

## County Court discusses emergency radio system

By Doris Brosnan

At the June 13 meeting of the Morrow County Court, the commissioners focused attention on the emergency radio system (450 MHz Radio System) intended as a segment of the chemical depot incineration project. The state of Oregon has approached Umatilla and Morrow counties to take responsibility for the system. Commissioner John Wenzholz reported that a Umatilla County commissioner announced that Umatilla County is not interested.

Commissioner Dan Brosnan voiced many concerns over the proposed changes, with questions about delays, the funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the state's role in the future operation of the system and the reasons behind the state's asking the counties to handle the radio contract, instead of its original plan to take care of it. Also of concern to the court were reports on the modifications and re-design of the incinerator and possible effects on the incineration time line.

Emergency Management Director Casey Beard, Bob Flournoy of the Citizen Advisory Committee and Governing Board, Michael Lasher of ESD, and Sheriff Verlin Denton discussed the issue with the court, as well. Beard reviewed the history of the radio issue, including the refusal of FEMA and the state to take on procurement of the system. Beard added that ESD would seem a logical option for managing the acquisition process. He shared a schematic and project proposal based on preliminary discussions with that agency and described some possible modifications that could result in a savings. He reported that the Governor's office has agreed to maintain the state microwave system for the life of the 450 MHz system and to contact FEMA for a commitment to fund the project at whatever cost.

Lasher assured the court that ESD has people with the expertise to take on a project of this scope, a staff with expertise in microwave and other technology. He reported having talked with representatives of state and federal agencies who seem "excited" about ESD's taking on the project.

Denton noted that he has a few technical questions for later, about controlling access to the system and the ability to communicate with the other three counties with which his office contracts to provide service, but he supports the idea of ESD's managing the project. Denton also voiced concern over outlying maintenance costs.

Beard said that the county might have to move from the VHF system, and he reported that the Corps of Engineers is interested in upgrading and joining the system and suggested that ODOT and OSP might be interested in joining in this region. He explained that he sees as an advantage to Morrow County's taking on the project the ability to reduce the county telephone costs. He agreed that the full support of Umatilla County and the state of Oregon would be required and added that the Governor's office and the State Emergency Management have committed to helping facilitate in any way they can.

Some questions remained and the court made no commitment to taking on the system, but the commissioners agreed that Beard and Lasher should make a presentation scheduled for the ESD Board the following evening.

Another issue generated interest among two citizens and three representatives of R.D. Offutt: a pending agreement among BAIC, PGE, R.D. Offutt and Morrow County for the dedication of a public right of way. County counsel Bill Hanlon offered some background

on this issue that started with a plat and has been in negotiation since. An Offutt representative said that company has tried to satisfy several parties to achieve their plat. He expressed belief that the agreement before the court, containing all required signatures, satisfied PGE's and the county's concerns.

From the county came further concern over some changes in agreement language. A property owner cautioned against the agreement and offered some suggestions. He questioned why the county was not requiring R.D. Offutt to make Taggares Lane a public road, and he observed a need for public input. Another property owner voiced concerns, as well, and suggested that all conditions in the agreement were not necessary. Hanlon explained that in signing the agreement, the county would be giving up the right to demand any action from BAIC or PGE to seek the right of way for a southern extension. Judge Terry Tallman observed that future opportunities to pursue such could occur, however.

An Offutt representative clarified that future development would require Taggares Lane to be opened to the public. Another suggested that if the county wants to maintain the 1999 agreement, it should maintain Tower Road at the higher standard of that agreement. He said that he sees the nullifying of the 1999 agreement as a compromise, and he added that nothing in nullifying the agreement would prevent the parties from agreeing to the "Ione-Boardman Road" in the future.

Hanlon noted that the nullification issue was not in earlier drafts and was not required by the planning commission. He said it changes the perspective from a maintenance issue, and he did not think it critical to the agreement or the covenant for the plat, but the Offutt representative said it is an important component for PGE.

Those present reviewed the maps of proposed road routes. Wenzholz wondered about getting an agreement for a north-south route in the future if the ground squirrel issue disappeared, and he noted the county's right to eminent domain. He also observed that the utilities and the port pay 68 percent of the county's taxes, adding that he wants to continue to attract industry to the county. One property owner emphasized that is why access to the Willow Creek Valley is so important and reiterated that the county has not received anything from this process. The Offutt representative offered that the county has not "made it easy" for them. The court approved the agreement to dedicate the public right of way.

The court also reviewed a letter from the EMS coordinator for the Morrow County Health District requesting a termination of the agreement with North Gilliam Health District, citing response times and some other uncertainties as reasons. The court agreed to revisit this topic, after discussing the issue with the coordinator, checking with North Gilliam, and assuring that the Boardman and Ione EMTs are aware of the issue.

Director of Behavioral Health

Kelly Sager discussed a contract with Mid-Columbia Center for Living. He noted that county counsel questions the reasons for an indemnity clause and left the contract with Hanlon for a determination. Sager reported pursuit of an extension of the agreement with Grant County, hoping for one more year for his research into the feasibility of continuing service to them, but Brosnan and Wenzholz voiced interest in a termination. Sager also reported a possible location in Fossil for office space in the United Methodist Church, and the court agreed he should contract for that. He asked for clarification from the court on in-county meal expenses, and the court explained the policy.

The court reviewed an individual's letter requesting to lease West Glen Estates Park. Planning Director Tamra Mabbott explained that the person would not be able to have the livestock he desired because of their density requirements. Counsel Hanlon noted that the property is dedicated to the county for park purposes, and the court agreed not to pursue the lease.

Hanlon reported that he had signed an agreement with Willow Creek Park District for some paving, but anticipated grant money to cover the expense had not yet come in. Brosnan will examine the situation, as the paving has been completed.

Hanlon read excerpts from a letter regarding annexation of territory into the Pilot Rock Fire District. He explained that, though the letter states that a recommendation of the Morrow County Court will be deferred to, the statute does not require the court to take action. Further, some property owners have objected to inclusion and others have petitioned to be included. After discussion about the Morrow County property owners' positions and boundary descriptions, the court agreed that Hanlon should respond with a letter stating that the court takes no official position.

Brosnan reported on the partnership meeting in Baker City. Marketing proposals for both counties will be discussed on July 2, and on July 10, the next meeting will occur in Ione. The city of Heppner has appointed Jerry Breazeale to the partnership board. The court approved that appointment. Brosnan also reported that the "911 Bill" had passed out of ways and means with a "do-pass" recommendation, and with Sheriff Denton the court discussed possible impact the bill could have on the center.

The court discussed two requests to serve on the planning commission and then approved the appointment of John Kilkenny to the commission, noting that the other interested party would be an equally good choice if another vacancy occurs.

The court approved the county treasurer's annual order to invest funds, awarded the bid from Noland Door Company for Wilkinson Arena doors, approved a new agreement with Umatilla County for community corrections space and an agreement with the Department of Corrections for space for 1145 prisoners. The commissioners also approved a contract with the State Marine Board for boating safety

and law enforcement services and a contract with Jackie Downie for licensed clinical social worker. They approved replacement of a table

in the Boardman Annex and approved an agreement with Lexington for funding support for CSEPP. To fulfill a need by the assessor's office, the court approved

an addendum to the agreement to the museum lease, providing a complete legal description and diagram of the building.

## Local youth qualify for rodeo finals



Jerid Penturf



Blake Knowles



Ryan Matteson



Lexi Matteson

The dust settled on the Oregon High School Rodeo Finals on Saturday, June 16, in Redmond, and several area competitors qualified for national level action in July.

Jerid Penturf, Heppner, finished as reserve champion in the bull riding. Joining him for the trip to the National High School Rodeo Finals in Springfield, Illinois, will be Ryan Matteson and Blake Knowles, Heppner, in the steer wrestling. The top four in each event earned a berth to Springfield.

Making the trek to Fallon, Nevada, for the Silver State Invitational Rodeo will be Mame Wilkins, Condon, who qualified in the pole bending, and Lacey Matteson, Heppner, who qualified in the barrel racing. Fifth through 10th placers earned a trip to Nevada.

Tragedy struck the finals prior to the start of competition when Nataly Tatone of Roseburg, formerly of Boardman, was involved in an auto accident on rain-slickened roads while traveling to Redmond. While Tatone escaped unhurt, all four horses in the trailer were fatally injured, including Tatone's mount that was named the Reserve AQHA

Horse of the Year for the Nation at last year's National High School Finals. In true cowboy code, friends made sure that both Nataly and her sister Jessica had mounts when competition began. Nataly went on to qualify for nationals in the barrel racing and pole bending, while Jessica will see action at the SSIR in barrel racing.

In addition to the arena awards, two area youth were selected as the Most Inspirational for the Oregon High School Rodeo Association. Mame Wilkins, Condon, and Blake Knowles, Heppner, earned the honor as the most outstanding role models for the state. Each earned a \$300 scholarship sponsored by Ariat Boots. Other scholarships were awarded, funded by a scholarship auction held during the finals.

Receiving \$500 awards were Ryan Matteson, Blake Knowles, Mame Wilkins and Ann Shear, Ione. Jerid Penturf was awarded a \$250 scholarship.

The late Bill Bowerman left

several scholarship trust funds and son Jon Bowerman selected the Oregon High School Rodeo Association as the beneficiary of one of those funds. Later this summer additional educational awards will be made from the trust.

## Baptist plans Bible school

Lexington Baptist Church invites children, ages three through sixth grade, to "SonCreek Junction." The SonCreek Vacation Bible School begins Monday, June 25, and continues through Friday, June 29. Classes are held at 170 'B' Street in Lexington from 6:30-8:30 p.m.

"This year's vacation bible school promises to be an adventure your children will not forget," said a spokesperson.

SonCreek is a western gold-

mining town set in the 1800s. The children will sing songs, create western crafts, play active games and discover five golden nuggets of truth for growing as God's children: they'll learn to Start Up, Listen Up, Open Up, Look Up and Speak Up in the family of God.

"We're looking forward to this very special opportunity to share the adventure of living and growing in God's family," the spokesperson said. For more information, call 989-8555.

## Local grad joins Gilliam Extension

John Qualls, an Eastern Oregon University graduate with degrees in crops and soils science and agricultural business management, has accepted a research assistant position in the Gilliam County Extension Service office.

A native of the Rhea Creek farming area in Morrow County, Qualls is assisting in managing field demonstration plots, evaluating field plot and other collected data, and

assisting in making the Extension agricultural program a full-time endeavor. Additional funding became available during the last legislative session to allow Gilliam County to have a full-time agricultural Extension program, with the addition of a one-half time research assistant position.

Qualls is the son of Roscoe and Kayrene Qualls of Heppner.

## Local girl to attend forum

Fourteen high school juniors and seniors (eight boys and six girls) will converge on Monmouth, June 18-22 for the 2001 Third Annual Youth Leadership Forum for Students with Disabilities. Each of the delegates attending the forum is a young person with a disability who has exhibited leadership interest and talent in his or her high school and/or community.

Dawn DeBoer of Heppner will represent the local area.

The Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) is a unique career leadership training program for high school students with disabilities. By serving as delegates from their communities at a five-day event at Western Oregon University, they will cultivate their potential leadership, citizenship and social skills.

The third YLF in Oregon is being spearheaded by Access Technologies, Inc., and the Oregon Disabilities Commission.




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