

Community Counseling Solutions to purchase land for building

Community Counseling Solutions has begun the process of purchasing property for a new building in Heppner, a representative has announced.

CCS, which currently leases space in the Gilliam-Bisbee Building on Heppner's Main Street, is in the process of signing an earnest money agreement for property adjacent to the Christian Life Center off Morgan Street in Heppner. CCS Executive Director Kimberly Lindsay said the property has some "zoning issues," which Community Counseling Solutions will have to work through with the city.

She also said CCS has engaged the services of Wenaha Group; if everything stays on track, she said, construction will begin in the summer of 2016.

Boardman teen drowns in Columbia

The cause of a Boardman teen's drowning death last week is still under investigation according to local law enforcement. This was Morrow County's second drowning death in the river this summer.

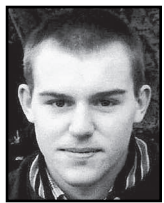
Friday at 3:53 a.m., Morrow County Sheriff's Office received a 911 call reporting that Gavin Ryce Roberts, 18, of Boardman drowned in the Columbia River. The incident occurred near the Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge in the McCormick slough.

Roberts was a 2015 graduate of Riverside High School in Boardman.

MCSO, Irrigon Rural Fire Protection District, Irrigon EMS, fish and wildlife, Umatilla fire, and Skamania County (WA) Sheriff's Office Dive Rescue all responded to the scene, and MCSO, fish and wildlife, and Umatilla fire department launched boats into the water.

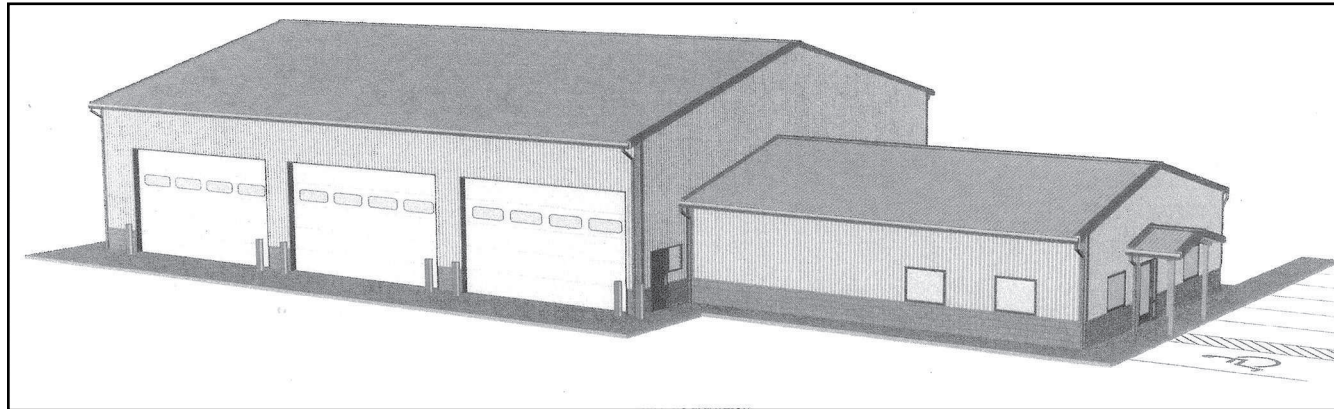
The dive rescue team recovered Roberts' body around 11:13 a.m. that morning.

The incident remains under investigation.



Gavin Roberts

City moves forward with bond for new fire hall



An artist's sketch of the new proposed fire hall was passed out at city council Monday night.

By David Sykes

The city council voted unanimously Monday to move forward with a bond issue to build a new fire hall near the city limits of Heppner.

The exact amount of the bond is not known at this time, but the fire hall is expected to cost \$930,000 and the cost will be split 40/60 between the city and the rural fire district, with the city responsible for 60 percent of the cost.

The city administration knows it will be a push, but wants to try and get the bond request on the ballot for this November's election.

"Also, we are still working with the rural fire hall to join with us for this project; they have not voted to support a bond measure

on the ballot yet, so that is still pending. This project will depend on the support of the rural fire district," Heppner City Manager Kim Cutsforth told the Gazette-Times Tuesday.

If approved by voters the hall would be located at the intersection of Riverside, Fuller Canyon and Hwy. 74 just outside the city limits of Heppner. Land for the hall will be donated by the Morrow County Grain Growers. The present fire hall is located on Willow Street in downtown Heppner. Because of the congestion and limited space, the area is not considered a good location for a new, larger facility.

Health District asks for parks smoking ban

In other business the council heard from Mor-

Housing grants re-funded

CREZ injects \$40,000 into south county housing program

By David Sykes

The Columbia River Enterprise Zone (CREZ) gave an additional \$40,000 to the Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group (WCVEDG) last week, to enable the group to continue with its successful grant program for home purchases.

Previously WCVEDG had been given \$195,000 for the program, which sees grants of up to \$5,000 made to people buying homes in the Heppner, Lexington and

Irrigon both have similar programs funded by CREZ.

In making the request for additional funding, WCVEDG thanked CREZ and told of the success of the housing program.

"We have received a total of \$195,000 and have exhausted all of these funds for residential home purchases in South Morrow County," WCVEDG said in its letter. "We funded a total of 39 grants, 7 rentals, 5 are building new residences

and the rest were owner occupied."

The letter was signed by WCVEDG board members Jeff Bailey, Kim Cutsforth, Marcia Kemp, Nancy Snider and David Sykes. WCVEDG executive director Sheryll Bates administers the grant program and was at the CREZ meeting last Friday with Cutsforth to make the request.

The way the program works is that anyone who has a written agreement to purchase a home can take the agreement to Bates at her office next to city hall, and be put on the list to receive up to \$5,000 in grant money. The money is put into escrow and goes toward the purchase at closing. Farmers Home Administration (FHA) loans are not eligible for the grants. The main stipulation in the program is if the home is sold within three years the buyers agree to pay WCVEDG back the grant money.

On Friday the CREZ also added another stipulation: the grant money cannot go toward the purchase of a rental by an investor.

"We always wanted this program to benefit the individual home owner," CREZ chairman Don Russell said in asking the group to make the change.

Also receiving funding was the city of Irrigon for its similar grant program. Aaron Palmquist, Irrigon City Manager, was on hand to ask CREZ for additional funding and was granted \$42,000. The city had previously been awarded \$50,000, which it had exhausted.

Boardman to open new splash pad

Boardman will soon open its new splash pad. The grand opening is set for 10 a.m., July 17, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony and free snow cones at the new splash pad located on NE Front Street.

City leaders decided to add a splash pad to an existing park area after former councilors, Mark Pratt and Neil Livingston, pitched the idea in 2011. A committee was formed, made up of council members. Councilor Brenda Proffitt was successful in obtaining a grant from the Wildhorse Foundation. That grant, along with city funds, made the splash pad a reality.

The 3,500-square foot, bubble-shaped pad features multiple jets of streaming water and over three dozen water features.

The splash pad is part of a park area that includes a soccer field and skate park. Like these other park areas, there is no admission to use the splash pad. This park area will get new picnic tables and benches later this summer.

The splash pad will be open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. through Labor Day. It may stay open through the fall, depending on the weather. This will be the first public splash pad in Morrow County.

New law to implement legal pot includes broad sentencing changes

Oregon rewrites marijuana criminal code to reduce most felonies to misdemeanors and to make prior convictions eligible to be cleared

July 1 Governor Kate Brown signed H.B. 3400, an omnibus bill to implement Measure 91, the marijuana legalization initiative adopted by voters last November. The bill was approved by the Senate and the House of Representatives prior to receiving the governor's signature.

Measure 91 legalized possession, use, and cultivation of marijuana by adults 21 and older and regulated commercial production, manufacturing and retail sales of marijuana. Legalization for personal use took effect July 1, 2015. As of that date adults 21 and older can legally possess up to eight ounces of marijuana at home and up to one ounce of marijuana outside the home. They may also grow up to four plants at home, as long as they are out of public view. The regulatory structure for commercial retail sales will not be up and running until next year.

In addition to addressing the implementation of Measure 91, H.B. 3400

contains broad sentencing provisions that extend beyond the elimination of criminal penalties for possession of marijuana and cultivation of up to four plants. The new law reduces most marijuana felonies to misdemeanors or lesser felonies with significantly reduced sentences. These changes allow eligible persons with prior marijuana convictions to have their convictions set aside, sentences reduced, and records sealed.

"A felony drug conviction carries significant collateral consequences that can mean the loss of public assistance, educational opportunities, employment, and housing," says Tamar Todd, Director of Marijuana Law and Policy at the Drug Policy Alliance. "With this new law, Oregon is not only taking a bold step forward to end the war on drugs, but is actively addressing and reversing the terrible consequences of that war."

However, while the changes are cause for cel-

ebration among marijuana proponents—not to mention those who now have the chance to have their convictions set aside—it raises concerns for state and local officials who have been responsible for seeing that laws are followed and lawbreakers prosecuted.

One of those, Morrow County District Attorney Justin Nelson, said that setting aside prior convictions is a concern for him.

"Prior to the passage of these new laws, Oregon had a system in place for setting aside convictions," says Nelson. "It required a defendant to wait a specific period of time, then apply to the court for setting aside the conviction and/or arrest. I wish the legislature would have let that part stay in place, and not allow a separate path for expunging a conviction."

The changes made by H.B. 3400 will apply to

thousands of Oregonians who were previously convicted of marijuana-related felonies. According to the Drug Policy Alliance, there are approximately 78,319 marijuana convictions included in the Oregon Computerized Criminal History file that have the potential to become eligible for the set-aside process. In 2012, more than 12,000 people were cited or arrested for the possession of marijuana.

"These defendants knowingly committed a crime at the time of their conviction. The laws were on the books, and it was very clear what the laws was. These defendants then decided to break the law, and they were held accountable for that," Nelson says. "The defendants are being held accountable for the law they broke at the time,

-See LAW CHANGES POT SENTENCING/PAGE FIVE

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