought it was \$1 per square foot in the county but he'd check it out.

Fowler and DeYoung decided to table a vote on the agreement until they could get some school representatives to come and make a case for it and County Development Director Mark Stevenson to give his take concerning the fee.

In other business Thursday they approved a metal cell tower on fairgrounds property that will replace an older wood structure. The new tower will be able to hold more antennas so the county will make more money from it. Finance Director Sandy Novak appeared asking permission to transfer some of the sheriff's unspent ARPA funds from one account to another so they could help pay for another Bearcat Armored Vehicle, a smaller one that can get up remote roads easier, she said. She was given permission to do that.

Fowler and DeYoung also approved a Board Order cancelling next week's Business Session because they won't have a quorum.

At the end of the meeting DeYoung got in a complaint about a letter to the editor in the Courier that was critical of the Board. He blamed the Courier for the writer's warped perspective about the Board. Fowler asked for prayers for fire fighters and urged people to "ask God to show mercy on our forests."