

Park. The public is invited to attend our quarterly meetings.
Published: February 23 and March 2, 2011

DA speaks against court consolidation

By David Sykes

Morrow County District Attorney Justin Nelson said a proposed bill in front of the Oregon Legislature that could consolidate all circuit courts in Pendleton would not be good for Morrow County.



M.C. DA Justin Nelson

"If this bill passes it would consolidate courts in Pendleton. Everyone would have to go to Pendleton for divorce proceedings, pre-trial hearings and appeals process," he told the Heppner Chamber of Commerce at its weekly meeting last week.

"The presiding judge for a judicial district that contains more than one county...may consolidate court administrative functions in one place," House Bill 2691 reads.

"It doesn't come out and say it, but they can do it," Nelson says about consolidating the courts in Pendleton. "The presiding judge could make that decision. None of this is decided by a vote of the people," he added. "Maybe people would rather go to Hermiston or Pendleton to file in small claims court," Nelson said, but he just knows that Governor John Kitzhaber has said to cut, and government agencies are looking for ways to save money.

"We could have three people at the courthouse that could be laid off or forced to go to Pendleton or Hermiston," he said. "The Hermiston courthouse is a beautiful building, and if there is consolidation then witnesses, victims and everyone else would drive to Pendleton. There will be more driving costs and the county expenses would go up," Nelson said.

After listing to Nelson, the Heppner Chamber of Commerce voted to write a letter to five state legislators urging them to defeat the bill.

"On behalf of the members of the Heppner Chamber of Commerce, we are writing to express our opposition to HB2691. We feel that this legislation will result in decreased efficiencies in handling the case load for Morrow County. We feel strongly that if passed, this legislation will cause a hardship and disservice to the people of Morrow County. This will negatively impact our economy within our communities with loss of jobs and revenue."

"We ask that you vote to defeat this legislation," the Chamber said.

Sheriff's Report

The Morrow County Sheriff's Office reports handling the following business:

Dec. 11 cont.:
-MCSO arrested Richard Dorman, 73, on a Heppner Justice Court warrant for Failure to Pay Fine/Driving While Suspended.

-BPD issued a citation to Caleb Brent Johnson, 36, for Violation of the Speed Limit by driving 45 mph in a 30 mph zone.

County inks agreement with PGE for gas plant payments

Proposed new Boardman facility would create jobs, generate revenue for county

By David Sykes

The Morrow County Court last week signed an agreement with Portland General Electric laying out tax payments the county will receive if a proposed new gas-fired electrical generating plant is constructed near the present coal fired plant at Boardman.

So far the project is still on the drawing boards and needs to get final approval from the Public Utility Commission (PUC), but the agreement signed last Wednesday spells out how much the county will receive in taxes.

Under the agreement, called SIP or Strategic Investment Program, beginning the first year the county will receive \$2,432,848 in combined taxes and SIP payments from the Portland utility company. PGE has had a long presence in Morrow County, having opened the coal fired generating plant at Boardman in the early 1980s. PGE is still the single largest taxpayer in Morrow County from the coal plant.

With the addition of the Carty gas plant, which is proposed to be built near the coal plant and employ 20 to 22 people when completed and 300-400 during construction. The plant still has

St. Patrick's Celebration has something for everyone

Heppner's Wee Bit O' Ireland St. Patrick's Celebration is just around the corner and it's time to get out the green and wear it proudly.

There are lots of activities planned for the 29th annual Wee Bit O' Ireland Celebration on March 17-20th. So planning on attending "St. Oliver Plunkett", the play written by Father Condon, with music by Joe Lindsay on Thursday, March 17; get ready to rumble as a participant or observer at the Heppner Chamber's/Y102 - Haystack Broadcasting 4th annual Irish Boxing Smoker on Friday, March 18 at Heppner High School; be a participant or spectator in the "St. Paddy's Arena Cross", "Cruz In" or "Great Green Parade"; the Remembrance Walk and 5K Run; the Iron Leprechaun Bike Ride" (sponsored by Scotts Cycle & Sports); the Leprechaun Run; attend KUMA Coffee Hour; Ceili; shop at the Vendor's Square; check out the arts and crafts display at Les Schwab organized by Morrow County Creative Arts and Crafts; the "Wee Bit O' Western Fine Art Photography" by Denise Smith and Celia Moyer at City Park; buy a book or



(Left-Right) Morrow County Judge Terry Tallman, County Commissioner Ken Grieb and Commissioner Leann Rea sign agreement last Wednesday for new gas plant with Dave Robertson, VP for Public Policy with PGE. Agreement spells out payments to Morrow County if new gas plant is built in Boardman. -Photo by David Sykes

to be approved by several state agencies and it could be up to five years before it is completed.

Under the SIP program, which was developed for new Nike and Intel construction in the Willamette Valley, PGE will actually be making payments instead of the regular appraisal and tax structure of earlier years.

Under the plan PGE will pay regular county taxes on the first \$25 million value of the plant, and, on top of that, it will make a SIP payment. The first year of the 15-year agreement will bring in \$357,637 in tax money and \$2,075,211 in SIP money

two to support the Friends of the Library book sale; check out Morrow County Heritage and Agricultural Museums; participate in the "Ewe-Do-Bingo", the "O'Ducky Race" and the "O'Kiddie Tricycle Races"; Kiss Heppner's "Blarney Stone"; Throw the Welly as a team or individual; watch the live mannequin show by the HHS Drama Club; attend the Sheep Dog Trials; and Road Bowling.

Don't forget to stop by and watch the Sheep Dog Trials (Saturday and Sunday) as part of the activities. There is lots of great entertainment planned for Saturday evening, which will include Tiller's Folly", the "Old Time Fiddlers" and "The NeverCanEvers". The entertainment is free to all and is sponsored again by the Morrow County Unified Recreation District.

Along with entertainment and activities, there will be a lot of great food to choose from.

The St. Patrick's Celebration weekend offers something for everyone. For more information contact all the Heppner Chamber office at 541-676-5536 or visit the website at www.heppnerchamber.com.

Creative Care students take field trip to Krebs' sheep farm



The Creative Care Preschool group (three and four year olds) took a field trip to Skye and Penny Krebs' sheep farm on Wednesday, February 23. This is an annual event that preschool teacher, Betty Rietmann, has organized for many years. Top Photo: Jackson Coiner and Morgan Cutsforth listen intently to Penny Krebs on how to bottle feed a lamb during the Creative Care Preschool annual field trip. Bottom Photo: Liam Heideman holds a lamb at the Krebs sheep ranch this past week with classmate Mason Orem. -Contributed Photos

for the county. "At the end of the 15 years they will still be on 30-year depreciation," Woodin said. "As long as the plant is in operation there will be some tax value to the county," he said. If PGE decides to add a second generator to the Carty plant, that would "retrigger" the valuation.

In the next step in the process to locate the plant PGE will take its proposal to the Public Utility Commission which will actually put the project out to "bid". Other businesses and utilities could bid against the project and, if their plan is accepted by the PUC, then the project will not be built. The bidding could include another type plant, or could even be a plan to sell power to PGE customers from another utility, Robertson said.

If the PUC accepts the PGE bid, then the plant will go to the Oregon Energy Facility Siting Council which will give final license to the plant. Robertson said the whole process could take up to five years to complete.

"PGE has been an integral part of Boardman for many years," said Boardman Mayor Chet Phillips. "We have concerns over the shutdown of the coal plant and the effects on the town and nearby area. We have total support of the project," he said.

Hope Lutheran, All Saints Episcopal announce Lenten events

The shared ministry of Hope Lutheran Church and All Saints Episcopal Church will observe the beginning of Lent with the imposition of ashes and the celebration of the Eucharist at 7 p.m. on Ash Wednesday, March 9, at All Saints.

On the following Wednesdays during Lent, beginning March 16, there will be a soup supper at 6 p.m. followed by a video series titled "Living Your Faith." Evening prayer will follow at 7 p.m.

The first of these midweek Lenten events will be held at Hope, and then alternate weekly between churches. Sunday worship continues at 10 a.m., with services held at the Lutheran Church on the first and third Sundays and at the Episcopal Church on the second and fourth Sundays of each month.

The evening before Lent begins, the community is invited to a Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper at All Saints on March 8 from 5 to 7 p.m. Proceeds from the pancake supper are allocated for local mission and outreach needs.

More information about these events is available by calling the shared ministry office at 541-676-9970. Everyone is welcome.

Eastern Oregon WALK MS to be held April 16



Pictured are participants in last year's MS Walk held in Heppner. -Contributed Photo

The first united "Eastern Oregon WALK MS" will be held April 16 in Pendleton beginning at 10 a.m. All towns in Eastern Oregon will be joining forces to walk for a cure for MS.

There is no registration fee for the MS Walk, and participants are asked to raise a minimum of \$100 per person. Walkers can earn prizes for outstanding fundraising, starting with

a t-shirt prize at the \$100 level. Anyone who brings \$100 the day of the walk will be eligible for a t-shirt that day, while supplies last. The 5K marked route is wheelchair accessible. The registration/check-in begins at 9 a.m. at Roy Raley Park, next to the Roundup grounds. The walk will start at 10 a.m.

MS Walk brochures, with registration

information, will be located in local businesses. Pre-register online at www.walkMSoregon.com, or by phone at 800-344-4867. Walkers may register at any time, including the day of the event.

For more information contact co-chair, Merilee McDowell at 541-571-5853, or co-chair, Darin Umbarger at 541-276-9288.

Morrow County Fair and Rodeo Ambassadors issue invitation to 2011 event

The 2011 Morrow County Fair and Rodeo Ambassadors invite everyone to join them August 17-20. The theme for the fair this year is "There's Country in the Air at the Morrow County Fair".

The fair is going to have great entertainment this year. There is the return of Adam the Great, a magician that walks around and amazes everyone, as well as a video game tournament for the kids of all ages to enjoy. Morrow County Fair and Rodeo will host a concert on both Friday and Saturday nights after the rodeo, with the Rock & Roll Cowboys Friday night and the ever popular Rodeo Rose Saturday night.

The 2010-2011 Morrow County Fair and Rodeo Ambassadors include Robert Blake McPherson, Kellie Nelson, Morgan McPherson, Samantha Baumgartner, and Tim Nelson. Blake is a freshman at Irrigon High School and has participated in the Morrow County Fair and Rodeo for six years. Kellie, a sophomore at Heppner High School, has participated in the Morrow County Fair and Rodeo for



The 2011 Morrow County Fair and Rodeo Ambassadors

seven years. Morgan, a senior at Oregon Connections Academy, has participated in the Morrow County Fair and Rodeo for six years. Samantha, a sophomore at Irrigon High School, has participated in the Morrow County Fair and Rodeo for 11 years. Tim, a sophomore at Heppner High School, has participated in the Morrow County Fair and Rodeo for seven years.

The Morrow County Fair and Rodeo Ambassador program is made up from Morrow County high

school age residents willing to promote and participate in the Morrow County Fair and Rodeo. Activities the ambassadors take part in include parades at county events, Chamber of Commerce events, City Council meetings, and community holiday events. Fair events include talent show, ice cream social, pet show, watermelon seed spitting contest, eating contests. The ambassadors also participate in some Morrow County Rodeo events.

Community Lunch Menu

Nazarene/7th Day Adventist members will be serving lunch on Wednesday, March 9, at St. Patrick's Senior Center. The meal will include barbecue chicken, steak fries, three bean salad, glazed carrots, fruit juice, corn muffins, and brownies. Menu is subject to change.