

HEPPNER

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Dispute between city and resident heats up



Dan McBride's property on Kirk Street in Heppner. -Photo by David Sykes

By David Sykes

An ongoing dispute between the city of Heppner and local resident Dan McBride came to a head recently, when McBride penned an angry letter to City Manager Kim Cutsforth which was read aloud at Monday evening's council meeting.

McBride, a long-time resident of the city, accused Cutsforth of "being out to get me" and of trying to ruin his life.

McBride and the city have been bumping heads for several years now, starting in January of 2011 when the planning commission and city council allowed him to live in a RV at 146 Kirk Street while McBride worked on building a house on the property. One year later on Jan. 12, 2012, without any construction started, the planning commission and the council agreed to extend the permit for another year as long as McBride started work on

a permanent house there within one year. Again there had been no construction started. It is against city ordinance for people to live in recreational vehicles on a permanent basis, and the city had also been providing water and sewer service to the RV. The permits are now expired and Cutsforth told the council she had the city crew cut off water service to McBride's RV because he was back living in there in violation of the ordinance.

"He tells us he wants the water turned on to water his plants and then he is back living there," she told the council. She said the last time she had the water turned off a deputy sheriff accompanied the city crew. A deputy was also present at Monday's meeting; however, McBride was not. He asked Cutsforth to read his letter out loud at the meeting, otherwise he would come in person and read it.

In addition McBride was upset because the city

had sent him a "nuisance abatement" letter (one of 27 recently sent out around town) telling him a boat on his property was not properly licensed and therefore was an abandoned boat and a nuisance and must be removed. McBride said the boat was "a work in progress" and that he would license it when it is ready for the water. He said if the city pushed the issue he would move the boat.

This latest run-in with the city prompted McBride to write a letter to Cutsforth that was read to the city council at Monday's meeting. In the letter McBride said he was a life-long city resident who was "born and raised in Heppner" and the property has been in his family over 70 years. He said he did not have a lawyer to fight city hall, but cited his history and service to the city. McBride said he spent 30 years as a Heppner volunteer fireman, was captain of Morrow County Search and Rescue, was a Little League coach for four years and spent two years with Emergency Management. McBride also said he was a Vietnam veteran and has been a security guard with the US Army for 19 years. He went on to say he raised five children and was not a "bum or trailer trash" and that he wanted to retire in Heppner. He asked the city to turn his water back on so he can water his trees and plants. He accused the city manager of looking for any violation to bring

against him.

Cutsforth said even though McBride had been paying his water bill she had the authority to shut it off, because "we can discontinue water for abuse." She said McBride had not been truthful when getting the water service, and that the situation has been going on for three years. McBride's RV should never have been allowed to hook up to city water and sewer in the first place, she told the council. She said every time he came to the city and asked to have the water turned on to water his plants, he would move back on the property. He is not living on the property now, she said.

Mayor Joe Perry backed up the city manager saying, "We support what you are doing."

27 nuisance abatement letters sent out

In a related matter Cutsforth said she toured Heppner with two Morrow County Sheriff's deputies recently and found 27 "nuisance" instances, most of which were abandoned vehicles. Letters were sent out to the property owners about the vehicles. Apparently the letters have caused some consternation in the community and prompted Cutsforth to ask the council to look at changing the city's abandoned vehicle ordinance. At a Jan. 30 Police Commission

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ODFW sees new area of wolf activity, OR4 collared 'again'



ODFW wildlife biologists place a new working GPS collar on OR4, the Imnaha wolf pack's alpha male, after darting him from a helicopter March 28, 2012 in the Zumwalt Prairie area, Wallowa County. This month, ODFW placed a fourth collar on OR4. -Photo courtesy of ODFW

A new area of known wolf activity has been designated by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) in the southern Catherine Creek Unit and the northern Keating Unit, the agency

reported last week. Tracks of five wolves were first documented by ODFW in late December in the Medical Springs area, after the department followed up a track report from an area landowner.

Since December, the group's tracks were relocated three times, including last week in northern Baker County.

The repeated use of the area over a period of time indicates that wolves have become established and are not simply dispersing wolves. However, ODFW says it has little data regarding the specifics of this group (e.g. origin, reproductive status, homerange). The agency report that future monitoring efforts will focus on more location data and radio-collaring.

Also, ODFW reports that on Feb. 1 they aerially darted and radio-collared the breeding male of the Imnaha pack (OR4). The wolf's previous GPS collar quit functioning in late December and this was the first time the wolf was in

an area where he could be safely darted.

The new GPS collar is the fourth applied to this particular wolf. While ODFW would not normally re-collar an individual wolf so many times, they say this particular wolf's collar has been helpful with managing depredation in the area.

"ODFW has plenty of location information about the Imnaha pack, but this wolf is important to continue to track in order to assist area livestock producers facing depredation," said Russ Morgan, ODFW wolf coordinator.

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ALL NEWS AND ADVERTISEMENT DEADLINE:
MONDAYS AT 5:00 P.M.

M.C. school district receives \$150 thousand from ed foundation

By April Hilton-Sykes

It's almost Valentine's Day, but Santa Claus, in the guise of Morrow County Education Foundation Representative Don Russell, delighted Morrow County school officials with the presentation of a \$150,000 gift to the M.C. School District.

MCSO Superintendent Dirk Dirksen said that the monies would go toward technology and school district infrastructure in

preparation for outfitting the schools and students with computers such as iPads and other technological devices. Other areas emphasized were scholarships and additional opportunities with Eastern Promise.

Education foundations are normally set up as depositories for monetary gifts to schools and school districts to circumnavigate the state requirements for school districts to offset the financial contributions they

receive with a reduction in state funds.

Russell, Boardman, who is also running for Morrow County Commissioner, earlier presented the Ione Education Foundation with \$15,000. Russell says that the donations to the two education foundations were based on a percentage of student populations of both districts. He said that MCEF did not specify what

-See MCSO RECEIVES GIFT/PAGE EIGHT

New EMT joins Health Dist. ambulance crew



Devon Pulvino with Morrow County Health District ambulance in Boardman.

Devon Pulvino, 37, is the newest member of the Morrow County Health District ambulance crew based in Boardman.

He comes here most recently from Crooked River Ranch and has also worked in the Seattle and

Bend areas, where he taught at the college and worked in critical transport.

Pulvino is married; his wife's name is Nichole and he has two children, a three-year-old named Vanesa and eight-month-old Dane.

Merkley to hold town hall in Boardman

Oregon Senator Jeff Merkley will hold a Morrow County town hall meeting in Boardman next Monday as part of a series of town halls throughout Eastern Oregon.

The Boardman town hall meeting will take place Monday, Feb. 17, at 9 a.m. in the Riverside Junior/Senior High School gymnasium, 210 Boardman Ave., Boardman.

Merkley says he will update constituents on his work in Washington, DC, as well as answer questions and invite suggestions about how to tackle the challenges facing Oregon

and America.

Merkley will also make stops in Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, Baker and Malheur counties over two days next week.

"Advocating for Oregonians is my number-one responsibility and holding a town hall in every county is a great way to hear directly from Oregonians," said Merkley.

"I invite all residents of Morrow, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, Baker and Malheur Counties to come and discuss what we need to do to strengthen our state and nation."

Exciting things planned at Willow Creek Terrace

Willow Creek Terrace board reports that the Terrace will soon be getting a new room adjacent to the current dining room.

The dates for beginning and finishing the project have not been determined, but the board approved the construction to begin as soon as the contractor has time available for it.

A solarium/multi-activity room with storage space will be built under the existing roof that shades a portion of the patio. Large

doors will provide access to this new room from either the dining room or the patio, and activities within the room can be independent of the commons area. The patio sees little use, so the board agreed that this new room would be a better use of space.

Anyone who would like to contribute financially to this new chapter on "The Hill" may do so by sending a check to Willow Creek Terrace, 400 Frank Gilliam Drive, Heppner, OR 97836.

G-T open next Monday

While some businesses will be closed next week for Presidents' Day, the Heppner Gazette-Times

won't be among them. We will be open and hard at work, with our normal deadline of

5 p.m. Monday for all advertisements and news.

Call 541-676-9228 with questions.