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## LEXINGTON

# CLOSED FOR BUSINESS



Photo courtesy of the Heppner Gazette-Times  
Curtis Thompson, left, is sworn into office by Lexington town recorder Dawn Greisen, while mayor Marcia Kemp and council members Marcia Sticka, Bobbi Gordon and Bill Beard look on.

## Rural Morrow County community closed after city council fails to pass budget

By JADE MCDOWELL  
*East Oregonian*

**L**EXINGTON — The recorded message greeting callers to Lexington City Hall on Monday was brief and to the point: “The town of Lexington is closed until further notice,” a woman’s voice said. “Thank you.”

Roads and businesses in the town of 238 people, nestled in the wheat-covered hills just north of Heppner, are still open. But city government is closed and its two employees laid off after the city council failed to pass a 2019-20 budget before the start of the fiscal year.

The closure follows months of contention at city hall between Mayor Marcia Kemp and city councilors over an empty seat on the council, resulting in several full and “verbally rowdy” city council meetings, according to coverage by the *Heppner Gazette-Times*.

Kemp said she doesn’t know why three of the four city councilors failed to show up to a budget hearing scheduled for Thursday evening, but their absence cost the city the quorum it needed to pass a budget.

“(The Oregon Department of Revenue) advised me since the town did not approve the town’s budget by June 30, 2019, the town does not have any authority to spend money as of July 1, 2019,” she wrote in an email to the *East Oregonian*.

Kemp closed city hall, collected all keys to the building and let the city recorder and maintenance employee know they were out of a job until the problem was resolved. She has scheduled a public meeting for next Monday at 7 p.m. at city hall to discuss the issue, but said the League of Oregon Cities



EO File Photo  
The town of Lexington sits nestled in the Willow Creek Valley surrounded by the rolling foothills of the Blue Mountains.

advised her that councilors wouldn’t be able to vote on a budget that night if they showed up.

“I am awaiting further clarification and still plan on having a community meeting,” she said.

Councilor Bill Beard declined to answer questions about why he hadn’t shown up to the budget meeting last week or whether he had known about it ahead of time.

“I’m not going to comment because there doesn’t seem to be any communication when it comes to [the mayor],” he said.

Marcia Sticka, the lone councilor at Thursday’s meeting, along with councilors Curtis Thompson and Bobbi Gordon, couldn’t be reached Monday.

Thompson was appointed to the council June 11 over the objections of Kemp and Sticka. According to the *Heppner Gazette-Times*, they alleged Thompson shouldn’t be on the council because he cursed at and was “verbally abusive” toward the city clerk after his water was shut off for nonpayment.

After he applied for a seat vacated in 2018 Kemp stated that the city charter’s language about the “full city council” voting on an appointment included allowing the mayor to vote, even though

the mayor would normally only vote in the event of a tie. After months of disagreement, Beard and Gordon outvoted Sticka last month to first clarify that the city charter meant only councilors, not the mayor, then voted Thompson into office.

Former city councilor Sheila Miller, who is still listed on the city’s website as its emergency contact, said the meeting was so heated it was no wonder city councilors didn’t take note of the special budget meeting that had been announced. She said the mayor didn’t do “due diligence” by making sure they got a reminder.

“The last meeting was so stressful and out of hand that they didn’t realize it had been scheduled,” she said.

Eddie Dickenson, who has handled maintenance for the city of Lexington for a little over two years, had a different take, saying it was suspicious that three councilors “couldn’t be bothered to show up” after feuding with the mayor. He said he normally enjoyed his job, but had walked out of a couple of city council meetings to take a break from listening to people “literally screaming at each other.”

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## Wyden talks about drones and foreign policy in Pendleton

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
*East Oregonian*

PENDLETON — A self-described “privacy hawk,” Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Oregon, spent much of the morning praising the manufacturer of a drone called Resolute Eagle.

If anyone noticed the raptor connection, it went by unremarked at a tour of the PAE ISR facility at the Pendleton airport.

Wyden did spend time explaining his work trying to protect American citizens’ privacy and his support for Pendleton’s unmanned aerial systems industry.

“What you’re doing shows that you should never freeze innovation,” he said. “What you should be asking is how the innovation is being used.”

He noted the potential economic impact the drone industry could have on rural Oregon, pointing to an article in *The Oregonian* that showed jobs in technology had an average annual salary of \$115,000 compared to the \$53,000 state average.

At the end of his tour of the World War II-era hangar that now acts as PAE’s West Coast operations facility, Wyden met with PAE employees.

After telling the group that Congress had extended the UAS test ranges to 2023, he asked how he could help PAE from Washington, D.C.

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## HB 2020 widens urban-rural divide

The impacts of the fight over doomed House Bill 2020 aren’t fully clear yet

By AUBREY WIEBER, CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE AND MARK MILLER  
*Oregon Capital Bureau*

SALEM — The debate on climate change appears to have deepened the gap between the liberal politics of Portland and Eugene and the conservative politics of rural areas with natural resource and agricultural economies.

The impacts of the fight over doomed House Bill 2020 aren’t fully clear yet. Legislators finished their work Sunday and will head home to constituents with deeply divergent views of whether Oregon ought to limit carbon emissions.

Cap-and-trade advocates said the climate issue turned into a lightning rod.

One of HB 2020’s chief architects, Sen. Michael Dembrow, D-Portland, said he tried to mitigate rural concerns.

“Great care has been put into shielding rural Oregonians from negative impacts from the bill, while creating investments that will breathe new life into their local economies,” Dembrow said. “The opposition

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## Destination Pendleton: Dutch couple travels overseas to visit the Round-Up Arena

By BRETT KANE  
*East Oregonian*

PENDLETON — “Wie is de Mol?” might not mean much to anyone stateside, but it’s a question that drives a Dutch couple overseas and all the way to Pendleton.

Rob Spelier and Maria van Klooster of the Netherlands are big fans of the Dutch reality television show “Wie is de Mol?” or “Who is the Mole?” in English.

Now in its 19th season, the hit show pits 10 Dutch celebrities together who must complete certain tasks to earn money. The catch is, one of them is secretly a mole intent on keeping the money earned as low as possible, leav-

ing it up to the other contestants to unmask him or her.

Spelier, who works in financing, and van Klooster, a restaurateur, have been together for 14 years. They’ve been traveling together ever since.

“I met him and I said, ‘If you’re going to be with me, you don’t have a choice (but to travel),’” van Klooster said.

It was an ultimatum that was fine by Spelier.

“I got hooked on the traveling bug,” he said with a laugh.

Their current trek spans across Oregon — they began in Portland and have a list of destinations along the way, including the Columbia River Gorge and the

Painted Hills near Mitchell.

Because they are such avid fans of “Wie is de Mol?,” they had to make time for a stop at the Pendleton Round-Up Arena, which hosted an episode of its 17th season back in 2017.

The couple spent Saturday morning at the historic rodeo stadium where they watched various cowgirls compete in the Green Mile Barrel Race. But the arena is but a pitstop along the way as they take in the natural beauty of Oregon, which they both agree is vastly different from their home country.

“It’s so beautiful here,” van

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Staff photo by Kathy Aney  
Maria van Klooster and Rob Spelier of the Netherlands found their way to Pendleton by way of the Dutch reality television show “Wie is de Mol?”



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