



## Discussions continue about county-wide housing shortage

Two groups team up to tackle problem

By David Sykes

Everyone at last Monday's Columbia River Enterprise Zone (CREZ) meeting agreed there is a shortage of rental housing in Morrow County, and that the shortage is expected to get worse as more businesses expand and create jobs in the Boardman area.

In an effort to alleviate the shortage, representatives of the Greater Eastern Oregon Development Corporation (GEODC), a Pendleton-based non-profit economic development organization, met with the CREZ board, "to first identify the housing problem and then to find possible solutions."

GEODC Executive Director Christine Nelson told the CREZ board that the most important steps are to assemble a team of professionals and conduct a forum, then conduct a market/feasibility study. Phil Nachbar, a project manager with GEODC, was also in attendance, and both wondered why a program to help fund new rental housing construction in Boardman has gone unused for the past year. The Boardman program was set up with \$100,000 in CREZ money to provide "gap" financing to developers who want to build rental units such as duplexes; however, no one has taken advantage of the program.

The CREZ has been talking of setting up a similar program for the entire county; however, Nelson wanted to find out why the Boardman program isn't being used before setting up a county-wide fund. She suggested having a forum either in January or

February where developers, bankers and others involved with housing could sit down with GEODC and discover the obstacles to building new rental units in the county and Boardman in particular.

"Because the proposed CREZ Housing Development Fund for Morrow County is similar to the existing Board Housing Development Fund, which is not being utilized; it is important to evaluate why and determine the best way to move forward," Nelson's proposal to CREZ stated.

"The first step should be to assemble a team of professionals and conduct a forum to discuss the rental housing incentives program and its challenges. The team should also address both rental and for-sale units and include representation of professionals that would participate in the program including a lender, a builder, a potential owner of rental housing, and GEODC staff. The second step, if necessary, would be to conduct a market/feasibility study of a prospective project to identify key elements of the rental housing incentives portion and the for-sale down payment assistance portion that should be addressed," Nelson stated.

Nelson said the study should address "site location, cost of construction for both rental and for sale houses, number of units, short and long-term financing terms, employee income levels, the type of units to be built including size, bedrooms and required amenities, rental rates and/or mortgage rate."

Nelson was also curious, and wanted to find

out why, with all the job growth in Boardman, no large-scale rental units or even condos were being built in Boardman. GEODC is the program manager for the Boardman housing program and will also be the program manager for the new county-wide program. The CREZ has funded the new housing program with \$150,000.

Also discussed was a proposed plan to give financial help to individuals purchasing homes in Morrow County. The program would be aimed at attracting new residents, many of whom already work here. It is estimated that only about 10 percent of the employees who work at various businesses located at the Port of Morrow in Boardman actually live in Morrow County. Tillamook Cheese currently has a program in which any employee who moves into the county and buys a home can receive a cash incentive from the company of \$7,500 toward purchase of a home. The CREZ is considering a similar incentive program for anyone moving into the county; however, details of that plan have not been finalized.

CREZ board members and GEODC discussed several variations of incentive plans, even one where a renter could have money set aside while renting that could eventually be used toward purchase of a home.

A dominant idea behind the establishment of enterprise zones such as the CREZ is that giving

-See HOUSING SHORT-AGE TOPIC AT CREZ/PAGE FIVE

## Russell files for county commissioner

Don Russell, Boardman, has filed to run for Morrow County Commissioner in the May 20, 2014 primary election, according to the Morrow County Clerk's office.

Russell filed Dec. 12 to run as a Republican for the #2 commissioner position currently held by Ken

Grieb, also a Republican.

Russell is Chairman of the Columbia River Enterprise Zone (CREZ) board and serves on the boards for the Port of Morrow and Boardman Rural Fire Protection

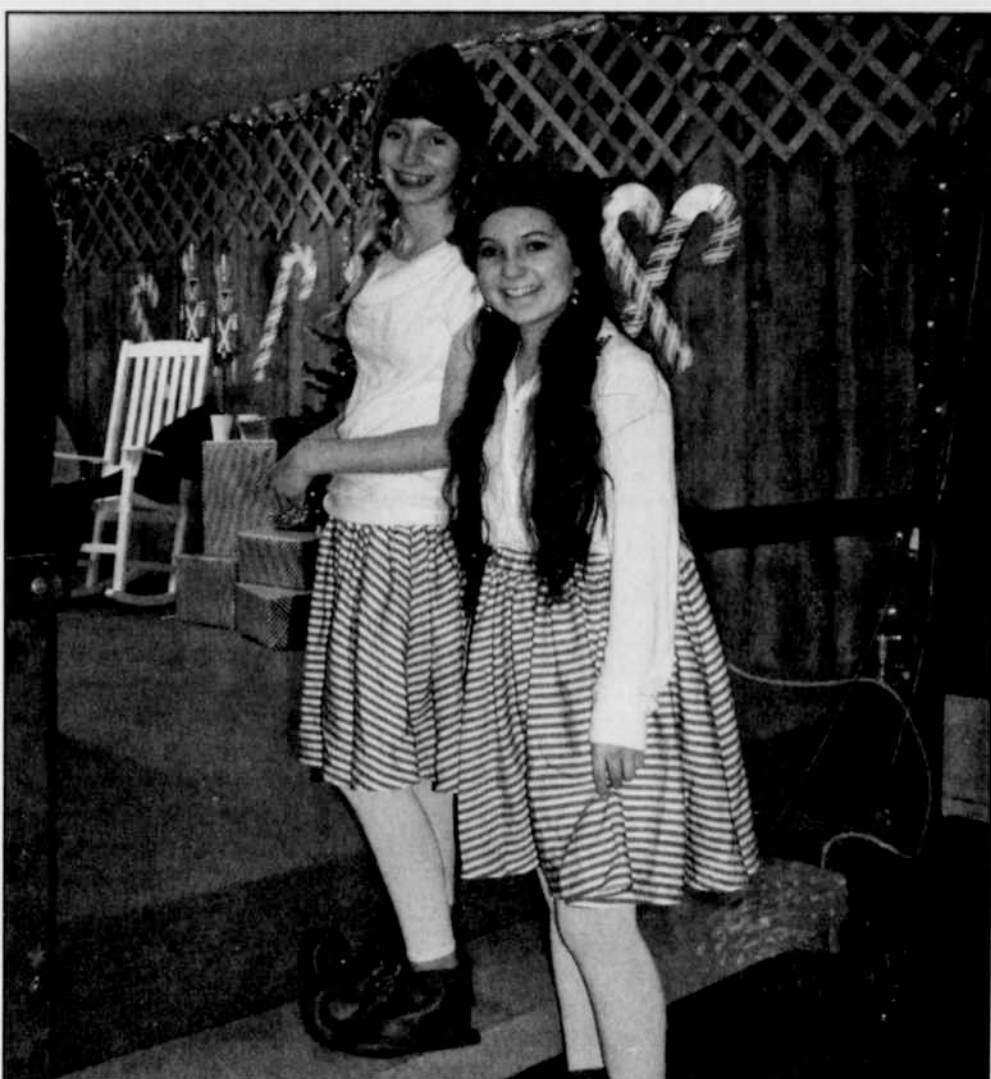


Don Russell

District.

Grieb has not filed as a candidate at this time. The field is still open, however, as the candidate filing period for the May 20 election is open until March 11, 2014.

## You won't find elves this cute at the North Pole...



Elves Natalie Grigg (right) and Reiah Waite served as Santa's helpers at the Celebrate Heppner Christmas event held last Thursday at the Morrow County Fairgrounds. The evening boasted food, fun and lots of prizes for those who held onto those Heppner rewards cards. -Photo by Megan Futter

## Local clinic nurse retires after 41 years with health district

By Andrea Di Salvo

A trip to the doctor's office is always made easier by a friendly face in the exam room. Both staff and patients at Pioneer Memorial Clinic will now miss seeing the friendly face of long-time nurse Linda Dunaway, who retired last week after 41 years with the Morrow County Health District.

Dunaway's retirement takes place not far from where her story began; the 62-year-old was born at Pioneer Memorial Hospital in 1951, a year after it opened. She lived in Morrow County her whole life, was raised in the Lexington/lone area and attended the Lexington school until it closed when she was in fourth grade. She then attended school in Lone, graduating from Lone High School in 1969.

Dunaway says she spent one summer working at a Morrow County Produce potato shed in Boardman, owned by D.O. Nelson.

"That's the only other job, other than babysitting and pulling rye, that I ever had," she recalls.

The rest of her working life was dedicated to the Morrow County Health District. She started work as a nurse's aide at Pioneer Memorial Hospital in 1972, where she stayed until 1974. She then took a year's leave of absence to attend Blue Mountain Community College in Pendleton, where she earned her LPN



Linda Dunaway sits in one of the exam rooms at Pioneer Memorial Clinic in Heppner, one of the rooms where, she says, she has spent the bulk of her life. Dunaway's last day with the clinic was last Friday, Dec. 20. -Photo by Andrea Di Salvo

(Licensed Practical Nurse) license in 1975. She then returned to work at the hospital in Heppner.

At some point, she says, she took over supervision of the nursing home. In 1994, she quit that and started work as a clinic nurse at PMC, where she has remained for the last 20 years.

That's a long time in one place, and Dunaway says she's feeling the effects of her decision to retire now.

"I have a lot of good friends. I'm gonna miss them and miss my patients," she says, tearing up. "There's a lot of memories. I've seen a lot of changes. I've learned a lot.

"I think when you quit learning, it's time to give up," she adds.

Dunaway has a

daughter and her family, including one grandchild, in Lexington. Other than that, she says she's been on her own for some time, with her sons and their families in Prineville, OR and Missouri.

That makes it even more poignant for her to leave the clinic.

"It's not been an easy decision. It's been my life," says Dunaway.

"I'm gonna miss everybody terribly; not just coworkers but also patients," she says. "Everybody's like family. You become family."

She says she's choosing to retire now because of her "new fellow"; Dunaway says she just sold her home in Lexington and that they will be moving out of the

-See NURSE RETIRES/PAGE TWO

## G-T closed for New Year's Ads, stories, due this Friday

The Gazette-Times will be closed Wednesday, Jan. 1, for New Year's Day. The news and ad deadline for the Dec. 31 edition will be Friday, Dec. 27 at 5 p.m. Normal business hours will resume Thursday, Jan 2.

We wish everyone a safe and happy New Year.

The Heppner Gazette-Times wants to see pictures of your trophy animals from this hunting season. Stop by to have your picture taken, drop off photos, mail them to PO Box 337 in Heppner, email them to editor@rapidsolve.net or text cell phone photos to 541-980-6674.



Have a Merry Christmas & Happy New Year! From all of us at MCGG!

CHRISTMAS HOURS-  
Closed 1/2 day Christmas Eve  
and all day Christmas Day

Morrow County Grain Growers  
Lexington 989-8221 • 1-800-452-7396 For farm equipment, visit our web site at www.mcg.net