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### County Court hears proposed salary scale

By Doris Brosnan

At the June 20 meeting of the Morrow County Commissioners, personnel director Andrea Denton and Public Health director Laura McElligott presented a modified salary scale extending the number of steps in advancement for longevity for part-time employees.

Denton explained how the proposal would affect current employees and what implementation of the proposal would cost. McElligott explained problems with retention of part-time nurses in her department because the scale is limited to two steps. She also reported difficulty in recruitment, which is an expense, because the salary is comparatively lower. She observed the need to be fair and competitive.

The commissioners asked for clarification of some aspects of the proposed scale and everyone discussed aspects of the county's salary scale and classification system and of nursing part-time and fulltime. The court considered budget impact and the choice of employees to work part-time rather than fulltime. They also requested of McElligott that less-than-half-time employees be held to no more than 19 hours weekly. The court approved establishing a new part-time employee salary scale, extending the number of steps, with employees advancing only one step at a time.

Tamra Mabbott, Lila Killingbeck, and Brett Cook of the Planning Department approached the court about software for the building permit program, voicing interest in increased efficiency and availability of important data. Also helpful in code enforcement, such a program was suggested by the auditors recently. Some financial assistance from the state was not as much as expected and a bill before the legislature, if passed, would disallow counties under a certain population from having their own building inspection programs, affecting all of Eastern Oregon except for Deschutes County. The Court approved the software purchase from the building fund.

Regarding the chemical depot project, Mabbott reported having a signed agreement for funding for the environmental compliance position.

Boardman Fire Chief Marc Rogelstad discussed with the court a countywide fire ban and suggested

Correction



Lacey Matteson

The photograph of Lacey Matteson in the June 20 Gazette-Times was incorrectly identified as her sister Lexi Matteson.

Lacey Matteson, Heppner, qualified in barrel racing for the Silver State Invitational Rodeo at Fallon Nevada.

that the court consider a countywide burning ban if conditions worsen. Rogelstad suggested consultation with the other fire districts for a concurrent decision.

A representative of Wheatland Insurance presented the workers compensation insurance renewal for 2001-2002 and explained rate changes for certain class codes. The court will discuss payment options and select a method. The representative also discussed with the court legislative measures that affect workers compensation and future losses.

Commissioner John Wenholz addressed the county's policy on property development and road maintenance, focusing on Morter and Tower roads. Commissioner Brosnan agreed with him that while getting dairy product to market is important, the need to regulate weight limits during freezes to limit damage to the county roads is important as well. Planning ahead for feed will be necessary during restricted periods.

Public Works director Burke O'Brien reported to the court that chip sealing is complete on Willow Creek Road and the day park at the dam, Dee Cox Road intersection, and the high school hill. One section of Bombing Range Road is seal coated, and some blading has been completed on the North Fork Road and Upper Butter Creek. The crusher was scheduled to start on the 25. Weeds at the fairgrounds have been sprayed and other spraying needs were discussed.

O'Brien reported that four employees have completed the Mine Safety and Health Training and he intends for the rest of the crew to receive it also. He has drafted an agreement with Gilliam County dealing with the blading of certain gravel roads, for which the two counties have previously had a verbal agreement. He also reported the need for a formal agreement with the National Marine Fisheries related to streams and road maintenance.

O'Brien explained that the Public Works Department presented on June 19 an "Employee of the Year Award" to Randy Henrichs.

Other Court actions included the following:

 approval of some purchases: a desk for the Accounting Department, 11 computers for Behavioral Health (paid for by the Mid-Columbia Center for Living

- approval of a fund-exchange agreement with the Association of Oregon Counties, to be used for Baseline Road;

- approval of two quitelaim deeds with property owners adjacent to Act of Congress land;

- decision to send a letter to the North Gilliam Health District to terminate an ambulance intergovernmental agreement;

- signing of the contract with Noland Doors for the Wilkinson Arena doors;

- decision not to join the Willow Creek Economic Development Group because, as a budget constraint, the court no longer pays membership dues to chambers and similar organizations;

- decision to send a letter to the Ione City Council to explain the recent agreement pertinent to, among other issues, an "Ione-Boardman Road."

On June 21, the Morrow County Commissioners met with Emergency Management director Casey Beard, Oregon State Police Department liaison Bev Venell, Oregon Emergency Management representative Chris Brown and Education Service District

representative Michael Lasher. The focus of the meeting was the proposed 450 MHz Radio Project.

Lasher explained that the ESD charter is sufficiently broad to allow a project not connected to education. He further explained that the project management would consist of a team, with him as the lead. For management of the system, Lasher said ESD would cost less than Motorola, which usually charges 15 percent.

Beard and Venell discussed some costs currently known, including the savings from eliminating the 911 dispatch centers in Hermiston and Pendleton. The Umatilla County commissioners have not resolved the issue of this consolidation/ elimination, however.

Venell reported that the OSP microwave system is not obsolete, and that OSP would commit to maintaining the microwave system for the life of the 450 system. Beard said that that agreement would be signed by the OSP but probably not by the Governor. Brown added that the OEM's digital system is state-ofthe-art and if one leg of the system fails, a new loop assures service. When questioned about continued future funding, dependent upon the legislature, for OSP's maintenance of the system, Venell responded that it would be a priority as a public safety communication issue.

Commissioner Brosnan observed that the 450 project involves the Federal Emergency Management Agency, OEM, Umatilla County, and Morrow County. He questioned why it has devolved to the lowest common denominator, why Morrow County is tasked with being in charge. Venell and Lasher agreed that OSP and the two counties could be signatories to the contract on a joint project. Brown noted that the contract would have to specify whom ESD would contact if a problem arose. The issue of co-equal management will be address at the OEM Board meeting.

Funding for the project will come from FEMA and Brown reported that OEM will commit the funding after the agreement is signed. He also read a request from ESD for a letter of commitment to pay a vendor if ESD places an order for equipment, to take advantage of a cost-saving incentive by June 30, before final agreement and funding. All three parties will have to sign the commitment.

Other topics to be determined include ownership of the radio system equipment, the counties' maintenance expenses after CSEPP, ESD as the correct location of the equipment and as system manager, and tower location. Everyone agreed that for maintenance, after the firstyear agreement with Motorola, ESD would contract for that.

When asked by Beard who the counties would turn to if the installed equipment does not work, Lasher said that ESD would be responsible for making sure that the system does work. Everyone agreed to the importance of assurance of functionality. He also said that he would meet with the state to discuss use of the additional bandwidth on the microwave.

Via a conference call, the group discussed the radio project with Umatilla County Commissioner Dennis Doherty, who agreed to having an agreement drafted. He said that the 911 centers in Hermiston and Pendleton remain an unresolved issue, but he thought he could sign the letter of commitment to ESD next week.

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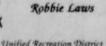
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