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Gazette Times

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Company purchases Columbia River Title

AmeriTitle enters Morrow County

By Autumn Morgan

On Monday, June 2, Columbia River Title changed hands and became AmeriTitle. Both the Heppner and Boardman branches are now operating under the AmeriTitle umbrella, but still doing the same work.

Pam Neal, who has owned and operated Columbia River Title for the last seven years, sold the business to the Bend based AmeriTitle in the beginning of May. "Nothing has changed," said Neal. "We are just part of a bigger company." AmeriTitle will remain in the same Heppner and Boardman locations without interruption of service. "As part of this transition and expanded service, all transactions currently in escrow will automatically be transferred to a client trust account in AmeriTitle's name," said Neal. "This transition will not impact the closing dates of funds for those transactions currently open."

Pam Neal will still work as an office manager and escrow officer for AmeriTitle. *-Photo by Autumn Morgan*

Along with Columbia River Title, AmeriTitle also acquired Morrow County Abstract and Title, the oldest title plant in Morrow County. Because of this acquisition, AmeriTitle will be able to offer the most complete title plant on record in the county dating back to the patent.

AmeriTitle has been serving Oregon communities for over 24 years. The company also has operations in Idaho and Washington. The company has 44 locations in the Pacific Northwest including 30 offices in Oregon. Besides the Heppner and Boardman offices, AmeriTitle also has offices in Hermiston and Pendleton.

"We found a very healthy, well run title company in Columbia River Title," said Linda Stella, president for AmeriTitle. "Pam has done a good job of growing the company. AmeriTitle has wanted to be in Morrow County for many years. We were excited when Pam wanted to sell her business. Columbia River Title was a perfect fit for AmeriTitle because we do business in small and mid-size communities. Heppner and Boardman are perfect communities. We are happy to be in Morrow County."

Pam Neal, office manager/escrow officer, may be reached at the AmeriTitle Heppner office at 676-5005.

Health district awards renovation project bid

By April Sykes

The Morrow County Health District Board, at their regular meeting Monday night in Heppner, awarded the bid for the Pioneer Memorial Hospital renovation project to low bidder Wellens Farwell at $747,477.

Wellens Farwell had previously been awarded the bid for $9,868 more, but architectural errors resulted in the district having to rebid the project. Second low bidder was Knerr Construction at $762,000 (previous bid $784,350). Other unsuccessful bidders were Mike Becker at $787,243 ($844,338 previously); McCormack, $862,500; Robinson, $785,000; and Ausland, $957,000.

Board Chair Larry Mills told the board that he did not believe the district should have to pay for the architect's "screw up" to the tune of $8,500.

MCHD CEO Victor Vander Does said construction is expected to start "right away" after he meets with the contractors. He said he expects completion of the project in four to five months. The renovations will allow the hospital to once again provide care for long-term patients. Vander Does said that once the renovations are complete, the district will have the potential to provide long-term care for seven to 11 residents.

MCHD Chief Financial Office Nicole Mahoney told the board that the Bank of Eastern Oregon has offered the district a loan for renovation at four-and-a-half percent with a 15-year payoff with an early-payoff option and a one-percent loan origination fee which would save the district "considerable", compared to the flex-lease loan that MCHD had anticipated using. Mahoney said that closing costs alone for the flex-lease option would have cost the district over $20,000. "I like the flexibility to pay it off early," said board member Linda LaRue. "I like doing business locally," added Mills. The board approved obtaining the loan from BEO with one abstention, Linda LaRue, who is a former BEO employee and is currently BEO board chair. The MCHD board also approved amending the district's budget to indicate the change in finance options.

Other budget items of note include anticipated revenue from the long-term care residents and a six-percent rate increase, said Mahoney.

The district anticipates hiring five to seven new employees resulting from the new long-term care program.

In more "unfortunate news," Mahoney said that the district has had to pay back $178,000 to Medicare. She said that the Medicare estimates have been recalculated by the district's accountant, who anticipates that the district may owe only $99,000 to Medicare, rather than the $178,000. She said the payback amount, if any, depends on hospital utilization between now and June 30.

In other business, the board:

-heard from Vander Does that Pioneer Memorial Physical therapy will be moving from upstairs in the PMH Clinic building to downstairs. The move will free up more space for doctor's offices and a meeting room. Another physician, Dr. Nichols, is expected to join the staff soon.

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New signs welcome visitors to HHS

Heppner TSA (Technology Student Association) students built new signs for Heppner Jr/Sr High. Pictured are Matt and Mercedes Garrett and Travis Richards. *-Contributed Photo*

Jeff Bailey named new president of Bank of Eastern Oregon

The Board of Directors of Bank of Eastern Oregon announced Jeff Bailey has been named President of Bank of Eastern Oregon effective July 1, 2008, subject to regulatory approval. Bailey has been at Bank of Eastern Oregon since 1996 and currently serves as Chief Credit Officer and is on the executive management team. He will retain the title of Chief Credit Officer.

Jeff Bailey

The current president of the bank, E. George Koffler, will retain his title of Chief Executive Officer of Bank of Eastern Oregon and President and Chief Executive Officer of BEO Bancorp, the bank's holding company. This announcement is a planned management succession move coinciding with Koffler's announcement of a retirement date of March 31, 2009.

"Jeff was a natural choice for the bank. He exemplifies the core values and business ethics the organization has embraced. He is the right person to lead the bank as we continue to grow at a measured pace and build on our excellent profitability of the past few years," said Chairman of the Board, Linda K. LaRue.

Ione-Lexington Cemetery Board unveils memorial display

The Ione-Lexington Cemetery Board created a memorial display where the names of people who have been cremated can be placed. The memorial will hold around 50 plaques.

A plaque in memory of John Wallace was placed by the family of Scott Denny McMillan. Wallace was the son of Colleen Kitch. Scott Denny McMillan was Myrtle McMillan's husband and Colleen Kitch's brother.

Wil White installed the memorial for the Ione-Lexington Cemetery District.

Pictured are Colleen Kitch, Ed Baker, Marilyn Childers, Maureen McElligott and Myrtle McMillan at the Ione-Lexington Cemetery in Lexington. *–Photo by April Sykes*

Ed Baker, Marilyn Childers and Maureen McElligott are on the Ione-Lexington Cemetery Board.

Rollins named branch manager at BEO

The Bank of Eastern Oregon announces that Tricia Rollins has been named branch manager at Bank of Eastern Oregon in Heppner.

"We are pleased to recognize Tricia for her hard work, experience, and dedication. She has the background and experience to give her customers great customer service and to lead our largest branch facility," said President and CEO, E. George Koffler.

Tricia Rollins

Rollins graduated from Montana State University in Bozeman, MT, with a degree in business management. She began her banking career with First National Bank in Belgrade, MT, and came to Bank of Eastern Oregon from First Interstate in Butte, MT, where she served a four-year stint.

Rollins and her husband, Ed, who is a lender with the bank, live in Ione and have two children, Taylor and Bryce.

Physical therapy office moves

Pioneer Memorial Physical Therapy has announced its move from upstairs to downstairs in the Pioneer Memorial Clinic building as of Tuesday, June 3. The address remains the same, 130 N.E. Thompson in Heppner.

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