

50 cents

Weather

Pretty warm

We can expect only a few clouds on Thursday as another day in the 90-degree range is in store. Page 2A.



Overnight low Thursday's high 54 90

What's inside

A special gem makes the cut

A local gemologist has made the cut for the Smithsonian Institute, which has acknowledged the state stone he sent to the famous museum.



COMMUNITY / Page 6A

Kobe wants out

Lakers' star Kobe Bryant asked to be traded on Wednesday morning, a day after calling the team's front office "a mess." He said there was nothing the Lakers could do to change his mind.

SPORTS / Page 1B

Teen survey

We asked 130 teens four questions about where they like to eat, drink and hang out. From coffee spots to fast food to a restaurant for a special occasion, they had plenty of opinions.



UNDER 21 / Page 5B

Kickin' cancer

Cancer survivor Mary Lou Thomason is this year's grand marshal for the Relay for Life, which is scheduled this weekend with plenty of events and opportunities to help find a cure, while having fun.

HEALTHY LIVING / Page 6B

A look ahead

Up and away

Sixteen balloons will be floating high over town this weekend as the 11th annual Wild Rogue Balloon Festival runs Friday through Sunday.



THURSDAY

Where to find it

- Abby10C
Business10B
Classified1-9C
Comics10C
Community6-9A
Entertainment9B
Healthy Living6-7B
Opinion4A
Sports1-3B

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45 county workers still facing layoffs

By Stacy D. Stumbo of the Daily Courier

A one-year extension of Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act funding, approved by Congress and signed into law by President Bush, will mean little to about 45 Josephine County employees facing layoffs.

The one-year \$425 million extension of county payments to more than 700 timber counties in 39 states will translate to about \$12 million for Josephine County's general fund, Commissioner Dave Toler said. That's enough

County payments extension will maintain criminal justice, but extra money won't open libraries or prevent other layoffs

to maintain criminal justice services at present levels and put about \$6 million in the bank.

The money will not be used to re-open local libraries or to prevent layoffs in virtually every other county department. Layoffs are expected to take effect on Thursday.

Toler said he and fellow commissioners will recommend the plan to the Budget Committee

when it reconvenes June 7 at 6 p.m. in Anne Basker Auditorium, 604 N.W. Sixth St. in Grants Pass.

"We heard the voters," Toler said of a three-year \$42.6 million levy proposal that was rejected by voters on May 15. The proposal would have preserved, and even increased some services in the baseness of the federal funding.

About 88 full-time employees in the Juvenile Justice Center, Sheriff's and District Attorney's offices will keep their jobs if the committee agrees to the commissioners' plan.

By putting about half of the federal payment in reserves, the county will have approximately \$9.3 million that will be available to fund public safety in 2008-09.

Budget Committee will reconvene on June 7 at the Anne Basker Auditorium.

"It's going to hurt," Toler said. "But it's going to hurt a lot more in the long-run than if we don't do something now."

Reach reporter Stacy D. Stumbo at 474-3806 or sstumbo@thedailycourier.com

Public can check out river plans

Three options still on drawing board following revisions

By Jim Moore of the Daily Courier

Consultants hired by Grants Pass to craft plans for a proposed Downtown River District plan went back to the drawing board following an open house in January. On Thursday Grants Pass residents will have an opportunity to comment on revised plans.

There are still three options, one emphasizing a convention center, one called the Sixth Street emphasis and a third referred to as mixed use.

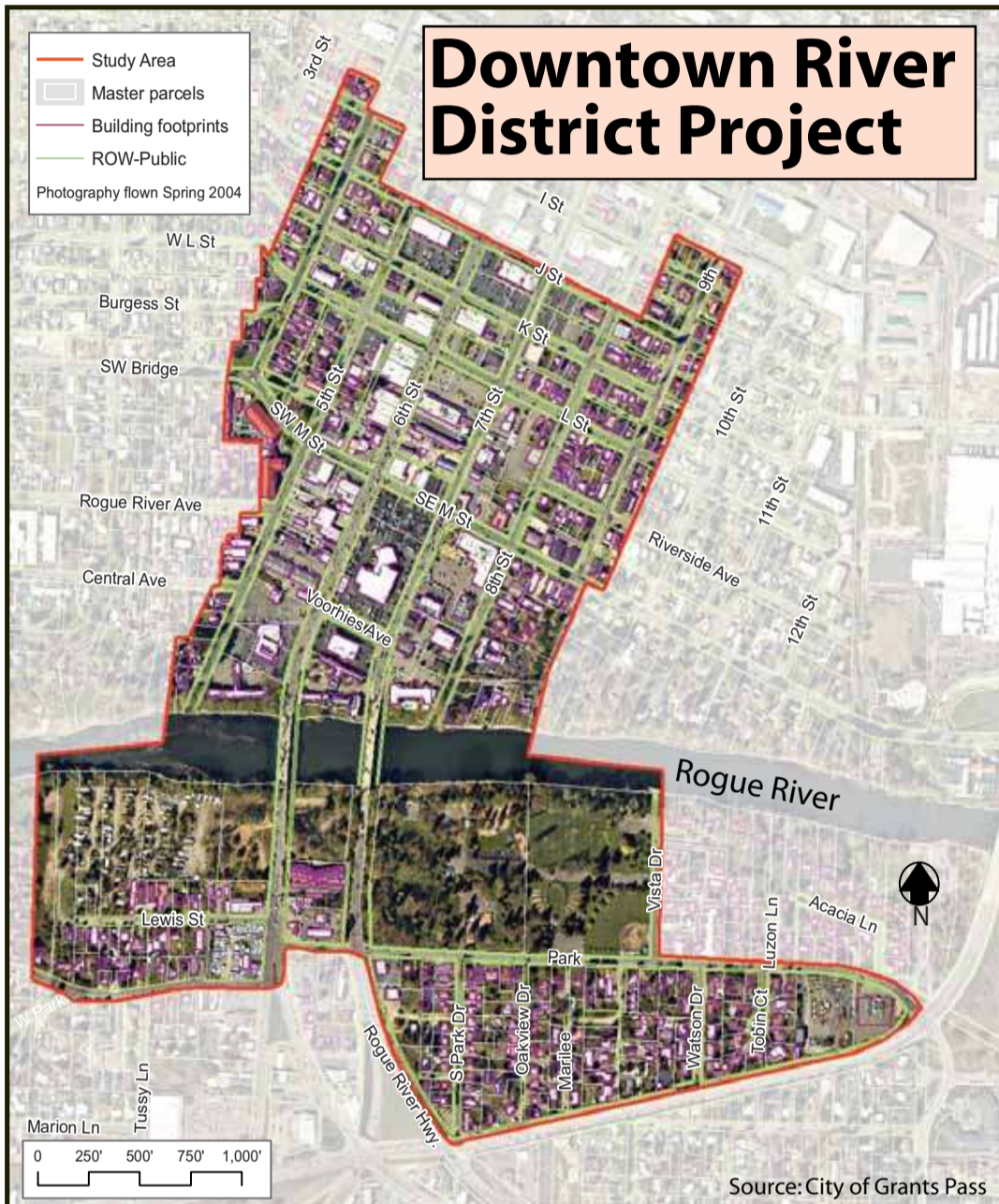
In January, the third option was termed a housing emphasis. "People thought it was too dense and too intense, so we changed the housing options," said John Spencer of Spencer & Kupper in Portland. "The biggest change we've made is how we've shown development and redevelopment possibilities south of the river."

All three options include transportation improvements, landscape improvements and extending street trees and pedestrian lighting all the way to the river, he added.

Thursday's meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers at 101 N.W. A St., and residents are urged to attend and voice their preferences and concerns.

"We have to look at all of the feedback and respond to it as best we can," said Tom Schauer, code analyst for Grants Pass who is heading the project.

"For me, this whole thing is to get input from everybody on what they want to see between J Street and the river," said



Vicki Magallon, a local artist who is a member of the Downtown River District Plan Citizens Advisory Committee. Several people at January's

open house did not get the opportunity to speak and instead were directed to use comment cards. Records show more than 100 cards were sub-

mitted, with the majority expressing negative opinions of all three options.

Turn to PLANS, Page 2A

GP police patrol in unique vehicle

T3 easy to operate and saves plenty in fuel costs

By Howard Huntington of the Daily Courier

It's already becoming a familiar sight, humming by like a little battery-powered chariot on patrol in Grants Pass.

Saturday's debut of the new T3 probably turned as many heads as any float in the Boatnik Parade. "It's a new product. We're the only ones in Oregon to have it," city police Sgt. Jeff Geddings said.

After studying several different vehicles, the city's Department of Public Safety rated the T3 Motion best for navigating increasingly busy streets.

It's an easy-to-operate three-wheeler that can go 25 miles between battery charges, at 8 cents a day for the juice.

If need be, the T3 can just keep going and going on backup batteries installed in the field.

It can burst forth with lights and siren at 25 mph, fast enough to catch anyone on foot, and squeeze into spaces less than 3 feet wide. It has a zero-degree turning radius and it's nearly silent.

Police paid almost \$8,000 for their T3, using money from auctioned old squad cars. Fuel savings alone are expected to pay for the T3 in about 18 months. "If we'd gone with a pickup, it would have cost about \$5,000 a year just to put gas in it," Geddings said.

He rode the T3 for the Boatnik parade. "I put about 14 miles on it, so that was the equivalent of about 4 cents worth of energy

that we used," he said.

The T3 was also an ice-breaker — between Geddings and people in the crowd who were curious about it.

"We are probably going to be using it on a daily basis in our historic downtown area," Geddings added. "We normally send people there on foot and that has worked pretty well. But, as generally happens, they could be at one part of downtown" when something happens at the other.

"We are optimistic right now that, if we had the opportunity, we could put people on it at all hours. It has movable headlights" and makes about as much noise as a bicycle.

The T3 also has taken a big load off Jennifer Souza's feet and enable her to cover a lot more ground in enforcing parking regulations.

She's averaging about 12 questions per hour about the T3, "people asking me what it is, how it works. I have them yell out of cars, 'How fast does it go?'"

"It's a conversation starter. I talk to people who probably normally wouldn't talk to me unless they had a problem."

At a maximum of 425 pounds, the T3 could haul about 4 1/2 Jennifer Souzas, so she has room to spare for ticketbooks and a defibrillator — particularly handy when people see the fines they're going to pay for parking in a handicapped-only space.

For more information, call police at 474-6370.



TIMOTHY BULLARD/Daily Courier

Community Service Officer Jennifer Souza uses the new T3 for use in parking enforcement and downtown patrol.

State police budget will be enough to add 100 new troopers

By Julia Silverman Associated Press Writer

SALEM — The Oregon House passed a \$327 million budget for the Oregon State Police on Tuesday, enough to add 100 new troopers to patrol the state's highways over the next two years, but not enough to restore round-the-clock coverage.

The budget goes to the governor.

The vote was 55-2, but Republican after Republican stepped up to complain that the proposal wouldn't pay for 24-7 coverage of the state's highways. That would require adding 39 additional troopers, they said, at an estimated cost of \$4.1 million.

Democrats have said that the state police — perennial victims of budget cutbacks — can't be entirely restored in one fell swoop without a new revenue source, and that 100 new troopers is a strong step in the right direction. They've also noted that the police force needs time to recruit and train new troopers.

The budget also includes money to hire new forensics workers and officers who will investigate identity theft and drug trafficking cases, as well as \$1.1 million to reduce the state's backlog of DNA samples.

Various attempts to raise dedicated funding for state police are still percolating in the Capitol, including a proposal by Rep. Sal Esquivel, R-Medford, to send an increase in the beer tax to the ballot for a vote, with the money going to state police and alcohol rehabilitation programs.

"A lot of them lack the courage to come forth and do what's right," Esquivel said of opposition to his proposal among fellow Republicans. "It's very difficult for some of them to vote for a tax. But my bill is letting the people determine if they want the tax."

Esquivel, along with Rep. Fred Girod, R-Stayton, voted against the police budget.

Girod called the budget "inadequate...I'm really kind of cheesed off with this budget. We need to pony up to fund state police."

Other ideas for a dedicated funding source for state police have fallen by the wayside this session, from Gov. Ted Kulongoski's proposal for an auto insurance tax to a House Republican proposal to set aside 1 percent of the state's general fund budget to state troopers.

Along the way, the dispute has turned into grist for the inevitable campaign mill: On Tuesday, Republicans used parliamentary maneuvers to force a floor vote on adding money for the 39 additional troopers.

The measure failed on a party-line vote, but it allowed Republicans to put Democrats on the record as having voted against round-the-clock highway patrols.

As it stands, the budget would bring the number of troopers to 431, up from the current 332 but 30 short of what the agency had before the 2001-03 recession reduced its ranks.

Oregon has the country's fewest number of state troopers per capita. The number has fallen by almost exactly half, from 665 in 1979, before voters approved a measure that ended the Oregon State Police's ability to rely on the gas tax and other revenue in the Highway Fund.

The Oregon State Police Association says low staffing levels mean they have to spend most of their time responding to crashes, instead of stopping aggressive drivers before accidents happen, or searching out the drugs that travel the I-5 corridor.