



VOL. 134 NO. 49 10 Pages Wednesday, December 23, 2015 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

Peace on earth...



This nativity scene in Lexington reminds us of the "reason for the season." Read more Christmas inspiration on PAGE THREE. Find local Christmas greetings on pages FOUR and FIVE. -Photo by Andrea Di Salvo

Heppner Celebrates Christmas



Heppner celebrated Christmas last Thursday at the Morrow County Fairgrounds. The evening included visits from Santa and Scrooge, a special performance by the Jingle Bell Dancers and, of course, the reward card and raffle prize drawings. Left: Santa chats with some very good little girls, Jingle Bell Dancers Hannah and Ali Green, with elf Zandra Masterson serving as Santa's little helper. -Photo by Barbara Prucha
Above: Scrooge gives his predictable opinion of the yearly festivities: "Bah, humbug!" -Photo by Carmelo Di Salvo

Gutierrez files for county treasurer

Gayle Gutierrez of Heppner has again filed for the position of Morrow County Treasurer, county clerk

Treasurer since 1997.

As a reminder, county positions open in next year's election are Morrow County Judge, Morrow County Commissioner Position 1, Morrow County Clerk, Morrow County Justice of the Peace, Morrow County Sheriff, Morrow County Surveyor and Morrow County Treasurer. All are four-year terms except for judge and justice of the peace, which are both six-year terms.



Gayle Gutierrez

Candidates for the Morrow County Judge position must file with the Oregon Secretary of State; the deadline to file for the primary is March 8, 2016. Candidates for all other county positions may file with the Morrow County Clerk; the deadline to file for the May 17 primary is March 10, 2016.

Appointments made to CREZ board

Two appointments were recently made to the Columbia River Enterprise Zone (CREZ) board. Morrow County Commissioner Don Russell was appointed as one of the representatives from the Morrow County Court. He will replace Greg Sweek, who was then named as an alternate on the board. Russell was already serving on the CREZ as an appointment from the



Don Russell

Port of Morrow; however, in the last election he won a seat on the county court and subsequently resigned from the Port of Morrow. He is currently the chairman of the CREZ board. In another appointment Port of Morrow board member Jerry Healy of Heppner was appointed to fill Russell's seat on the CREZ. The CREZ is an enterprise zone located mainly in the Port of Morrow area

around Boardman, and offers tax incentives to businesses wishing to locate there. Businesses pay fees in lieu of property taxes to the CREZ, which subsequently distributes the money throughout the county to be used for four different purposes: Education, housing, community development and public safety. The CREZ board is made up of two appointments from three different



Jerry Healy

entities—the Port of Morrow, Morrow County Court and City of Boardman. The board members jobs are to negotiate agreements with new businesses and decide how funds are to be spent. Since July of 2015 the CREZ has taken in approximately \$2.2 million in payments from ConAgra Foods, VaData (Amazon), Columbia Plywood and Columbia River Technologies (Tillamook).

Rental study may lead to more units

Shortage of rentals a persistent problem in South County

By David Sykes
A recently completed study on rental units in Heppner, Lexington and Ione has revealed what most people already knew—there is a persistent shortage of available rental housing in South Morrow County.

find a place to live. New employees many times do not want to buy a new home immediately, and wish to rent instead. WCVEDG sees the rental shortage as an economic hindrance to the area, which needs to be addressed.

Commissioned by the Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group (WCVEDG), the study was completed by long-time appraiser and housing expert Doug Barak of Barak and Associates, Hermiston. Among other things, the study revealed a one-percent vacancy rate for single-family rentals and a zero-percent vacancy rate for duplexes in South County.



Doug Barak

To start off the study WCVEDG Director Sheryll Bates compiled a list of rental units in the area, which was then given to Barak for his analysis and report. Landlords for 54 single family rental units, seven duplexes and three apartment complexes were contacted and confidential data on type of rentals and rents paid was gathered and used in the study.

Major employers in the area, along with real estate agents, WCVEDG and the Heppner Chamber of Commerce have for some time been wrestling with the rental shortage, which becomes most apparent when new people come into the community seeking employment, and can't

WCVEDG has been working for several years on ways to ease the rental shortage, and the group hopes the study will provide valuable information for possible developers who might either build new units, or rehabilitate existing homes for conversion to rental units.

Electric co-op declares patronage payments

The board of directors of Columbia Basin Electric Cooperative, headquartered in Heppner, has announced the retirement of \$660,000 in Capital Patronage Credits. This amount represents the second half of 1984 and all of the 1985 outstanding Capital Patronage Credits and several small credits from more recent years. Capital Patronage Credits represent members' equity in the member-owned cooperative.

With the addition of the \$660,000, the Co-Op has returned \$5,242,697 to its member/owners over the last 38 years. Most credit holders will receive payment by check. Active credit holders of very small value or in arrears will have payments applied to their account. Multiple account holders will receive a single check for all accounts. Funds are expected to be disbursed in mid-December 2015.

Logging will impact snowmobile routes along Western Route

This winter, logging activities on the Heppner District will temporarily impact groomed snowmobile routes along a 10-mile section of Forest Road 53 (Western Route Road), announced Ann Niesen, Heppner District Ranger. The temporary road closure on Forest Road 53, from its junction with Forest Road 5321 to its junction with Forest Roads 5311/5312, may be in

place through February. A one-lane snowmobile path will be available along this closed section allowing access to nearby snow trail systems on the Forest. Snowmobilers can expect to encounter logging traffic along this route and are advised to use caution. In addition, Morrow County Public Works will close County Road 603 as -See SNOWMOBILE ROUTES/PAGE TWO

Gazette closed for Christmas, New Year's

G-T to close early Christmas Eve

The Gazette-Times will close at noon on Thursday, Dec. 24, and will remain closed Friday, Dec. 25, for the Christmas holiday.

Normal business hours will resume Monday, Dec. 28. The Gazette-Times will also be closed Friday, Jan. 1, for New Year's Day.

Normal business hours will resume Monday, Jan. 4. We wish everyone a safe and happy Christmas season and New Year.

HOLIDAY SALES EVENT

DISCOUNTS UP TO \$3000

NON-CURRENT SNOWMOBILES LIMITED TO STOCK ON HAND

MCGG will be open until Noon on Christmas Eve Closed Christmas Day

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

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

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