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County, Port & Boardman sign Rackspace money agreement

Enterprise zone exempts company from regular property taxes

By David Sykes

The city of Boardman, Port of Morrow and Morrow County have signed an agreement with Rackspace, Inc. spelling out how much money the company will pay in fees instead of property taxes over the next 15 years. Because the company's new data center will be located at the Port of Morrow in an enterprise zone, it is exempt from regular county taxation.

The newly-signed agreement will cover how much the $6 billion San Antonio, TX-based data hosting company agrees to pay each year "as a contribution to local services or infrastructure benefiting the Facility" instead of property taxes.

In the agreement, Rackspace, which trades on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol RAX, agreed to pay the county $100,000 per year for the first three years of the agreement; from years four to 15 it will pay $200,000 per year in what is described as a "local service fee."

The funds will be collected and held by Morrow County government; however, disbursement of those funds will be governed by a six-person board of the Columbia River Enterprise Zone. The board is made up of two representatives each of the Port, the county and the city of Boardman.

Under the rules of the Enterprise Zone Committee the board "shall receive recommendations and requests from affected Special Districts of potential impacts involving the service provided by said Districts, including but not limited to schools, fire protection, and public safety."

Those members on the committee are Mayor Chet Phillips and City Manager Karen Pettigrew from the City of Boardman, General Manager Gary Neal and board member Don Russell from the Port of Morrow, and Commissioner Leann Rea and Assessor Greg Sweek of Morrow County. Non-voting Chairman of the Enterprise Zone Committee is Carla McLane of the Morrow County Planning Department.

The board was set up in March of 2009, and governs the approximately 12-square-mile enterprise zone in the north end of Morrow County, which includes mostly the Port of Morrow and the city of Boardman.

As part of the agreement, 15 percent of the money Rackspace pays will go to the recently-formed Morrow Education Foundation. The Foundation is not part of any school district, and was set up to be similar to the Ione Education Foundation, which receives money outside the regular taxing system but helps fund education through a series of grants to the local schools.

In addition, the agreement calls for Rackspace to pay an additional amount equal to four percent of the

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Irrigon clinic expansion held up by Irrigon Planning Commission

By April Sykes

Morrow County Health District CEO Michael Blauer told the board, at their regular meeting in Irrigon June 25, that the "planned remodel and expansion of the Irrigon Medical Clinic is being reviewed by the city of Irrigon and the city manager has expressed concern regarding areas where our plans do not meet the most recent codes for Irrigon's downtown commercial area."

Blauer said that the "board discussed its concerns over the cost of incorporating some of the suggested improvements and proposed some possible responses to the city's requirements."

He said that he and board members plan to attend the next Irrigon Planning Commission meeting to "discuss this issue and hopefully come to a resolution." He said that once MCHD gets approval from the city of Irrigon, MCHD will seek a building permit, and added that the issues will likely delay the project "a little."

Blauer said that the district is making final arrangements to be able to attest that MCHD's electronic records system is functioning according to government standards. He said that MCHD conducted a security audit in June to ensure that they have policies and procedures in place to protect electronic health information and they are making improvements based on that audit.

In other business, the board:

-learned from Blauer that the state has not approved any Coordinated Care Organizations in Morrow County. He said that the primary applicants have been asked to reapply.

"There are a lot of questions regarding how CCOs might affect our organization," said Blauer, "as well as other rural health care providers in eastern Oregon, and we have been involved in many discussions with the state and with potential CCOs in an effort to have our questions answered. However, because the state's transition is happening on a fairly rapid timeline, there are still many rules and regulations that haven't been finalized." Under the plan, Medicaid patients' care would be managed by a CCO. Under the plan, the patient would receive a certain dollar amount, which would be distributed, or managed, by the CCO to pay for a wide range of care, from clinic and hospital care to dental, psychological and more.

-discussed the expiration of the current levy in June 2014. The district plans to put a new levy, which provides the district with "necessary supplemental operating funding" on the ballot.

-See IRRIGON CLINIC/PAGE FIVE

Rock band releases album titled: Port of Morrow?

Boardman industrial park is inspiration for indie rock band's new album

By David Sykes

So you're a hot indie rock band called The Shins, and you are ready to release your first album in five years. Now, what's a good, catchy name to call your new album? Of course, call it "Port of Morrow."

No joke. Seems the band's front man James Mercer was driving on I-84 to Portland and saw the sign for the Port of Morrow on the side of the road by Boardman. Being the creative guy he must be, he explained it this way: "There's a sign by the side of the road that says 'Port of Morrow' and I always just wondered about it, I guess.

"When writing that song it popped into my head and I was thinking of it as death, like what's beyond the exit point, the 'port of morrow,' the port into tomorrow?

"Everyone's future is death. That's a very dark way to look at it, but in the song it just happened to fit in with that thing. Like the ace of spades, port of morrow, life is death, death is life."

Indie Rock band The Shins gets inspiration from Morrow County's Industrial center for it's last album.

The tenth track on the album is called "Port of Morrow" and you can listen to it on YouTube at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=EsTJz4K9HqU. Some of the lyrics actually mention the Port, too. "The cyanide of an almond, Let him look at your hands, get the angles right, Ace of spades, port of morrow, life is death is life."

Upon the album's release, Mercer stated that he had not yet visited the Port of Morrow.

"I looked it up online the other night because people are asking me now over here, so I looked it up. It's this industrial port and very boring," he said.

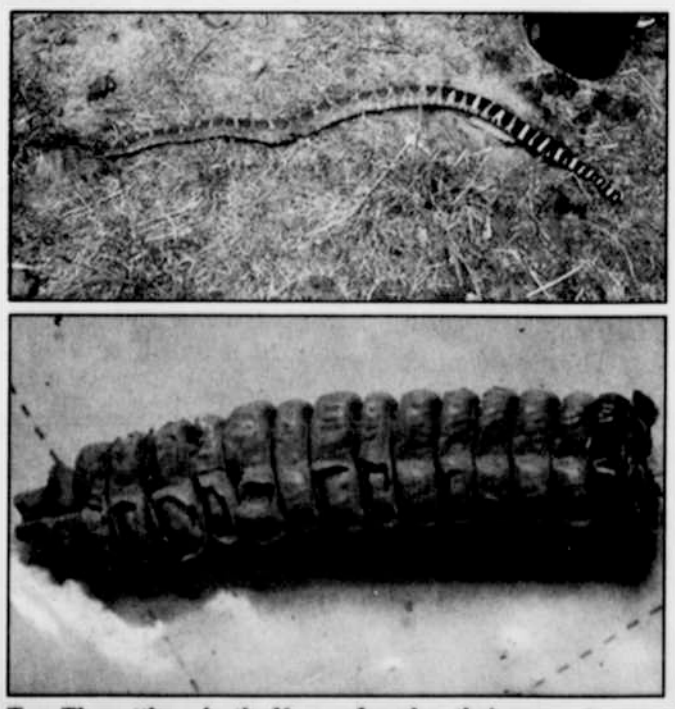
The cover of the new album titled Port of Morrow.

Big rattlesnake killed on Rhea Creek

Jerry and Patty Nance of Rhea Creek recently had a brief run-in with a monster of a rattlesnake.

Patty Nance was weedeating around their residence, about three miles north of Ruggs, last month when she said she spotted a snake moving around their greenhouse. When her work took her to the front of the greenhouse, she saw a large rattlesnake stretched on the ground in front of the greenhouse door, apparently seeking warmth.

She got her husband, Jerry, and the two decided relocation was not an option for the snake, which measured 42 inches "without its head or rattles." So, said Patty, the rattler "met its demise."



Top: The rattlesnake the Nances found on their property measured 42 inches "without head or rattles." Bottom: The large snake sported a set of 14 rattles. *–Contributed photos*

The Nances estimated that the snake was around four inches thick; it had 14 rattles.

Patty Nance said their neighbors agreed it was the biggest rattler they had ever seen. Although they were warned about snakes when they bought the place, she also said it was unusual to see one in the open like that.

"They're almost always going away from you; it's not like they're hanging around looking for someone to beat up on," she said. "We've seen quite a few this summer, though."

Plan ahead to run for office

Anyone interested in running for office in the November general election needs to begin the process soon.

Morrow County Clerk Bobbi Childers says there are no county positions open in the November 6 election. However, several city positions are open county-wide.

The deadline for all candidates to be filed with the Morrow County Clerk's office is August 28.

However, interested individuals need to think ahead and consider their city's filing requirements, which may include gathering supporter signatures. City due dates for filings also vary, so interested candidates need to check with their local city hall.

Heppner city positions up for grabs this November include City Mayor, a two-year term currently held by Les Paustian.

Also about to be vacated are four city council positions currently held by Cindi Doherty, John Bowles, Cody High and Keith Lewis. All council positions carry four-year terms.

Filing paperwork for Heppner city positions is available at Heppner City Hall.

According to Heppner City Manager David DeMayo, individuals interested in filing as candidate for any of these positions need a minimum of seven signatures (one percent of the number of total state votes in the last gubernatorial election). However, DeMayo recommends gathering more than the minimum, in case any of the signatures are invalidated for any reason. Petition signers need to be registered voters who are willing to support the candidate in running for the office.

The town of Lexington has two positions open, for city councilor positions #1 and #2, which are currently held by Billee Owen and

-See CANDIDATE FILINGS/PAGE SIX

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