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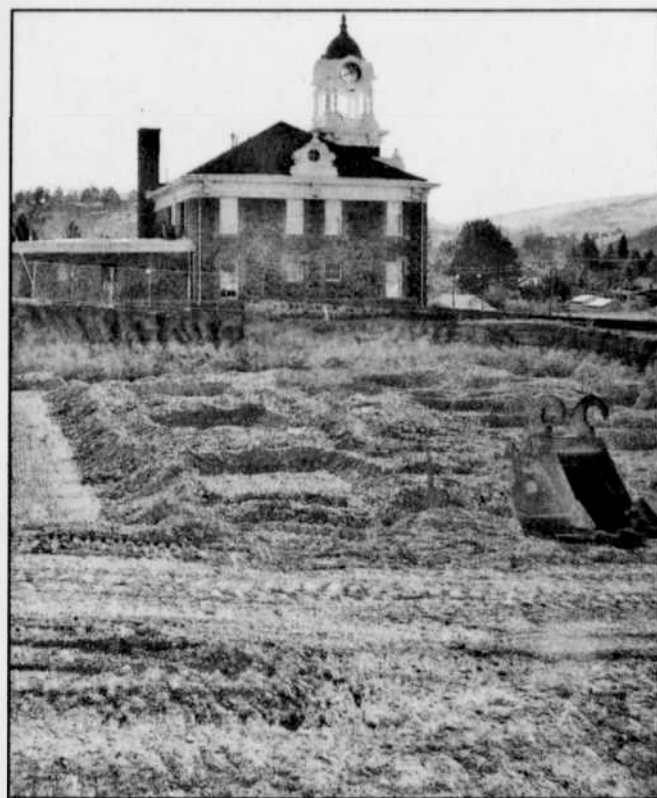
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Gazette Times

VOL. 133 NO. 38 8 Pages Wednesday, November 12, 2014 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

New county administration building grows in size, cost

Estimated price now at \$4.1 million for 11,200-square-foot facility



Construction has begun on the new Morrow County administration building, which will be over twice the size and cost that was originally proposed. —Photo by David Sykes

By David Sykes

The new Morrow County Administration building under construction next to the existing courthouse in Heppner was originally estimated to cost \$1.8 million, but will now cost around \$4.1 million, county Judge Terry Tallman told the Heppner Gazette-Times last week.

Tallman and Project Manager Scott Rogers of the Wenaha Group said the main reason for the cost increase is that as the building went through the planning

stage it increased in size from an original proposal, and the cost of land acquisition was not included in the original estimate.

"Why did I say \$1.8 million back then?" asks Tallman. "I went with the best information I had at the time," he explains.

Scott said it was originally estimated that the new building was going to be between 4,500 and 7,500 square feet, and building costs would be around \$360 a square foot. That put the first rough estimate to be

between \$1.6 and \$2.88 million. However, Tallman had publicly stated a \$1.8 million figure. Not only did the facility increase in size when planning started, but the original estimate did not include purchasing the three homes next to the existing courthouse, which were torn down to make way for the new structure.

However, according to Wenaha's own website the company still lists the admin building as 8,000 square feet, which at the \$360-per-foot estimated would still have made the original estimate to be \$2.88 million. Even as late as February the square footage was estimated to be 9,500 square feet. Scott still says Wenaha's original square-footage estimate was spot on, pointing out that recent hard construction costs have come in at \$357 per square foot, which makes the cost of the larger 11,200 square foot building to be \$4.1 million.

Why the county was so far off on the size of the facility can be traced mostly to county officials underestimating the need for more space.

"When we got into planning the actual facility we found out we were not very realistic," says Tallman.

The needs for the Health Department and for more storage and conference rooms are just several of the reasons for increased the square footage, he points out.

"Our estimates were grossly underestimated," he admits.

Tallman says mandates from the state increased the needs for the health department, which is currently located upstairs of the Gilliam Bisbee building. As everyone who has visited the health department knows, there are steep stairs to get up there, and the building is in a deteriorating condition.

"Our main problem with fixing up the Gilliam Bisbee Building was the steep stairs, no elevator and the water running through the basement," explains Tallman. There is a spring below the building and water can at times literally flow through the basement in a stream.

"It sounds like a small waterfall down there," Tallman says.

Judge Tallman also said he went through the courthouse and asked each department if they wanted to move to the new facility. The clerk, accountant and assessor all said they did not want to move, he says. The District Attorney will stay in the present courthouse

—See ADMIN BUILDING'S RISING COSTS/PAGE FIVE

Mustangs crush Bobcats to advance to quarterfinals



Tom Gould (#61) pushes hard against a Myrtle Point player during last week's playoff game in Heppner. The Mustangs crushed the visitors 49-0 to advance to quarterfinals. Gould's performance this season earned him a spot as an offensive line on CBC all-league second team. —Photo by Sandra Putman

—See full story PAGE FOUR

Morrow County voters buck state trends in election

By Andrea Di Salvo

Morrow County voters faced some highly contested races this election. At the local level, close races made the outcome uncertain. At the state level, the majority of county voters bucked trends that swept through the rest of Oregon, putting voter sentiment at odds with election outcomes.

At the local level, the race for Heppner mayor and councilor positions was a hot issue going into this election, as was proved by the close margins in the mayoral race. Skip Matthews won the mayoral election with 37 percent of the vote, trailed closely by incumbent Joe Perry with 34 percent and challenger Cody High with 29 percent.

For Heppner's councilor position number 5, incumbent JoAnne Burleson fought off challenger Kathy Marick, retaining her seat. Councilor position number 6, which had no incumbent running, was won by Adam Doherty.

With all of Ione's council candidates running uncontested, there were no surprise overturns in that city, with Mayor Linda LaRue and councilors Deacon Heideman, Beverly Crum and Joel Barnett all winning their seats by landslides.

Still up in the air is the Lexington town council. A vast majority voted for Deona Siex, the single contender for council position 2, but the mayor and the rest of the council positions were all determined by write in. Morrow County Clerk Bobbi Childers said she had not yet verified the results of those races; more information will be published in the Gazette as it becomes available.

On the county level, Don Russell became the new county commissioner, running away unopposed with 95 percent of the votes. Measure 25-69, which changes the position of county commissioner from partisan to nonparti-

san, passed with 63 percent of the vote.

On the state level, Republican Greg Walden, who retained his seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, was certainly helped by the 80 percent of Morrow County ballots cast in his favor. Likewise, State Representative Greg Smith will continue to represent the 57th district, thanks in part to the 98 percent of county voters who supported him.

However, the majority of Morrow County voters was often at odds with the rest of the state, such as when Morrow County supported Republican Dennis Richardson over incumbent John Kitzhaber for governor with 2,057 votes, or 66 percent. Likewise, Morrow County would have elected Monica Wehby for U.S. Senator by a narrower margin of 55 percent versus the 36 percent who voted for winner Jeff Merkley.

While Oregon at large passed Measure 91, making

recreational use of marijuana legal, Morrow County voted down the measure by

66 percent. Measure 87, which allows judges to be hired by the National Guard and public universities, was passed at the state level but rejected by a narrow 53 percent of county voters. Fifty-two percent of Morrow County voters also cast their ballots against Measure 89, whereas 63 percent of total Oregon voters approved amending the state constitution to state that "state/political subdivision shall not deny or abridge equality of rights on account of sex."

The issue of Measure 92, which would have mandated labeling of certain foods containing GMOs (genetically modified organisms) was almost too close to call at the state level before falling by a narrow margin, but not in Morrow County, where 73 percent of voters were

—See ELECTION TRENDS/PAGE SEVEN



Skip Matthews



JoAnne Burleson



Adam Doherty

G-T Trophy Corner



Top: Aaron Smythe went on a quick walk around the hill behind his house after practice, but ended up shooting this big-bodied 2x3 whitetail in his backyard on the way down to the house for dinner. Aaron is the son of Scott and Claudia Smythe. Bottom: Aaron Smythe killed his first elk, this 4x5 bull, in Buck Canyon at 7:15 a.m. on Nov. 10. He shot the bull with a Savage 30-06 he purchased with his own money for elk season. Aaron said he came out of mist and encountered the elk, the first one he'd seen. He got excited, shot high and missed at 100 yards. The elk then moved over a rise. Aaron snuck up the rise and shot the elk in the lungs at 30 yards...this time saving his excitement for after the kill. —Contributed photos

County DA's office to continue prosecution of marijuana cases

DA announces prosecution as usual until law takes effect next year

Last week, a majority of voting Oregonians passed Measure 91, Oregon's legalized marijuana initiative. Unlike the majority of voting Oregonians, Morrow County residents voted against the measure by a margin of 66 percent to 34 percent.

The Morrow County District Attorney Office has announced it has no plans to dismiss any open marijuana cases, or to refuse to prosecute any future marijuana cases based upon the passage of Measure 91. The provisions of Measure 91 will not take effect until July 1, 2015. Until the provisions

of Measure 91 take effect, the Morrow County District Attorney Office says it will continue to review all marijuana cases that are submitted to the office for prosecution.

"There will be no blanket dismissal of open marijuana cases, and no refusal to file charges of new marijuana cases based upon the passage of Measure 91," says Morrow County District Attorney Justin Nelson. "The Morrow County District Attorney Office enforces the criminal laws of the state, and until July 1, 2015, those laws have not changed."



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