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Supervisors ponder Prop. 13 transfer OK

BY SALLY MORRIS
THE TRINITY JOURNAL

Trinity County supervisors voted 4-1 last week to introduce a property tax ordinance that, if enacted when they consider it again Sept. 1, would allow people over age 55 or disabled to transfer their Proposition 13 base-year property values from other counties to newly purchased or constructed homes in Trinity County.

Approved by California voters in 1978, Prop. 13 prevented local agencies from taxing property at a rate of more than 1 percent of its full cash value at the time of purchase or new construction.

Except for a 2 percent annual increase allowed to cover inflation, a property's base-year value does not change until the property is sold or otherwise transferred. For instance, a property purchased in 1980 is continually assessed at that 1980 value until it is disposed of, at which point it is reassessed at its current value.

In the years following enactment of Prop. 13, voters approved additional initiatives authorizing counties to allow people who are over 55 or disabled to transfer their base-year property values from one property to another in a different county.

Doing so enables those qualified to sell their homes for current market value, but take their original property tax value with them when purchasing or building a new home elsewhere.

Only seven of California's 58 counties, including three in the Bay Area and four in Southern California, have enacted ordinances such as the one introduced in Trinity County last week to accept the transfer of base-year value from another county.

The proposed ordinance would be retroactive to August 2005 and sunset in July 2011, allowing any who qualify within that six-year timeframe to reduce their property assessment to what they previously had before moving here.

The ordinance would not entitle anyone to refunds of past property taxes paid in those years, but would extend the benefit beyond the sunset date indefinitely for as long as those qualifying own their properties.

Trinity County supervisors have considered such an ordinance at least twice before, most recently two years ago, when they rejected the idea based on concerns about the potential it presents for lost property tax revenue.

That decision resulted in a lawsuit being filed in Trinity County Superior Court against the Trinity County Board of Supervisors in February 2009 by Duane and Sharon Sceper of Hayfork.

See **PROP. 13**, page 10

It's fair time!



PHIL NELSON | THE TRINITY JOURNAL

Quilt judge Susan Magrini of Redding pores over a quilt entry Monday morning at the Trinity County Fair. For the daily schedule and more on the fair, see page 8

Exhibits, food, fun highlight this year's Trinity County Fair

BY AMY GITTELSOHN
THE TRINITY JOURNAL

The Trinity County Fair is back in all its old-time, animal-loving, pie-eating, down-home country glory.

Returning after a year's cancellation due to last summer's wildfires, the fair theme this year is "Trinity County, Doin' Fine in 2009." All events are at the fairgrounds in Hayfork.

Some fair activities will start on Thursday, Aug. 27.

The fair officially opens on Friday (Kids Day) at 8 a.m.; children 12 and un-

der will get in free. On Saturday, American Indians will get in free, and on Sunday admission is waived for senior citizens.

Otherwise, prices at the gate are \$5 for people ages 13 to 59, \$4 for seniors 60 and older, and \$3 for youths 6 to 12; children 5 and younger get in free.

Children's pedal tractor events introduced at the last fair in 2007 will be back — with some changes. There will be pedal tractor races rather than the tractor pulls which caused repeated breakdowns, said Fair Board President

See **FAIR**, page 10



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Quilt judge Susan Magrini of Redding, center, is assisted by the Log Cabin Quilt Guild's Martha Beymer, left, and Barbara Ledbetter Monday at the Trinity County Fair. Quilting is just one of the many exhibits fairgoers can expect to find at the fair, which officially opens Friday.

County to loan stimulus money

BY SALLY MORRIS
THE TRINITY JOURNAL

In a split 3-2 decision last week, Trinity County supervisors voted to loan \$18,523 in federal stimulus money to Modoc County for a roadway improvement project in downtown Alturas because the allocation is too small and timeline too fast to qualify for any projects here.

Trinity County's allocation of federal grant funds from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act includes \$18,523 specifically for transportation enhancement projects such as sidewalks, pedestrian paths, bike trails and decorative features along roadways.

Director of Transportation Rick Tippet said the federal money comes with stringent requirements and short timelines in which the funds are to be spent to put people to work.

He added the amount is small considering all the paperwork involved "and we don't have a project ready that we could spend it on right away."

Meanwhile, Modoc County has a \$594,000 road project under way in downtown Alturas that can be enhanced with a pedestrian pathway thanks to the \$18,523 contribution from Trinity and the same kind of loan from Plumas County for \$29,620.

The agreement approved by Trinity County requires Modoc to pay the entire amount back out of its State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) shares in the state's 2010 funding cycle or as soon as those funds are available. The advantage for Trinity is that the STIP funds come without the same strings and short deadlines as the ARRA funds.

Initially, Modoc wanted a sunset clause in the agreement stating that if it does not receive adequate STIP shares to reimburse Trinity by 2014, then the agreement would sunset and the funding would not be reimbursed.

Objecting to that, Trinity supervisors struck the clause from the agreement they approved and Modoc has since agreed to accept the money without a sunset clause.

Supervisors Roger Jaegel and Judy Morris voted against the plan.

"This seems very strange to me. Even though \$18,000 is not a lot of money, we have at least three projects in Trinity County I can see that would benefit from it. This is a loan to another county that is very tenuous. It's to be paid back with money from the state which is another question and I say we try our best to get a good priority project to utilize that money in Trinity County," Jaegel said.

He and Morris asked why
See **LOAN**, page 10

Hayfork fire halted at 50 acres

Power out in Hayfork up to 33 hours

BY AMY GITTELSOHN
THE TRINITY JOURNAL

The fire that burned 50 acres near Hayfork on Friday and caused a lengthy power outage was started by cigarette smoking, a Cal Fire spokesman said.

The fire was reported at 5:39 p.m. in the area of Wildwood Road and Highway 3.

"The first unit got at scene right around six o'clock, reporting fire on both sides of Wild-

See **HAYFORK FIRE**, page 10



FREITAS | CONTRIBUTED

Fire climbs the hillside near Highway 3 and Wildwood Road near Hayfork on Friday evening. The blaze eventually burned about 50 acres.

Coffin fire suspect pleads not guilty

TRINITY JOURNAL STAFF

Brenda Joyce Eitzen pled not guilty Thursday to charges alleging that she recklessly started the Coffin fire which burned more than 1,000 acres near Lewiston last week.

Eitzen, 60, of Los Molinos is now represented by Defense Attorney Frank O'Connor, who entered the plea of not guilty on all counts for her. Attorney Derrick Riske, who was appointed earlier, declared a conflict of interest in the case.

See **COFFIN FIRE**, page 10



Eitzen