

Chamber tours new Boardman sawmill



Top Photo: Members of the Heppner Chamber of Commerce and others toured the new sawmill and tree plantation in Boardman last week. Here standing in front of 12 year old Pacific Albus trees are L-R John Edmundson, Larry Mills, Larry and Cricket Micholson, Nancy Snider, Claire Sponseller, Sheryll Bates, Doris Brosnan, David Sykes, Jeff Bailey, Claudia Hughes, Ed Baker, Cliff Green and Merlyn Hughes. The trees are getting ready to be harvested as 12 years is considered mature and ready to cut for the sawmill.
-Photo by David Sykes



Heppner Chamber of Commerce Members (L-R) John Edmundson, Larry Nicholson, Doris Brosnan and Jeff Bailey look over inside of new sawmill in Boardman. -Photo by David Sykes

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plantation. The 25,000 acre plantation uses irrigation water from the Columbia to grow the trees until they are 12 years old. The trees will grow one inch per year until cut. The trees were previously owned by Potlatch and were first grown to be used for chips.

A vast system of drip irrigation line waters the trees. The irrigation system uses up to 180,000 of water per minute and is also highly computerized to make sure the water gets where it is going. The trees are also trimmed and cared for in special ways to improve the quality of the wood. The limbs are trimmed out from

the trees to reduce the limb size and the size and amount of knots. Also limbs on the trees around the outside of each 40 acre plot are generally allowed to grow longer, thus blocking the amount of sunlight that reaches the inside trees which reduces limb growth. Marty Britt contracts all the logging on the plantation.

The company says a lot of wildlife lives on the plantation including deer, elk, cougar and owls. The company builds owl houses to encourage the birds as they help decrease the rodent population.

After the trees are cut new trees are planted in between the stumps of the previous trees, and after 12 years the old stumps rot out so removal of the stumps is not required. There are 30 different breeds of poplar trees on the plantation and in the long term the company says it will have 12 different breeds, which keeps pest lost to a minimum.

Mill management is also proud of the fact they are FSC certified, having met the conservation and environmental criteria of the Forest Stewardship Council.

Cattle truck overturns on Willow Creek Road

The Morrow County Sheriff's Office, along with Heppner Ambulance, Heppner Fire Department, and ODOT responded to a call on Saturday afternoon, October 18, regarding cattle truck with approximately 40 head of cattle that had overturned on Willow Creek Road.

The driver, Dewey William Kennedy of Con-

don, did not sustain any injuries. The cattle were transported in personal trailers to a local rancher's residence for temporary placement. One of the cows expired the following day.

Damage to the guard rail resulted in several thousand dollars, which ODOT is currently working to replace.

Holly Rebekah Lodge to hold card party

Holly Rebekah Lodge will hold a card party on Saturday, November 1, at 7 p.m. The cost is \$5.

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M. C. Health District has donated over \$883 thousand to Boardman health care facilities since 1999

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the patient refuses transport, as is often the case in the north end, the district does not receive payment. The district receives money only if the patient is transported and is able to pay through insurance or private pay.

Also discussed at the meeting Monday was the underlying reason for the concern over possibly not being able to pay the Boardman clinic's subsidy-the district's financial situation. This year MCHD has been operating without a levy. The earlier levy has expired, and the district has subsequently lost \$63,985 so far this fiscal year, which amounts to a \$21,328 average monthly-year-to-date loss, according to Mahoney. "Can we justify giving them (CRHC) money, when we're operating at a loss," said Rea.

Another issue of concern voiced by the MCHD Board is CRHC Board's reluctance to provide financial data to MCHD. The CRHC Board has not been forthcoming with financial reports and has not indicated what MCHD's \$70,000 annual payments to CRHC have been used for. Language in the new contract with CRHC, which is currently being hammered out, also ties payment to reporting financial information "in a timely fashion."

Also at the meeting, Mahoney reported \$487,091 in gross patient revenue for the Month of September with \$31,399 in revenue deductions and \$52,878 in tax monies for \$511,815 in total operating revenue. An additional \$50,904 (non-operating net gain) brought the bottom line to a gain of

\$5,019. She said that the district saw \$22,027 in bad debts for the month, which could be partially attributed to around 10 ambulance runs in the north end, which cost the district around \$1,000 each, since transport was refused.

In other business, the board:

-learned from Vander Does that construction at Pioneer Memorial Hospital in Heppner is moving right along and a final punch list is expected the day before Thanksgiving. The construction will once again allow the MCHD to provide long-term care, similar to a nursing home.

-heard that the PMH roof should be completed by Wednesday.

-learned that Vander Does expects to have long-term residents in the remodeled facility by Christmas.

-learned from Vander Does that they are in the process of ramping up staffing for the long-term care facility. Director of Nursing Molly Rhea told the board that the hospital will need five full-time CNAs (certified nursing assistants) to staff the facility, but providing training so that the nursing assistants can be certified has been difficult. She said that she had not received a good response from Blue Mountain Community College which has offered classes in the past. Two CNAs, three cooks and a housekeeper have been hired. Mahoney said three of the staff who were laid off when the former nursing home closed have been rehired.

-learned from Rhea that five "scopes" have been

completed-four colonoscopies and one endoscopy. This is a new service which is provided by recently hired physician, Dr. Nichols.

-learned that due to an error in calculating Medicaid payment rates, that Mahoney attributed to accounting firm Mike Bell, the district will have to pay an additional \$70,000 back to the government on top of \$70,000 that was anticipated.

-received the following reports: Heppner Ambulance had 11 page-outs in September with 11 transports for \$8,935 in revenue; Boardman Ambulance had 24 page-outs with 18 transports for \$20,015 in revenue; Irrigon Ambulance had 13 page-outs with seven transports for \$8,550 in revenue; there was one flight; Pioneer Memorial Hospital had three admissions, five swing bed admissions, 10 admitted for observation, one admitted for respite care, 474 total outpatients, 72 emergency room encounters, 1389 lab tests, 129 x-ray procedures; 29 CT scans, 18 EKG tests and five respiratory therapy procedures; Home Health had 154 patient visits; Hospice had three admissions; pharmacy had 1466 drug doses for \$69,363 in drug revenue; Irrigon Clinic had 213 patients with 40 new patients, 39 seen by a nurse and 18 no-shows (Vander Does attributed the increase in patients to closure of a clinic in Hermiston and more use by the greater Hermiston-area residents); Pioneer Memorial Clinic had 476 patients with 41 new patients, 51 seen by a nurse and four no-shows.

Ione schools get exceptional rating for second year in a row

By David Sykes

The Ione School District received an exceptional rating from the state for the second year in a row; it was announced at last Monday's board meeting. Only 11 percent of the schools in the state receive the exceptional rating and only four percent receive it for two consecutive years, the board was told by Superintendent Karl Ostheller.

In other business at the October 20 meeting, the board learned that there are 173 students enrolled in the all grades in the district. It has been projected earlier that there would only be 154 students. The number included seven foreign exchange students, which caused the board to vote on a new policy authorizing

that amount as the old policy only allowed four exchange students.

In other business, the board discussed a letter for the Willow Creek Park District which said there would probably not be enough money in the park budget to give Ione the requested \$10,000 for pool maintenance. The park district was unable to give funds last year either and as Park District President Skip Matthews explained in a letter to the superintendent: "...if the money is available, the Willow Creek park District is more than willing to help out the Ione Pool operations.... expenses are up and revenue, including tax collections, are decidedly down," Matthews wrote. "Last year was the start of

financial shortfall for the district, including reduced revenue at the RV Park due to fuel prices and health advisories for the reservoir. Those difficulties continue this year with the added burden of propane costs for our pool operations. You must agree that with these hard economic times, a surplus of funds is just not as available as it has been in the past," Matthews wrote.

In other action the board accepted the resignation of board member John Rietmann with Lisa Rietmann abstaining.

The board also heard a report from Beth O'Hanlon, the district's Chief fiscal Officer. She said the district received basic school support for September of \$129,268 and property taxes of \$3,887. She said the Oregon Department of Education billed the district \$16,751 for previous years'

receipt of the small high school grant. Since Ione School District is a charter school, it is not eligible for the grant and will have to repay the money. She said the district has requested that they pay the state back in four equal installments.

She also reported that she was projecting an unappropriated ending fund balance of \$370,000.

The board also heard a report that the district would be exploring the possibility of heating the pool with solar power. Part of the money from the windmill projects in the district is earmarked for renewable energy.

The board voted to hold its November meeting on Nov. 10. There will be a work session starting at 5:30 p.m. with the meeting to follow. The board will interview and appoint a new board member at that time.

Electric Co-Op Annual Meeting Thursday, November 6th

The Annual Dinner meeting of Columbia Basin Electric Cooperative, Inc. is planned for Thursday, Nov. 6th at the American Legion Hall in Ione. Registration starts at 4:30 p.m. with dinner served at 5:15 p.m. The annual meeting and election of Directors will follow the dinner.

Multiple door prizes will be awarded and results of the annual Fourth Grade Electrical Safety Poster contest and the Annual Photography contest will be announced, with winning entries on display. Again this year will be a special section of door prizes devoted just for youth when accompanied to the meeting by their parents. MP3 Players, iTunes Cards, and other prizes for students will be given out.

All members are welcome to come and learn about their electric co-op.

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