

Gazette Times



VOL. 134 NO. 13 8 Pages Wednesday, April 1, 2015 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

Health district hires new nurse practitioner

Dr. Anderson to leave in August

By April Sykes

The Morrow County Health District has hired a family nurse practitioner, Vicki Kent, FNP, to provide patient care primarily at the Irrigon Clinic, but also at the proposed Ione Community Clinic and Pioneer Memorial Clinic as needed, MCHD CEO Dan Grigg has announced. Kent will receive an annual salary of \$87,360 plus annual

cost of living increases. In lieu of medical and dental insurance coverage, the district will pay her a monthly lump sum equal to the value of the current year premium for an employee and spouse.



Dr. Dan Hambleton

The new hire will free Dr.

Dan Hambleton to work more days at Pioneer Memorial Clinic in Heppner,

especially critical now since PMC will be losing Dr. Betsy Anderson in August. Dr. Hambleton has been spending about seven days a month at Irrigon and about nine at PMC.



Dr. Betsy Anderson

Dr. Anderson has given notice to take a position at La Grande and the district has begun actively recruiting for another family medicine physician.

“Dr. Anderson has worked for the health district for the past seven years and has done a tremendous amount of good for our patients and our community. She will be greatly missed,” said Grigg.

Grigg also told the board at its regular Monday-night meeting in Heppner that the Morrow County Court has accepted MCHD’s offer to purchase the Pioneer Annex building located above the clinic. He said that the district will seek to finance the purchase through GEODC and the building will be available in the fall of this year after the new county building construction is completed.

Concerning the proposed Ione-based clinic, Grigg said that the Oregon Health Authority, which certifies school-based health centers, has recently visited Ione and offered to keep the project in the funding cycle as long as they are in the permanent site and have the clinic certified by Oct. 31. A proposed temporary site may allow the clinic to be opened by June 30.

Grigg said that an architect has finalized the clinic design.

Ione has purchased a building for the clinic site and is in the process of hiring a project manager and beginning construction.

In other business, the board:

—learned from Grigg that MCHD has hired four new employees: Robin Warren, RN, as the new Home Health and Hospice director; Jamie Poirier, RN; Nichole Kahn, Certified Nursing Assistant; and Lisa Spencer, RN, as a part-time Home Health nurse. Hiring a new Home Health and Hospice Director will free up Star Roth, recently hired as both clinic supervisor and Home Health and Hospice director, to concentrate on managing the clinic.

“I think she (Warren) will do really well,” said Molly Rhea, director of nursing services.

Grigg told the board that applications have been submitted for PMC and IMC to become certified as Tier 3 Patient Centered Pri-

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County farmers upset with the powers that be...or the powers that might be

By Andrea Di Salvo

A proposed transmission line from Morrow County to Idaho has local landowners upset, but the county says its hands are tied.

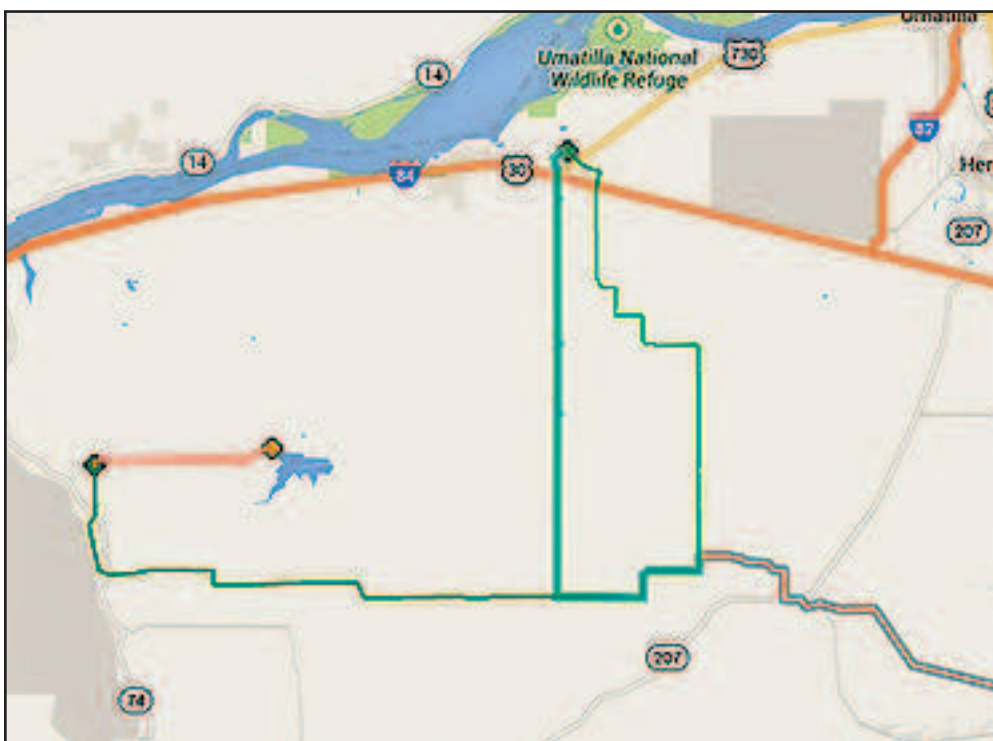
“Where this really affects us is they want to come right through our farm,” says John Luciani of the project. Luciani’s Butter Creek farm lies right in the path of the proposed line both in Morrow and Umatilla counties.

“The key damage to me is the disruption to our land building it, and the roads torn through each field where normally I grow wheat,” Luciani continues. “The way they have (the proposed line) run through our ground would be a huge construction disruption of land to build the thing and then erosion...and breaking up all my fields. And that seems to be where they want to go.”

Luciani isn’t the only local landowner concerned about the possibility of mammoth electrical lines running over his property. The list looks like a who’s who of local farmers, many of whom use words ranging from “concerned” to “disgruntled” to “mad as hell.”

The project that has them concerned, known as the Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project (B2H Project), is a proposal from Idaho Power to build and operate a 500 kilovolt transmission line from a proposed substation near Boardman to the Hemingway Substation near Melba, ID, outside of Boise.

The project—or at least the idea of the project—has been in the works for more than a decade, since



While there are several alternate routes proposed for B2H, a current project map indicates that the “preferred route” would run the line down Bombing Range Rd., then across country via secondary roads such as Alpine Lane and Wagon Trail Road, before crossing 207 near Butter Creek. The B2H line would then run across private land, running roughly parallel to Butter Creek/Big Butter Creek Ln. and then Hwy. 74 before crossing Hwy. 395 north of Pilot Rock.

Idaho Power first identified the need to pursue Pacific Northwest transmission upgrades in 2000. In January of 2012, Idaho Power signed an agreement with the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and PacifiCorp “exploring joint participation...on the B2H Project as they evaluate options for meeting demand throughout their service territories,” according to the project website.

The B2H line would run approximately 305 miles across five Eastern Oregon counties, including Morrow County.

Idaho Power says that, to cross public and private lands in Idaho or Oregon, the project must be evaluated and approved by federal, state and local agencies. As one part of the B2H approval process, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) created a

draft Environment Impact Statement (EIS). Released by the BLM in December, the draft EIS divides the project into six segments and analyzes three route alternatives. Those three, plus two more that Morrow County Planning Director Carla McLane says have been “requested to be considered,” cover a lot of ground and have a lot of farmers on pins and needles over the futures of their farms.

Idaho Power touts the company’s commitment—and ability—to work with landowners to minimize the impact on agricultural operations, but Morrow County landowners say they aren’t so sure about either the ability or the commitment.

“It’s gonna change what we do, no matter what,” says Shane Matheny, who works the family farm out

of Lexington. “I don’t see how it could be business as usual. It’ll change how we farm that ground.”

“Arrogant” just comes

to mind,” adds Iver Christensen when speaking of Idaho Power. “These people don’t give a rip what we think or say.”

He and other Morrow County farmers say they don’t trust Idaho Power to hold to their word, citing, they say, examples of lying and trespassing throughout their dealings with the company.



Idaho Power use photos like this to show how 500kV lines can work around Ag production to cause minimal impact but area landowners aren’t so sure. —Photo courtesy of Idaho Power.

“If they stuck to the

“It’s gonna change your farming practices, and (there is) possible devaluation of your land,” says Corey Miller, who works land north of Ione that could be affected by one of the proposed line routes. Miller, like others, is concerned that the land he farms could be devalued both in terms of usefulness

—See POWERS THAT BE/PAGE THREE

Motel saved from fire by manager’s quick action

Northwestern Motel in Heppner experienced some excitement last week when a spark caused a potentially disastrous fire in the motel’s laundry room.

Motel manager Joshua Miller said he was standing across the street from the motel around 12:40 p.m. on Friday when he noticed smoke in the air. At first, he said, he was concerned that the smoke was from a passing truck; then the truck passed and he realized the smoke was coming from the area of the motel. When he ran across the street and to the motel, Miller said, he saw flames shooting out the laundry room window.

“My main thing was putting the fire out,” said Miller.

He had a reason for his urgency; under the laundry room window sat several propane tanks.

“If the fire had gotten

to those propane tanks, the whole block would have gone,” said Miller’s wife, Marcie Miller, manager of Cornerstone Gallery. “I saw my husband running—he almost got hit by a car crossing the street—and I’m just thinking, ‘Oh, God.’”

“I didn’t want any damage to the business but I also didn’t want to lose my husband,” she added.

Miller said he grabbed a fire extinguisher and reached through the laundry room window to extinguish the blaze. He also had another man working with a garden hose to keep the fire suppressed until the Heppner fire department arrived, which Miller said was within five minutes.

Heppner Fire Chief Rusty Estes said the firefighters hooked up an inch-and-a-half attack line and had the fire completely

extinguished and smoke cleared in about 20 minutes. Estes then called the state fire marshal and stayed on hand until the fire marshal arrived to investigate the cause of the fire.

Miller said the fire apparently started near a light fixture. Estes said the fire started from items stacked on a shelf too near the light bulb.

Both men said the damage was extensive; Miller said the damage was “quite a bit,” while Estes said the fire “destroyed the room. It was pretty hot in there,” Estes added.

“We lost everything in (the laundry room),” Miller said, saying that the extent of financial damage would be determined after a visit from an insurance agent on Tuesday.

No injuries were reported.

The hunt is on when the Easter bunny hops into town Saturday

Heppner and Ione will both hold their annual Easter egg hunts this Saturday, April 4, at 10 a.m.

Ione’s annual Easter egg hunt will be held April 4 at 10 a.m. in Ione City Park. Children up to the

fourth grade are invited. Many donations helped make the event possible; anyone still wishing to make a donation may do so at Bank of Eastern Oregon in Ione.

Also Saturday is the

Easter egg hunt at Heppner City Park, sponsored by Elks Lodge.

Pictures with the Easter Bunny will be at 9 a.m., with the hunt starting by age group at 10 a.m.

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