

ENERGY: Report recognizes that agriculture remains the primary economic driver in the basin

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(report), thanks to the governor's office," McLane said. "I think the hard work is yet to happen."

The committee included representatives of farms and utilities, officials from Umatilla, Morrow and Gilliam Counties, as well as state Sen. Bill Hansell (R-Athena) and Rep. Greg Smith (R-Heppner). Hansell said he was pleased with how the parties all came together, and said the Morrow County corridor has a lot to offer the region.

"It's a solution I think we ought to implement," he said.

The final report recognizes that agriculture remains the primary economic driver in the basin, especially irrigated farms. Without irrigation, dryland wheat typically yields a value of \$100 per acre. But add just one acre-foot of water and that value rises to \$500 per acre.

At three acre-feet of water, farmers can grow high-value vegetables such as potatoes, carrots and onions at a value of \$5,000 per acre. But accessing that water is not easy. Pumping irrigation water from the Columbia River is not profitable to elevations more than 1,000 feet above the McNary and John Day pools, which limits the land base for high-value crops.

That's why growers say it is so crucial to protect this bank of farmland. Kent Madison, of Madison Ranches in Echo, said transmission lines impede regular farming and irrigation practices, such as aerial spraying of fertilizer and chemicals.

Madison said he supports a single green energy transmission corridor in order to minimize the impact from wind and solar farms on surrounding agricultural land.

"It's a whole lot better to have this corridor with one big transmission line through it than four small corridors over a 10-mile area, with four or five transmission lines," he said. "We need to protect the high-value agricultural ground."

Though McLane said the



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Protecting irrigated farmland is the goal behind establishing a single transmission corridor for multiple renewable energy projects, as opposed to having multiple power lines criss-crossing the landscape.

corridor project is still in its conceptual phase, she imagines it would run along Bombing Range Road connecting wind and solar developments at the south end of the county to electrical substations at the north end.

But there are a number of hurdles to clear first.

The county is still awaiting the final record of decision from the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Navy on routing a portion of the Boardman to Hemingway transmission line on the west side of Bombing Range Road — part of the Navy's Boardman Bombing Range — as opposed to the east side. Stephanie McCurdy, a spokeswoman for B2H developer Idaho Power, said those decisions are expected within a matter of months.

If all goes according to plan, then McLane said it may be possible for the local Umatilla Electric Cooperative to upgrade its transmission system on the other side of Bombing Range

Road to accommodate the green energy corridor. She figures it would take a 230-kilovolt line to handle the anticipated capacity of proposed new wind and solar developments.

"We're not done," McLane said. "B2H is a big piece of the puzzle."

UEC is already exploring building the line, which would initially hook up to the new 500-megawatt Wheatridge Wind Energy facility that was issued a site certificate in April. Wheatridge is approved for 292 turbines near Heppner, with a portion of the project extending into southern Umatilla County.

Robert Echenrode, UEC general manager, said one large corridor would be a more strategic effort to plug renewable energy projects onto the grid, as opposed to landowners being inundated with requests for power lines.

"We listened to the landowners in this corridor area, and I believe we were successful in finding common ground,"

Echenrode said.

Tamra Mabbott, Umatilla County planning director, said they will be watching Morrow County closely to see if the green corridor model can be a success.

"Certainly, we're looking for a win-win and that's what we hope Morrow County will come up with," Mabbott said.

When the state went all-in on renewable energy, McLane said nobody thought about the consequences for Oregon farms. But a green energy corridor might just be the answer to Morrow County keeping their agricultural base whole.

"For rural counties, (renewable energy) does bring an economic benefit. But how do we protect these other things that are important?" McLane asked. "It would be nice if the local jurisdiction could be the balancing authority for that."

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BOND: Many voters disliked the potential increase in taxes

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district will discuss a target date for a new election and steps they need to take between now and then.

The bond had proposed expanding Hermiston High School, complete rebuilds for Highland Hills and Rocky Heights elementary schools and a new elementary school on East Theater Lane. The board had passed a bond in 2008 that replaced Sunset and West Park elementary schools, as well as Armand Larive Middle School on a new school-owned property.

"The new board will wrestle with not only the timing of a future election, but also the projects included with the ballot question," Maiocco said. He said the earliest the board could choose to place a new ballot question before voters is November 7.

While Maiocco said the district still had much to discuss before pinpointing why the bond failed, some community members had an idea.

Virginia Beebe, a member of the Hermiston Senior Center, said she doesn't live in Hermiston. But she heard many of her peers complain about the potential increase in taxes.

"We already had bonds out," Beebe said. "They weren't willing to go out for another."

She added that many senior citizens she knew were put off by being told they had to move out of their current location whether or not the bond passed. The former fairgrounds where the senior center is located were purchased by the school district, and the senior center will move to a new building under construction near the Hermiston Public Library.

"It was very harsh," she said. "They basically told us that the building comes down no matter what."

Many other senior citizens at a lunch on Thursday declined to be named, but said they weren't willing to vote for a bond that would raise taxes of people on fixed incomes.

A table full of people who all voted "no" on the bond said the additional \$116 to their annual tax bill was too much to ask.

"If they would have just put the repair of Rocky Heights and Highland Hills on there, I probably would have voted for it," said a woman named Chris, echoing a comment made by several other senior citizens at the lunch. "But I'm not voting for a new school."

While several said they had voted "yes" on the previous bond measures, they felt the district should put more effort into maintaining the current buildings.

"In some ways, (buildings) could have been kept up and added onto," said a woman whose family owns a business, and for whom taxes would have gone up around \$1,000 annually if the bond had passed.

One woman at the senior center lunch, Loretta Stevens, said she and her husband voted for the bond.

"The schools need it," she said. But she added that many people feel like they're being taxed out, and can't afford it.

Some also said they felt the influx of Hispanic families has contributed to the population boom in schools, but felt that those populations weren't paying their fair share of taxes.

Several parents picking up their children from Rocky Heights Elementary School on Thursday afternoon said they were disappointed the bond failed, and were surprised by the outcome.

"I was so sad," said Katie Anderson. "I just think it was the money."

She added that while she thinks the district will have to change the bond to get voters to support it, Rocky Heights should be a priority because of its safety concerns.

Liz Sharon, another parent, said she had a sign in her yard and supported the bond, but heard others complain about another tax increase when there were already other bonds still to pay.

But she said Rocky Heights is in need of the proposed repairs.

"It's 56 years old," she said, recalling some issues with the school's roof. "It's just worn down."

Both Anderson and Sharon said they had not heard much chatter about the bond, but most of what they had heard had been in support.

Other parents said they would have supported the measure, but didn't vote or forgot to turn in their ballots.

"Especially because our own kids go here," one woman said. "You see it more at this school than others. And all the schools have multiple portables."

Heather Beal, a parent at Rocky Heights, said most parents she knew supported the bond, because they see problems with the facilities on a daily basis.

"It's so crowded," she said.

In a statement the day after the bond failed, Maiocco said the district would continue to serve its growing population, using existing facilities and modulars.

"With no separate funding for the procurement of modular classrooms, any move to expand our temporary facilities will have to be paid with the same funding we use to pay for classroom supplies and materials, textbooks and employee wages," he said.

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FOUNDATION: \$2,350 grant was given to CAPECO

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Larios. "Throughout the process, I didn't think any of us imagined how it would impact us or our community."

On Tuesday evening at the Pendleton Center for the Arts, the teens presented checks to representatives from their six chosen organizations. One by one, they stood at the microphone in front of a Harold and Arlene Schnitzer CARE Foundation backdrop and addressed grantees, a smattering of parents and three representatives from the Schnitzer Foundation.

Club president Abby Rinehart told the audience that the year of trying out the role of philanthropist changed her.

"This club has really opened my eyes to what many don't see — homelessness, hunger and suffering," Rinehart said.

One recipient, Susie Stuvland of CAPECO (Community Action Program of East Central Oregon) said she choked up during the phone call from a club member telling her of a \$2,350 award to purchase supplies for Project Community Connect. On Tuesday, she accepted the check with a solemn expression.

"We will do good work with this," Stuvland promised the students.

The CAPECO grant was the biggest dollar amount. Others ranged from \$500 (awarded to the Oregon East Symphony for a scholarship that will be matched with another \$500) to \$2,000 (awarded to the Pioneer Relief Nursery for diapers and hygiene items). Altrusa of Pendleton accepted \$1,000 to purchase an assortment of items and services for homeless students. Neighbor 2 Neighbor, which runs the Pendleton Warming Station, received \$650 for sheets for bunkbeds. The Blue Mountain Community College Foundation got \$1,500 to help financially struggling students with small scholarships for such things as food, fuel and even haircuts.

"It makes a huge difference," said Margaret Gianotti, of the BMCC Foundation. "When they get to the end of the month, \$25 is a lot."

Neighbor 2 Neighbor coordinator Chris Clemons had led club members on a tour through the warming station, answering



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Dania Larios, a member of the CommuniCare Club at PHS, stands back and listens after presenting a grant award check to Chris Clemens of Neighbor 2 Neighbor Tuesday night at the Pendleton Center for the Arts.



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Abby Rinehart, president of the fledgling CommuniCare Club at PHS, shakes hands with Debbie McBee of Altrusa during the club's first grant award ceremony Tuesday night at the Pendleton Center for the Arts. Rinehart presented three Altrusa representatives with a \$1,000 check for a program that helps homeless students.

questions about the facility and the homeless people stay there. Their professionalism made an impression.

"They took it seriously. They are the people who are following us," he said. "They will continue to carry the baton."

Advisor Jill Gregg drew the biggest laugh of the night after the awarding of the final check.

"So we are now out of money," she said.

The club will rev up again next year with the one non-senior member (freshman Emily

"This club has really opened my eyes to what many don't see — homelessness, hunger and suffering."

— Abby Rinehart, CommuniCare Club president

Rinehart) and a new crop of young philanthropists.

The Harold and Arlene Schnitzer CARE Foundation started CommuniCare about 20 years ago in the Portland metro area. Pendleton is the only non-Portland school participating. The foundation's executive director, Barbara Hall, explained that the couple's son, Portland businessman Jordan Schnitzer, has a special relationship with Pendleton.

"Jordan has a strong connection with Pendleton and felt strongly about giving back to this community," Hall said. "So we made an exception."

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