

County considers road service district

Commissioners start work May 18 to protect school funds

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — A new road service district for Wallowa County will soon be in the works after the Board of Commissioners agreed to put the wheels in motion to take advantage of a piece of legislation that “fixes a bad piece of federal rulemaking,” as board Chairwoman Susan Roberts said.

At the end of their regular meeting Wednesday, May 4, Roberts said that at the next meeting, May 18, the commissioners will start work on a road service district. She’s been working with a law group that’s been doing research for the commissioners to put together paperwork to free up payment in lieu of taxes (PILT) money and create a road district.

Funds received through the Secure Rural Schools program provides additional funding to rural counties across mostly the western United States, according to U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley’s website. The counties that generally receive SRS funding are those that have large tracks of public, tax-exempt forestland. In the latter part of the 1990s, timber receipts from the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management began to fall, impacting many rural

counties that received a portion of those dollars from timber harvests to fund services. The SRS program is designed to bridge that funding gap by providing funding for schools, road maintenance and other county services.

Roberts said the SRS money will go into the new road service district and not into what are considered county funds. The governing board will be just like that for the Wallowa Lake County Service District, it’ll have separate commissioners and a separate budget meeting.

“What it does is it puts that money from the payment in lieu of taxes (PILT) back into the General Fund, which then allows us to fully staff our sheriff’s office or other work that we may have been putting aside because we didn’t have the funds to do it.”

Commissioner John Hillock said counties outside of Oregon have already taken such measure.

“There are counties in Montana that have done it already,” he said.

Roberts declined to comment further pending the outcome of further research, but said when the commissioners get started on May 18, it will be the beginning of a long process.

Other business

In other matters:
• Commissioner Todd Nash brought up the proposed bicycle playground planned at Wallowa that is currently in the fundraising process. Roberts and Hillock agreed

that it is a worthwhile project and Roberts said that she’d like the county to be able to donate toward it, but wants more information and would like to see a presentation on the project. Ron Pickens, of Building Healthy Families in Enterprise, has made such presentations before to other public bodies and would be requested to do so before the commissioners.

• Was informed by county counsel Paige Sully that her legal practice is changing to handle only government bodies as clients. She has obtained as clients a couple other cities, she said, and the elimination of private clients would allow her more time to work on the government clients and eliminate potential conflicts of interest.

• Corrected the statute number for the county’s drought declaration resolution the commissioners approved April 20 that followed up on action they took April 6.

• Rescheduled a continuation of a hearing on a petition to vacate a roadway, submitted by Matthew Graham and Laura Noë. The commissioners agreed to hold that hearing at their June 1 meeting, giving them time to properly advertise plans for it.

• Accepted the withdrawal of a petition to vacate a portion of Pollack Road requested by petitioners Dale and Virginia Mammon. A hearing on the potential vacation had been held after the April 20 meeting. The Mammons informed the commissioners that since the hearing, they still wish

to obtain the property, but believe it best achieved by other means.

• Review and approval of a resolution authorizing reconveyance of an interest in real property owned by Steve Roundy at Wallowa Lake. Sully told the commissioners she needed their approval to execute and record lien releases for the Roundy property so it can be sold and the county can receive money it is due. Sully said that after the commissioners give their approval, she would take the appropriate documents to the Wallowa Title Co. that day for filing.

Employee action

The commissioners also approved several employee-action notices. Those included:

• Position and salary changes for Winifred Conner from fairgrounds manager to a grants position and information technology support. She replaces longtime Grants Manager Chrystal Allen who retired this year.

• Grace Lathrop as a new election worker in the County Clerk’s Department.

• Susan Moody as a new 911 sergeant in the Wallowa County Sheriff’s Office.

• A position change for Sianna Williams from 911 dispatcher to juvenile counselor.

• Position and salary changes for Candi Staigle from property appraiser trainee to Property Appraiser I.

• Ryan Moody as a new patrol deputy with the WCSO.

Wallowa Memorial again on top 20 list

Chieftain staff

ENTERPRISE — For the fifth time in the past six years, Wallowa Memorial Hospital has again been ranked among the top 20 critical access hospitals for overall performance in the country and the only hospital to make the esteemed list in all of Oregon, according to a press release.

The top 20 hospitals scored best as determined by the Chartis Center for Rural Health for Overall Performance. The rankings were recently announced by the National Rural Health Association. In September an awards ceremony will be held during NRHA’s Critical Access Hospital Conference in Kansas City, Missouri.

The top 20 CAHs have achieved success in overall performance based on a composite rating from eight indices of strength: inpatient market share, outpatient



Wallowa Memorial Hospital/Contributed Photo

A drone photograph shows Wallowa Memorial Hospital. The hospital has been named one of the top 20 critical access hospitals in the nation for the fifth time in the past six years.

market share, quality, outcomes, patient perspective, cost, charge, and finance. This group was selected from the Chartis Center for Rural Health’s 2022 top 100 CAH list, which was released earlier this year.

The top 20 CAH best-practice recipients have achieved success in one of two key

areas of performance:

- Quality index: A rating of hospital performance based on the percentile rank across rural-relevant process of care measures.
- Patient perspective index: A rating of hospital performance based on the percentile rank across all 10 HCAHPS domains.

“Wallowa Memorial is proud of the efforts of our hardworking physicians and staff who have contributed to our hospital achieving this designation,” said Larry Davy, hospital CEO. “The support of our community is also a significant part of this success. It has allowed us to add several desired services that are often not offered in rural communities. These services include but are not limited to orthopedics, extensive rehabilitation services and outpatient therapy for cancer patients. Our results as an overall top performer means our community can count on us to deliver the services they need now and in the future.”

Wallowa Memorial Hospital is a 25-bed Critical Access Hospital and Level IV Trauma Center. The current hospital was built in 2007 and serves the residents and visitors of Wallowa County.

Hansell, Lively appointed to cultural trust board

Chieftain staff

SALEM — State Sen. Bill Hansell (R-Athena) has been appointed to the Oregon Cultural Trust board of directors by Senate President Peter Courtney.

Hansell, a third-term senator who represents District 29 in Eastern Oregon, fills a spot held previously by Cliff Bentz, who now is the 2nd District representative in the U.S. House.

“It’s an honor to serve on the Cultural Trust Board of Directors,” Hansell said in a press release. “I am excited for the opportunity and the work we will be

able to accomplish.”

A second appointee to the board, Rep. John Lively (D-Springfield), has ties to the region. Lively was born in La Grande and lived in Wallowa County before his family moved West in 1963. Lively, a former Springfield mayor who has been in the Legislature since 2012, was appointed by former House Speaker Tina Kotek, replacing former Rep. Margaret Doherty.

“Cultural arts are an important part of the quality of life in every Oregon community,” Lively said. “It is an honor to serve on the Cultural Trust Board which sup-

ports efforts to sustain and enhance offerings throughout our state.”

Hansell and Lively both will “serve in an advisory, ex officio nonvoting capacity per the Cultural Trust statute,” according to the release.

“We are extremely proud that two such passionate and dedicated Legislators have committed their talents to the Cultural Trust,” Niki Price, chair of the Cul-

tural Trust Board, said in the release. “We welcome their breadth of experience and expertise and know they will make substantial contributions to our work in protecting and strengthening Oregon culture.”

The trust was established in 2001 by the state Legislature as an “ongoing funding engine” for arts and culture in Oregon. Residents gave a record \$5.55 million to the trust in 2021.

IN BRIEF

Scholarships available through WVHCF

ENTERPRISE — Three scholarships are available to health care workers at Wallowa Memorial Hospital or another local nonprofit health care organization through the Wallowa Valley Health Care Foundation.

The scholarships — two at \$2,000 and a third at \$1,000 — are available for workers “who wish to further their professional development through training, certification or education,” a press release from WVHCF states.

Scholarship requirements include that recipients be committed to staying in the county at the conclusion of their training, certification or education, and that the investment furthers their career and improve or expand county health care services, according to the release.

The scholarships are: the \$2,000 Coffin Memorial Scholarship, the \$2,000 Edgar Burbridge and Frances Boyd Burbridge Scholarship, and the new Gail Swart Memorial Scholarship in the amount of \$1,000.

Applications are available online, and due by June 2. Visit www.wvhcf.org/scholarship to apply or for more information, or call 541-426-1913 for information.

More than 71,000 Oregonians to receive money

SALEM — As part of a nationwide settlement, Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum secured \$2.1 million for Oregon from TurboTax, Intuit Inc., for deceiving over 4.6 million consumers nationally into paying for tax services that should have been free.

In Oregon, Intuit will send out checks to 71,230 Oregonians for \$29.64 in restitution each. Impacted consumers will automatically receive notices and a check by mail.

As part of the settlement,

Intuit must suspend TurboTax’s “free, free, free” ad campaign that lured customers with promises of free tax preparation services, only to deceive them into paying for services. All 50 states and the District of Columbia have signed onto the agreement

Controlled and premium hunt deadline is May 15

SALEM, Ore. — Don’t wait until the last minute to apply for a controlled or premium hunt as the May 15 deadline falls on a Sunday this year.

Apply online at ODFW’s Licensing System (which accepts applications until 11:59 p.m. on May 15) or at a license sale agent during store hours. Applications are \$8 per hunt series (buck deer, antlerless deer, elk, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, Rocky Mountain goat) and an annual hunting license is also required.

As of May 1, 164,706 controlled-hunt applications have been sold. Last year, a total of 526,361 controlled-hunt applications were received with most applications coming in the last week before the deadline.

Issues with an online account can be addressed by calling Licensing at 503-947-6101 or email odfw.websales@odfw.oregon.gov.

Four named to EOU dean’s list

LA GRANDE — Eastern Oregon University named 590 students to the dean’s list for the 2022 winter term. Qualifying students achieve and maintain a grade point average of 3.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale while completing a minimum of 12 hours of graded EOU coursework.

Ella Anderson and Karli Bedard of Enterprise and Gracie and Heidi Niezen of Joseph were named to the dean’s list.

EOU congratulates each of these high-achieving students, and acknowledges their dedication to academic excellence.

— Chieftain staff

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wallowacountysoroptimist.org Deadline June 1, 2022
Mail Applications to: Soroptimist, P.O. Box 127, Enterprise, OR 97828
For More Information call 541-398-0189

Soroptimist is a global volunteer organization working to improve the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and economic empowerment

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