

## Commissioner Report for Sept. 1-8 2022

Commissioner Dan DeYoung is dreaming big. He revealed his dream during the Sept. 1 Administrative Workshop as Finance Director Sandy Novak was giving her a report on the status of various ARPA-funded projects (American Rescue Plan Act) in Josephine County. DeYoung sat back and said what he'd like to see is the construction of a new county administrative building where all county offices would be in one place.

"We ought to start making a motion to build a brand new admin building for the whole Josephine County to be in one building so we can bring all these...so there will be a desk for Public Works, there will be a desk for Parks, there will be a desk for everybody so when somebody comes in to the Josephine County Administration Building they can get their building permit, they can see the clerk, they can see Wally (Wally Hicks, County Legal Counsel), they can see a Commissioner, all in one building and then the courts can have this whole building (the Courthouse) to themselves and the parking and everything else. And I'd like to put that on the Christmas list for I don't know when," said DeYoung.

Novak quietly told him there is no money for such a thing. DeYoung talked of bonds and said if the county could get rid of all the debt service it has now it might be able to pull off a construction project. The county needs a master plan which includes such a project, he said, just in case some grants come along.

Fowler, who chaired the meeting in Commissioner Herman Baertschiger's absence, just mumbled "that's a big lift."

"Capital plans are not about money, it's about a dream," said DeYoung, who went on to lament about lost opportunities in the past "when we could've bought land up by the freeway, then sold some off for housing lots..."

Other than the big dream discussion matters were fairly routine during the workshop. The annual bus pass program for Rogue Community College was approved. The college pays the county Transit Department \$30,000 so students and staff can ride busses to and from the campus for free. This is an on-going program.

Commissioners also discussed a rezoning matter after discovering the Grants Pass Overnights RV Park and Campground was sitting in a residential zone. It was changed to commercial with no objections.

Commissioners also set in motion approval of a \$68,000 contract for electrical work on the Airport's new fuel system. This is being financed by ARPA money. Novak reported that nearly all the projects approved by Commissioners to be funded by ARPA have been started, with some close to completion. The Grants Pass Airport fuel system was one of the larger projects which DeYoung said came just in time. The old, underground fuel tank had a life of 30 years and has been in operation 31 years and if it had started leaking the county would have had a big problem, he said.

Fowler repeated his mantra about how he doesn't feel bad about taking federal money for county improvements because the federal government cheated Josephine County out of timber receipts.

A host of employee recognitions opened the Weekly Business Session Sept. 7. After that Commissioners gave final approval to the matters discussed during the Admin Workshop and listened to comments from citizens. All three Commissioners were present.

First up as always was Judy Ahrens who said juvenile crime in Josephine County is a result of the poor education students get at public schools here. Jeff Clark urged people to come out to the September 15 meeting at the Josephine County Fairgrounds from 6:30-8:30 pm where Ron Smith and those attending are going to figure out how to "stomp down" SB 762, a bipartisan bill to provide \$220 million to improve wildfire preparedness. Clark said, "we must protect our property rights and choose how to stomp out this law."

Also speaking was a woman named Cassandra who is on a quest to solve homelessness. She said part of the problem is communication. "There's a real disconnect between our community and our capacity to be able to communicate with our community and because of that we have a lot of people having conversations that are not funneling into an identifying channel that represents a direction moving forward, especially as it relates to our housing crisis and our homeless population."

Then Howard Oswald got up to discuss a breakthrough technology that turns soil into solid rock. Lith Tech is a method of mixing old road base soils with a substance to create a hard surface that is eco-friendly and cheaper than the current paving process, he said. He asked to meet with Commissioners about this.

Commissioners responded to the concerns about the homeless by referring Cassandra to the Grants Pass City Council since most homeless live in the city. They were interested in the soil-to-stone claim and asked Howard to schedule a meeting so they could learn more about it.

Commissioner Herman Baertschiger said he and Fowler agree that our public school system is letting kids down but it will only change "when the people change." He said he was angry about the last two state legislative sessions where legislation was passed without much public input but he didn't specifically address SB 762.

Fowler said SB 762 "really got hackles up" but the state has been responsive so perhaps there's hope. He then went on to praise the firefighting efforts around Josephine County that have protected communities.

The meeting ended with DeYoung's pitch for the sales tax measure on the ballot, saying voters will have to decide whether to fund or defund law enforcement.

## Right-Wing Radio

Herman hasn't been on the radio for a few weeks but as the election draws closer the indignation grows louder. Christine Drahan is being criticized for trying to appeal to "Willamette Valley voters" while ignoring the concerns of the rural areas. She's also being pilloried for not being loud enough about her loyalty to Trump. One commenter called her a "valley girl."

Tina Kotek is also much discussed as a vile enemy who would be Kate Brown to the power of 10. According to The Bill Meyer Show and his phone-in commenters, "Kotex" as they call her, is the embodiment of evil who will drive Oregon into rack and ruin. Several callers said they would move to Texas if she's elected governor. Idaho, they said, is becoming too liberal.

A few callers seemed to consider Betsy Johnson a protest vote candidate, someone they might vote for out of spite for Drahan who they don't trust. They don't trust Johnson either but want to teach Drahan a lesson for being a moderate.

The gun safety initiative, Measure 114 is also being trashed on the radio but some commentators said it should worry Democrats because it will drive Republicans out to vote against it. It was noted that the Democratic Party of Oregon's Gun Owners caucus has come out against the bill, which should guarantee its demise, but "this is Oregon" they say, where liberal causes tend to prevail.