

# Irrigon plans Watermelon Festival

The City of Irrigon will hold its annual Watermelon Festival on Saturday, July 30. Several events are planned throughout the day beginning with breakfast at 6:30 a.m.

Funds raised through this community event go to benefit various areas across the community of Irrigon, including scholarships, Cooley Sports Complex, the senior center, food baskets program, flags for events, and more.

This year an array of donated items will be raffled; buy 50/50 raffle tickets at many of the local businesses or on festival day.

Events and opportunities taking place at the Irrigon Marina Park include breakfast beginning at 6:30 a.m., a hearty breakfast served for a nominal price. The annual parade kicks off at 10 a.m. and runs down NE Main Avenue. At 11 a.m. is the opening ceremony at the Irrigon Marina Park band stand. The day will include on-going raffle items throughout the day, as well as an array of games, contests, vendors (local and out-of-town). Multiple food vendors, besides the hometown food shack, will be available.

For more information, contact Renee Couchman at 541-922-1560 or Aaron Palmquist, city manager, at manager@ci.irrigon.or.us.

# Boardman water, sewer go up this month

During its March 1 meeting, the Boardman City Council approved resolutions for an increase in the city’s water and sewer rates.

The city’s garbage rates will remain the same.

The rate increase is due to future improvements to the city’s water and sewer system. This is the first water and sewer rate increase since 2008.

The water rates reflect an increase only in the base rate. Overage rates will remain the same. All water base rates will increase by \$1.50.

This brings the residential water rate to \$16.50 for the first 7,000 gallons used in a month, the commercial and hydrant meter base rates to \$20.50 for the first 8,000 gallons used in a month, the school water

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# Busy mama or babysitter...



A doe and four fawns take a break in the shade off Gale Street in Heppner Monday. -Photo by Andrea Di Salvo

# Little Free Libraries promote reading in city parks

By Andrea Di Salvo

Heppner City Park and Hager Park have some new additions in the form of little red boxes full of books.

The boxes, which were placed in the two Heppner parks last week, were the brainchild of Jamie Mullins of Heppner, who had seen similar structures on the internet.

Many, if not most, library structures like these are part of the Little Free Library network. Little Free Library is a nonprofit organization with a mission to “connect neighborhoods around the love of reading by placing free book exchanges worldwide.” Part of their plan is an initiative to place 100,000 of their book exchanges across America by the end of this year.

The idea grabbed Mullins’ imagination, and she decided to bring it up to the City of Heppner.

“I was in (city hall) paying a bill one day, and I said, ‘Hey, I have this



Jamie Mullins and children Charlie, Ella and Emma stand in Heppner’s Hager Park by one of the Little Free Library boxes they helped bring to fruition. -Photo by Andrea Di Salvo

idea.... How interested would you be in putting something like this in the parks to promote literacy?” said 32-year-old Mullins.

City employee Judy Healy loved the idea, and told Mullins she would get newspaper dispensers to serve as library boxes.

“Judy has a lot to do with it,” Mullins said.

They had to wait for some time but, true to her word, Healy procured two boxes from the East Oregonian.

Once the boxes were in Heppner, Mullins, who had been an art teacher in Wisconsin before moving to Heppner almost five years ago, took the two boxes home to decorate and stock them. She and

# City continues to wrestle with nuisance enforcement

By David Sykes

The city of Heppner continues to grapple with how to enforce property nuisances such as trash and junk cars on property, even going as far as to hold a meeting with law enforcement and court officers in search for solutions.

City Manager Kim Cutsforth told the city council Monday the problem is that, even though the city has increased powers to deal with problems of trash, junk, tall weeds and other nuisances on private property, getting the properties cleaned up has proven to

be very difficult. Cutsforth said violators of the nuisance ordinances refuse to clean up their properties, ignore fines, don’t show up for court dates and flaunt all efforts at enforcement.

Cutsforth said she recently arranged for a meeting between the district attorney, justice court judge and sheriff to discuss what could be done. She told the council that violators are issued multiple tickets of \$250 for each violation, but have discovered that not showing up for court is better than going. Cutsforth said since the tickets for

property trash violations are for ordinances, the violators cannot be sentenced to jail.

It was discussed to move violations from ordinance to the criminal code; however, city attorney Bill Kuhn said then the offenders would be allowed a jury trial and legal representation, both of which the city would have to pay for. Kuhn also said any jail time given the offenders would also be billed to the city, money it just doesn’t have, Cutsforth said.

The city has the power to go in and clean up the properties, then bill the property owners for the work. If the property owner refuses to pay then the city can place a lien on the property for the amount of the cleanup; however, the city has been reluctant to use this authority—once again, for lack of funds.

After receiving complaints from multiple residents of Water Street, city management applied for and received a community enhancement grant to provide free dumpster service there as an incentive to offenders to clean up their property. However, Cutsforth said at an earlier council meeting that while the free dumping had some success, it also caused friction with some other property owners who felt it was unfair the violators received the free dumpster service and they did not. She said the city probably would not use the free dumpster program again.

Kuhn told the council he would continue to work on a legal solution to the nuisance problem.

In other business at Monday’s meeting the council approved several animal permits and discussion was held on the number of the permits being issued. Council member Joann Burleson said she thought the permitting “was getting way out of hand.” She said it used to be young people would have a few animals in town for the fair, but now there were all kinds of animals in the city limits. Monday the council approved permits for ducks, goats and miniature horses. Cutsforth said if a problem with the animals comes up then the permits could be revoked.

“It is all complaint driven,” she said, then pointed out that the city receives very few complaints about animals.

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