

CREZ continues work on program to attract residents to county

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University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403

By David Sykes

The Columbia River Enterprise Zone (CREZ) continues work on a housing program that would encourage people who work in Morrow County to

also live here. The program would also provide low interest "gap" financing for developers who want to construct rental housing in the county. There is an acknowledged shortage of rental housing in all sections of the county, and the CREZ board hopes the program will encourage more market-driven rental housing. There seems to be enough low-income housing throughout the county.

At its meeting Monday the board reviewed a proposed housing program drawn up by CREZ administrator Carla McLane similar to one adopted by the city of Boardman. The CREZ program will be administered by Greater Eastern Oregon Development Corp. (GEODC), which administers other housing programs in Morrow and Umatilla counties, and funded by fees CREZ receives in lieu of taxes when businesses locate in the enterprise zone at the Port of Morrow in Boardman.

CREZ has so far given the city of Boardman

\$100,000 for its housing program, but members said Monday there probably will not be funding for a county-wide program for a year or two.

The board also talked about encouraging businesses locating in the enterprise zone to implement their own housing program.

"We need to start having a conversation with our business partners," said CREZ board member Gary Neal. "They know we are trying to promote Morrow County living and they have a tool (to assist in this) that they can use," he told the board.

If enterprise zone businesses implement a housing assistance program they can partially offset the cost of that program against the fees they will be paying the CREZ. Tillamook (Columbia River Processing) already has a program where employees who move into Morrow County can receive a \$7,500 grant towards the purchase of a home, and Neal suggested the CREZ use that template to approach other businesses

such as ConAgra to offer similar incentives. ConAgra is in the midst of a major expansion at the Port of Morrow and plans on hiring up to 100 new employees. The company is holding a job fair in Hermiston on Friday and members of the Willow Creek Economic Development Group plan on attending and handing out information about south Morrow County in an attempt to entice new employees to live in Morrow County. Boardman Chamber of Commerce will also be at the job fair.

The CREZ does not currently have any funds for the housing program and will not for a couple of years; however, the board did discuss the expenditure of approximately \$300,000 they have collected already from businesses. The money is paid the CREZ instead of property taxes and can come in for up to 15 years in some cases. Some board members felt the \$300,000 was already committed to the Morrow County Education Foundation. The foundation

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VOL. 132 N.O. 40 8 Pages Wednesday, October 9, 2013 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

G-T Trophy Corner



Above: Better than homework.... Thirteen-year-old Aaron Smythe of Lone had only about an hour of daylight to hunt after football practice on Monday, Sept. 30, when he bagged this 3x4 buck on his family's property using a .257 Roberts inherited from his grandfather, Tom Huston. Middle: Colton and Josey Evans both bagged their first deer (ever) during their first time hunting (ever) this season. Colton, 13, took down his 3x4 on the Columbia Basin Unit on opening day, while Josey downed hers, a 4x4 with a 24-1/2 inch spread, the day after. Top: Diana Healy, 13, of Heppner shot this 3x4 buck with a .243 Winchester on Oct. 6 on the Healy Ranch on Butter Creek. This was Healy's third successful hunt. -Contributed photos

Robinson retires after 32 years in banking

By Andrea Di Salvo

Florene Robinson will retire from the Bank of Eastern Oregon this month after 32 years in banking and 10 years with the Bank of EO's Heppner branch. Robinson will be 66 on the day she retires, Oct. 18.

Robinson was born in Ontario and raised in Adrian, in Malheur County, Oregon. She says she spent all 12 grades in Adrian schools, graduating from Adrian High School in 1965. She spent one year pursuing general studies at Treasure Valley Community College in Ontario before meeting her soon-to-be husband, Heppner native Dean Robinson. She left school when they were married, and the couple moved to La Grande, where Dean completed his teaching degree.

The Robinsons moved to Moro, OR in 1971, where Dean taught and Florene took a job as a part-time

teller at First National Bank in Moro, now the Moro branch of Bank of Eastern Oregon. She worked there until 1975, when Dean took a "sabbatical" from teaching. The couple moved to Arlington, where Dean worked for Frank Anderson for 13 years.

"Then CRP came into play," says Robinson, and the couple moved to Heppner. Dean took a job teaching in Lone, where he stayed until his retirement, while Florene returned to banking, going to work for First Interstate Bank in Heppner, located where Heppner City Hall is now. She worked there as a teller and operations officer through bank mergers and buy-outs with Wells Fargo and Klamath First Federal, until the Bank of Eastern Oregon bought out the bank in 2003. The consolidation

didn't mean the loss of a job, though.

"Four of us moved up here to Bank of EO (Heppner branch)," she says.



Florene Robinson

She spent her first year with BEO as a teller before becoming the assistant to financial services. She has spent the last eight years serving as phone receptionist and assistant to current financial advisor Russ Murfitt.

While many people look forward to retirement, Robinson says she isn't one of them.

"I want to put on the brakes. I'm not sure I want to leave!" she says, though she adds that her husband is ready for her to spend more time with him in joint retirement.

"This is my family, too, my second family. It's kind

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Ballots go out next week for Nov. election

Ballots for the upcoming special election will be mailed Wednesday, Oct. 16. Remember, ballots are not forwarded. Those who don't receive ballots but believe they should have should contact the Morrow County Clerk's office at 541-676-5604.

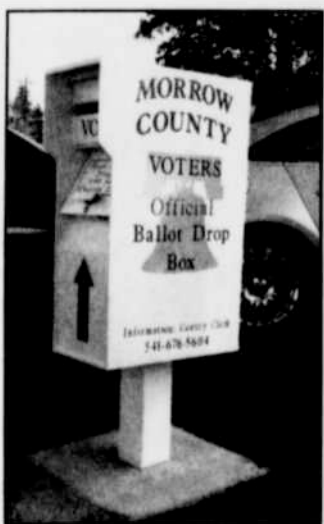
The ballot only contains one issue for Morrow County residents to determine this November, a measure shared with Umatilla County to determine the future of a capital improvement bond for Blue Mountain Community College.

Measure 30-96 "Authorizes General Obligation Bonds for Blue

Mountain Community College Dist." The question as stated on the ballot is whether the college will "issue general obligation bonds not exceeding \$28,100,000 for construction, improvements, technology, land acquisition and capital assets? If the bonds are approved, they will be payable from taxes on property or property ownership that are not subject to the limits of sections 11 and 11b, Article XI of the Oregon Constitution."

Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 5. All ballots

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Drop boxes like this one in the Morrow County Courthouse parking lot are available for 24-hour delivery of completed ballots in the upcoming special election, Nov. 5. -File photo

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