

MERKLEY MEETING

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changed.

Merkley had little to offer on the subject, saying he did not know the whole history of the B2H project, adding there was no “magical way to do this” without interfering in current land usage and electronic communications.

“I read a *Popular Science* article several years ago that said maybe we can run the wires down the middle of the highway,” Merkley said about a proposal to put the lines in the I-84 highway right of way. “But I guess the technology is not there yet for that. There is a whole dialogue on this already being worked and reworked,” he said about B2H, “but it’s not there yet.”

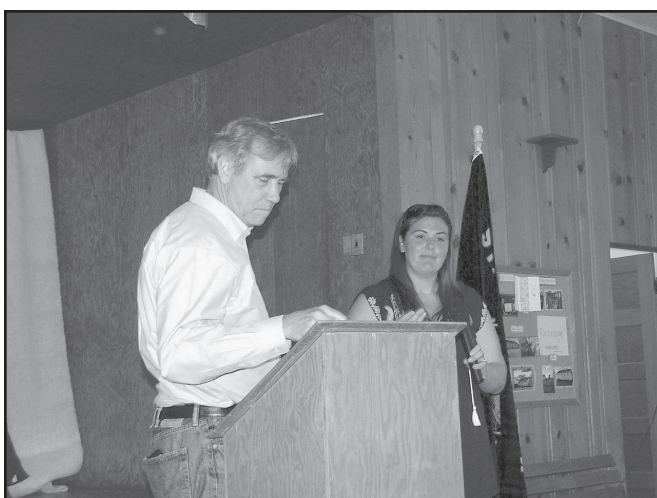
Merkley offered little help on the questions except to say he wished the planners would get better “at being in direct engagement with citizens.”

Another Morrow County farmer says the B2H line as currently proposed “cuts right through our circles” and he urged Merkley to talk to the Navy and try and get them to be more cooperative about easements across bombing range land. Merkley said he met with the Navy and “I asked them if they are listening to the public and considering what the public is asking,” he said.

Morrow County land owner John Luciani also spoke on the B2H line saying it has “been hanging over my head for 10 years.” He said the proposed line runs for 300 miles and is receiving quite a bit of push back in Union County. Luciani said he did not think the line would ever be built. He told Merkley no one wants the power line except certain people in Boardman.

Luciani also questioned Merkley on his support of transgender bathrooms.

“I am upset with a man being able to go into the bathroom with my granddaughter,” he told the Senator, who last month came out in support of President Obama’s orders that public schools allow transgender students to use either the men’s or women’s bathrooms. Merkley and Oregon Senator Ron Wyden both signed a letter saying in part: “We strongly believe that it is our responsibility—not just as senators, but as adults—to



Sen. Merkley presents flag which flew over the U.S. Capitol to Laura Winters for her work on the Lexington Grange Hall. -Photo by David Sykes

protect our children and young people, and to help them flourish. We applaud and thank the Department of Education, as well as the Department of Justice, for sharing that goal, and for their commitment to equality and work in support of LGBT students.”

“How can you agree that this is a good thing?” Luciani asked Merkley. The question drew applause from the audience. Merkley did not answer the question about his support of transgender bathrooms, but did answer several people when questions about gun control were raised.

Recently Merkley joined other Democrats in a sit-down protest at the Capitol over demands for more gun control legislation. He said he wanted legislation that would block anyone on the no-fly list from to put weapons. When asked what would stop the government from expanding the list and starting putting large numbers of people on the no fly list “because they don’t like what you say,” thus depriving them of their second amendment rights, Merkley admitted there would be issues of civil liberties to address when formulating the legislation. Another audience member asked at what point you stop the government from disarming its citizens. Merkley said that the government is not disarming the citizens.

“There is no disarming going on. This is something someone is dreaming up and telling you,” he told the man.

When asked his thoughts on Middle Eastern refugees coming into the country, and a June 2 incident that has been in the news about an alleged sexual assault of a five-year-old Twin Falls, ID girl by three young refugees, Merkley said that he had not heard about it. He did

say that only 1,500 Syrian refugees have so far entered the U.S., and “It is in our blood to let people come in. People have to be thoroughly vetted, and I think they are,” he added.

Morrow County farmer Mark Miller also took the town hall opportunity to ask Merkley if he had heard about the case of the Albany Environmental Protection Agency fines up to \$100 million for building a dike, with the guidance of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, along the Santiam river to protect his land from losing up to 50 acres of ground from erosion.

“The EPA will not listen to anyone,” Miller told Merkley. “They are completely out of control.”

Merkley said he had not heard about the incident, which was widely reported in the media, and advised Miller to get in touch with his staff member saying he has a “red tape team” that would look into it.

Merkley was more animated, however, explaining his belief and support of efforts to stop global warming. In a question about his support of a carbon tax Merkley said the United States needs to “accelerate away from fossil fuels to renewable energy.” He said climate warming was causing longer forest fire seasons, smaller snow packs (except for this year, he added), less irrigation water (especially in Southern Oregon) and a higher acidity in the ocean, which is affecting the fishing industry.

“It (global warming) is affecting farming, fishing and forestry and we must pivot away (from fossil fuels) quickly,” he emphasized. Merkley said he supports continued government subsidies for solar and wind power and away from coal and fossil fuels.

On the subject of housing, Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group director Sheryll Bates told Merkley small communities like those in Morrow County are struggling to find work force housing for people.

“We have no place to put people,” she said. “We don’t need low income, we have good jobs here. The businesses are just trying to bring in workers and we don’t have a place to put them,” she said.

Merkley said government programs are aimed to low income and as far as market housing or workforce housing, “I don’t have an answer for that,” he said.

Before the town hall meeting began Merkley went over some of his recent accomplishments in Washington DC. “We got rid of No Child Left Behind,” he said, saying the government would no longer use “shame and blame” in education. He said it was replaced with new legislation called Every Student Succeeds, which shifts education back to the state level.

Merkley said he also was working on expanding the Forest Service budget for fighting fires so that in a large fire season the rest of the Forest Service budget would not be taken to fill in for larger-than-anticipated firefighting costs. He said he also is working on putting a \$200 million “buffer” in place for big firefighting years.

Merkley also said one program that came out of his past town hall meetings was more low-cost lending for city water projects. He said especially small communities have facilities wearing out and need new infrastructure.

Garden ministry springs to life in Heppner



The new Hopeful Saints Ministry garden in Heppner will soon be providing fresh produce for community members. -Contributed photo

The new Hopeful Saints Ministry garden, developed this spring behind the Lutheran parsonage on Alfalfa Street, will soon be providing fresh produce for members of the community who can’t grow their own—whether limited by space, time or ability.

Assistance with weeding, watering, or harvesting in exchange for produce will be welcome, but is not necessary, and deliveries can be arranged for the home-bound. Before heading to the garden, please call the Shared Ministry office at 541-676-9970 to inquire about the availability of produce or any help needed.

Signs will also be posted around town as various crops mature throughout the summer.

This garden project was made possible in part by a grant from the Oregon Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the donation of labor and materials by many members of the Shared Ministry. It is intended to supplement the twice-yearly food boxes filled by local churches and distributed at All Saints Episcopal Church, no questions asked, to anyone in need—and in this case, anyone who may need a reminder to “Eat your vegetables.”

Chamber Chatter

Sunday, July 10, 5-7 p.m., Heppner’s Music in the Park concert in Heppner City Park: The entertainment for this event will be Slipshod’s Matt Snook and Steve Blanchard with bluegrass tunes. Bring your lawn chairs for an evening of great entertainment sponsored by the Morrow County Unified Recreation District and facilitated by the Shared Ministry of Hope Lutheran Church and All Saints Episcopal Church. Food will be available for purchase to raise money for the Shared Ministry’s continuing efforts to provide clean water to needy communities around the world. Rain location for concert will be All Saints Parish Hall.

Friday, July 29, 8:30 a.m., eighth annual United Way of Umatilla and Morrow Counties Charity Golf Tournament to be held at Wildhorse Resort and Casino’s Championship Golf Course: For the past eight years, the United Way of Umatilla and Morrow counties has hosted this charity golf tournament to help raise funds for our local area United Way partner agencies. Remember, all money donated to your local United Way stays in our area. Call the United Way office at 276-2661 to secure your sponsorship, register a team or donate items for our raffle.

Saturday, July 30, 6-8 p.m. fourth annual “Bowl-

A-Thon” at Desert Lanes in Hermiston, sponsored by Domestic Violence Services: Register your team today; the cost is \$30 per bowler or \$120 for a team of four; includes three lines of bowling and shoes. This event is fun for all ages and there will be great prizes. All proceeds will go toward providing shelter, meals and supportive services to victims of domestic and sexual violence in Umatilla and Morrow counties.

Saturday, July 30, 6:30 a.m. – 1 p.m., City of Iririgon’s annual Watermelon Festival: Bring the whole family for great fun and enjoyment on the bank of the beautiful Columbia River. For more information, contact Renee Couchman at 541-922-1560 or Aaron Palmquist, city manager at manager@ci-irrigon.or.us.

Tentatively – August 3-4, ODOT to be chip sealing downtown Main Street in Heppner: More information will be available soon. The dates are tentative, as this is part of the project they will be working on this summer and will depend on how the schedule ends up. ODOT will continue to communicate a status update.

Saturday, Sept. 17, and Sunday, September 18, the Heppner chamber will be coordinating the fifth annual ride of our local Blue Mountain Century Scenic Bikeway; the ride is limited to 50 riders.

Chamber lunch meeting

The next lunch meeting of the Heppner Chamber of Commerce will be an all entities report on Thursday, July 7, at noon in Heppner City Hall conference room.

Cost of lunch is \$10; Mustang Diner will cater. Chamber lunch attendees are asked to RSVP at 541-676-5536 no later than the Tuesday before to guarantee a lunch.

Community lunch menu

St. Patrick’s Catholic Parish volunteers will serve lunch on Wednesday, July 6, at St. Patrick’s Senior Center. Lunch will include cheeseburgers, potato salad, carrot salad, cucumbers and onions, and ice cream.

Milk is served at each meal. Suggested donation is \$3.50 per meal. Menu is subject to change.

90TH BIRTHDAY OPEN HOUSE FOR: HENRY KREBS



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Sunday July 10th
 Lone American Legion Hall
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