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Former firefighter opposes Seal Rock tax levy

BY MICHAEL HEINBACH
Of the News-Times

SEAL ROCK — During the May 18 special election, voters in the Seal Rock Rural Fire Protection District will decide whether to support a ballot measure to increase the district's tax levy from \$0.40 per \$1,000 of assessed property value to \$0.80 per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

With a simple majority of voter support, or 50 percent plus one vote, the new five-year levy will replace the one currently in place, set to expire June 30, 2022. According to the district, the measure is estimated to generate more than \$465,000 in tax year 2022-23, more than \$480,000 the following year, and increasing to an estimated \$527,462 in the levy's final tax year, 2026-27.

In the summary of the measure on the May 18 special election ballot, Seal Rock Fire states, "The reasons for the request are increasing personnel costs and allowing for adequate staffing. Additional staffing will allow us to better comply with national standards for minimum number of firefighter to be on scene of structure fire."

However, one lifelong Seal Rock resident and a former longtime member of the fire district is rallying his neighbors to vote against the local option tax levy.

Paul Highfill, a former Seal Rock Rural Fire Protection District assistant chief and volunteer firefighter who served 33 years with the department, thinks that doubling the fire district's tax funding is asking too much.

"I think that basically, the board (of SRRFPD directors) hasn't done a good job figuring out our finances right yet," Highfill told the News-Times earlier this week. "Seal Rock has always been solvent in the past, so why now are we going to go broke all of a sudden if we don't double our taxes? I don't want to see them double the doggone thing for the same amount of firefighters and level of service."

Highfill was one of three volunteers who

SEAL ROCK on Page A6

Fire destroys home near courthouse

BY KENNETH LIPP
Of the News-Times

NEWPORT — A Sunday morning blaze in a home at the corner of Hurbert and Olive streets left one half of a duplex destroyed and the other half uninhabitable.

Newport Fire Chief Rob Murphy said firefighters were called to the scene at about 10:30 a.m. to find a duplex at 508 W Olive St. with its west half fully involved, and fire starting to impinge on a home to the north on the same lot.

Murphy said firefighters accessed a fire hydrant and were able to prevent spread to other structures, with mutual aid from Depoe Bay Fire District, Central Oregon Coast Fire and Rescue, Seal Rock Fire District and Toledo Fire Department. Newport Fire responded with three engines, a rescue vehicle and a ladder truck.

Neighbors alerted residents of the east side of the duplex and

FIRE on Page A6



The western half of a duplex (pictured above) on West Olive Street burned Sunday morning, leaving the adjoining half uninhabitable. (Photos by Kenneth Lipp)

A fire investigator from a private firm, hired to assist with the investigation of a blaze on West Olive Street in Newport Sunday morning, visits the fire scene on Tuesday.



Newport to consider room tax hike

BY KENNETH LIPP
Of the News-Times

NEWPORT — The Newport City Council will hold a public hearing May 17 on whether to increase the city's tax on short-term rentals, including vacation homes and traditional lodging establishments, by more than 25 percent. This is being considered in a bid to make up a longstanding imbalance between revenue and expenditure

ROOM TAX on Page A4

New revenue meant to offset structural deficit



If a proposed rate hike passes Newport City Council, Newport short-term rental businesses, including vacation homes and traditional hotels/motels, will charge an additional 2.5 percent in transient room tax beginning in the fall. (Photo by Mathew Brock)

Charges against Seal Rock storeowner amended

DA's office drops aggravated harassment count

BY MICHAEL HEINBACH
Of the News-Times

NEWPORT — The office of Lanee Danforth, Lincoln County District Attorney, dropped one of six initial charges levied against a former California law enforcement officer and current Seal Rock business owner accused of crashing a pickup truck while driving drunk last month, and later spitting on a hospital respiratory therapist.

During an early resolution conference on Monday, April 19, in Lincoln County Circuit Court in Newport, the district attorney's office dropped an aggravated

CHARGES on Page A6

Fire victims still in need of aid

BY MATHEW BROCK
Of the News-Times

OTIS — While the majority of the cleanup has ended and new homes are popping up in Otis weekly, many families hit by the Echo Mountain Complex fire still find themselves struggling to rebuild from little or nothing in the aftermath.

Many Otis families were either uninsured or underinsured during the fire and received either no compensation for their loss or an amount

too low to start rebuilding.

Melynda and Tye Small, who have lived in Otis for 20 years and led the community's volunteer cleanup effort, found themselves in just such a situation, but they haven't let it deter their efforts to rebuild their town.

Melynda and Tye have headed the volunteer cleanup effort since the start of October and have spent each day since trying to help Otis and its residents recover, cleaning up more than 80

properties in the process. They even spent major holidays such as Easter and Thanksgiving putting

VICTIMS on Page A7

Melynda and Tye Small stand in front of the volunteer cleanup command post in Otis. The post is now shut down, but the Smalls' efforts to rebuild their town continue. (Photo by Mathew Brock)



Kim

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