

Josephine County Democrats

Minutes, Oct. 12, 2021

Zoom/UU building

After a welcoming social Chair Dorothy Yetter reminded everyone of the upcoming election in November and invited attendees to get involved because even the smallest contribution is helpful. As an example, she said a “rapid response” to a call for action regarding a poorly written anti-mandate county resolution worked. After pushback, county commissioners abandoned the resolution consisting of a list of out-of-context quotes and a vow to fight the vaccine mandate “with words.” She said anyone interested in helping out can contact her at

Chair@josephinedemocrats.org

The minutes were approved, and a new PCP was voted in. Ron Wright, retiring chair of the county Planning Commission. Treasurer Colette Storms said the treasury took in \$338 dollars more than it spent last month, thanks to some new donors and increases by some regular ones.

Speakers included state Sen. Jeff Golden with a legislative update, Sheriff Dave Daniel on the necessity of passing the jail and juvenile levy, county animal shelter manager Laura Jansen on the need to increase the shelter levy, Illinois Valley Fire District Board Member and treasurer Michelle Binker to discuss the fire district levy renewal and Rick Better from the Williams Rural Fire District to talk about the Williams RFPD levy renewal. Dorothy pointed out that every county voter will have two levies, the jail/juvenile and the shelter levy. If you live in Illinois Valley you will have three, including the fire district levy. If you live in the Williams area you will also have three levies on the ballot.

Sen. Jeff Golden: The last legislative session was mostly about keeping bad things from getting worse while the things he really wanted to get done were put on hold while dealing with COVID, keeping people from being evicted, and helping people recover from wildfires. \$600 million was allocated for Alameda fire recovery and legislation to help people live with the inevitability of fires was passed. While not a climate change bill, the legislation addressed responding to fires, making property more fire resistant and building adaptive communities. Pushback came from those who believe they don’t want the government telling them what to do on their property. Republicans were difficult to deal with during the session, he said, voting no on almost everything as a protest and while calling it an “illegitimate session.” Progress, however, was made on recycling, with bills that make the producer avoid packaging that isn’t recyclable. A scaled down climate change bill, HB2021 focuses on making all power generated in Oregon greenhouse gas free by 2040. American Rescue Plan Act funding was also channeled into three areas...behavior health, housing and water. On redistricting, Golden said it should be done by a non-partisan commission since, as a state representative, voting on a district you are to be re-elected in is a conflict, but the dilemma is that redistricting isn’t just a state matter. Oregon has to balance out red states where gerrymandering gives Republicans an advantage, even when they are even in the minority. We have to “play the game we got,” he said.

Sheriff Dave Daniel: Making his case for renewing the 93 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value levy, he said promises for the money are the same as last time, that all who are arrested go to jail and that an external audit be held to make sure the money is going to fund the jail and juvenile detention exactly as it is supposed to do. The levy funds most of the jail and juvenile facilities with the state kicking in about 12 percent and about 12 percent coming from the county's general fund. Josephine County prides itself on being a low-tax county, he said, and he doesn't mind working harder and smarter to get the job done. When asked if he was going to run again, Daniel said "Absolutely. We've worked to hard to let things slide."

Laura Jansen: The Animal Shelter levy is being increased from 8 cents per thousand to 11 cents because without the increase services will have to be cut back. Showing what the shelter looked like before the 8 cent levy, there were no medical services available for the animals, all sick or injured animals were euthanized, kill rates were high, animal control was limited, little effort was made to reunite lost pets with their owners and the shelter was barely staffed. Since the levy was passed five years ago, animals now receive veterinary care if sick or injured, get spayed or neutered and chipped before adoption and the kill rate is less than 10 percent, mostly animals too sick or vicious to put up for adoption. There really is no such thing as a no-kill shelter, especially, as a county shelter where they must take in every animal brought to the shelter either as a stray, as belonging to someone jailed, as animals brought in from an abuse situation or an owner surrender. Unlike a private non-profit "we can't pick and choose," she said. The shelter, located in Merlin, takes in about 2,000 animals a year. All funds donated to the shelter and adoption fees go to the animals. The levy pays for staff and two animal control officers who work in coordination with the sheriff's department. Rumors circulating that the officers issue citations to make money for the shelter are not true, Jansen said, since citation money goes to the courts and not the shelter. With the 8 cent levy the shelter was spending down its contingency fund and collecting bottles and cans to help meet expenses. Without the additional 3 cents cuts would have to be made, cuts in staff and medical services and the live release rate of more than 90 percent would decrease. If they levy doesn't pass the shelter will be reduced to a holding space for animals, provide no veterinary services and have to resort to putting down many more animals.

Michelle Binker: The Illinois Valley Fire District levy, at 50 cents per \$1000 assessed value, funds four full time EMTs who have improved response time in emergencies. The continuing levy is more important than ever because fires are more intense and frequent. Board Chair Jerry Allen, who has a farm in Selma, said the full-time responders are backed up by volunteer firemen, providing an important service in the area.

Rick Vetter: The Williams Fire Chief said the 65 cents per \$1000 levy is up for its third renewal. The Williams district is the smallest in the county with a single station and no full-time staff even though it is in a high fire area adjacent to the mountains and includes some of Applegate Valley. Jerry commented that the mutual aid from these small fire districts is fantastic and necessary. The levy provides equipment and services, he said. Equipping one volunteer costs in excess of \$4,000. Support the levy, he said, "and keep us rolling."

After the speakers finished and answered questions from those attending in person and some of those on Zoom, Dorothy announced the November meeting will be a forum on mining. Environmental Caucus Chair Joe Stodola hinted his members have been researching the claims a mining company is making.

The December meeting will be a holiday social, Dorothy said, and hopefully COVID will have receded and boosters available so everyone can attend.

It was also announced that the Unitarian Fellowship will be holding a Zoom panel on What Trans Youths Need at 3 p.m. Saturday.

Bob Bath discussed the potential recall of District 7 board members but Geri Ventura said that had been suspended because of COVID impacts.

Jerry Allen thanked Dorothy and those present for the civic dialogue regarding the ballot measures. Others said the evening was very informative.

Submitted 10/13/21 by Secretary Lynda Demsher