

Commissioners OK new smart texting system

TextMyGov gives public better access to county systems such as payments, city news and more

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — A presentation on a new smart texting system was made to the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners on Wednesday, Aug. 18, after which they agreed to purchase and install the system.

Attending the meeting via Zoom, Russell Murphy, of TextMyGov, demonstrated to the commissioners how the system works both for the county and for county residents.

According to the company's website, TextMyGov is a software company out of Logan, Utah, that uses smart texting technology to communicate with citizens 24/7. Local government agencies can answer questions, send links to their website and

provide details on garbage pickup, utility payment, city news, events, office hours, department locations and more.

Murphy has been working with Stacey Fregulia, the county's information technology director and the commissioners' executive assistant on the system.

Murphy said he's been working with other Oregon counties, as well as with local governments in other states. In addition to contact between the county and residents, the administrators can allow other select groups to be involved.

"We work with all kinds of populations and demographics," he said.

The three main functions of the system are to allow texting to:

- Report issues, such as

those concerning public safety.

- Find information on any variety of topics.

- Request permits issued by the county.

"We wanted to make it simple so it's simple for the citizens to get in," Murphy said.

Search parameters use keywords such as "fire," "fair" or "events" and can include additional ones as system administrators determine the necessity.

"I like it," Commission Chairman Todd Nash said. "It seems like a product that is really user friendly."

Commissioner John Hillcock had his thoughts on possible uses for the system.

"The Road Department could use it if they had a road delay, fire emergencies, there are a lot of things that

we could definitely use it for," he said.

Commissioner Susan Roberts said a certain level of responsibility is needed by those using it, as the system appears to include.

"A citizen has to sign in, that's an important thing," she said.

Fregulia, in her role as IT director, gave her thumbs up to the system.

"It's very user friendly," she said. "It's very non-complicated for department heads."

Roberts said the system costs the county \$2,500 a year with a \$1,000 setup fee. It starts with an initial two-year contract and after that each year is a separate contract.

The cost of the system pays for 50,000 texts and additional texts can be

purchased.

"We have to be careful of that limited number of texts," Roberts said. "Everybody and their dog is going to be texting."

The commissioners agreed it will take some monitoring to control the number of texts used in the system.

"There will be some learning we'll have to do," Nash said.

Roberts noted that the board has until Aug. 25 to approve the contract, so they voted Wednesday to do so. They will notify the public when the system is up and running.

Other business

In other matters, the commissioners:

- Approved two service-provider agreements

between the county and Community Connections of Northeastern Oregon for the Statewide Transportation Fund. The agreements involve grant applications.

- Agreed to reopen public roads closed due to fire-safety issues.

Formally received unanticipated revenue to the Wallowa County Fair in the amount of \$14,000 in an anonymous donation.

- Adopting an intrafund transfer of \$11,000 from the county's Contingency Fund to the Website Maintenance Fund.

Approved a request by Rose Favino for an easement on the Troy Road for access to a private residence. The easement was initially listed on the agenda as for Dunham Road but corrected at the meeting.

Commissioners honor 911 dispatcher

Brooke Langerman helped keep vital service going

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — The coronavirus pandemic may be causing problems, but it also allows for stars to shine — in this case, a star of the Wallowa County 911 dispatch division.

On Wednesday, Aug. 18, dispatcher Brooke Langerman was awarded the second-ever Golden Feather of Achievement award by the Wallowa County commissioners at their regular meeting.

"For the second time ever since I've been here, we're recognizing an employee for exemplary work," Commission Chairman Todd Nash said. "This goes to Brooke Langerman. She apparently got tricked into coming over here. We really appreciate the above and beyond and your willingness to hang in there and keep a vital part of Wallowa County operating at the 911 station there. You gave up family time in a time of trepidation where you could've said, 'It's just too dangerous and I'm not coming in.' But you kept that operation going and we really appreciate your service and we want to recognize that. There's a lot of extra people who came here today just to make sure you are recognized for your duties here, so thank you very much."

This was met with applause from those present, which included Sheriff Joel Fish, several Enterprise Police officers and other 911 dispatchers.

Langerman said after the presentation that four of the six 911 dispatchers were out



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Wallowa County 911 dispatcher Brooke Langerman, right, is congratulated by Commission Chairman Todd Nash for exemplary work Wednesday, Aug. 18, 2021, as Commissioner Susan Roberts applauds and fellow dispatchers watch in background.

sick with coronavirus and it was just her and her supervisor keeping the operation going.

"We were working 12-hour shifts," Langerman said.

The working mom of three kids, ages 3, 5 and 6, said that the long shifts and shorthanded situation lasted about two weeks.

Nash turned the presentation of the award over

to Commissioner Susan Roberts.

"Since it was decided that we have employees who went above and beyond, we decided we needed to give those employees something special when they did something special," Roberts said. "So, the local glassblower made the Golden Feather of Achievement for us. We do understand that the line on the flag for 911 operators is

a gold line."

The first time such an award was presented was June 16 to Wallowa County Deputy Jennifer Harmon.

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The Wallowa County Stockgrowers Ranch Rodeo took place over the weekend and saw more than a dozen people win events. Cody Ross was the most prolific winner, taking three events, while Tom Birkmaier and Wyatt Warnock, pictured, won the famous rockjack building competition.

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