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Morrow joins effort for full lottery funding

Oregon counties say state has been "shorting" what's owed from video gambling

By David Sykes

The Morrow County Commission last week voted to join in an effort by other Oregon counties, to force the state into allocating the full amount of lottery money they say is rightly owed each year under the law.

Under Oregon law, established when the lottery was formed, the state is supposed to divide up and distribute 2.5 percent of net video lottery funds after prizes, to the 36 counties. According to the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) however, of which Morrow County is a member, the state has been handing out less than is owed. For instance, a total of $39,083,827 was given out to counties in 2016. That is $1,752,921 less than the law stipulates, according to AOC.

Apparently, the state has begun distributing a "fixed" amount of lottery funds to the counties. Then when actual revenue comes in higher, has not upping the allotment as required. AOC says if actual revenue comes in higher, then the state should come back and distribute the actual 2.5 percent owed. Under the proposed legislation "…. counties are supposed to receive 2.5 percent of new video lottery proceeds," said the AOC in an email sent out to Oregon counties asking for assistance. "In practice, however, this percentage has been replaced with a fixed appropriation, and the statute suspended." The email went on to say the proposed legislation would provide, " a mechanism to fund the actual 2.5 percent levels."

Video lottery provided over $78,000 for county economic development in 2017

The AOC said the funds were needed by the counties and "are an important investment in local economic development." How the money is spent has been pretty consistent, at least over the past three years. For instance in 2016 Morrow County received $79,189 in lottery money and those funds went to county tourism, the rodeo, the museum, the fair, OSU Extension and the Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group. In 2017 the county received $78,610 and used the funding in a similar way. The county received $70,381 in 2015, and those funds also were distributed for economic development. How much money the county receives, depends partly by how much is taken in from video gambling within the county.

"I am in favor of this (the AOC effort)," said Commissioner Don Russell at the Dec. 27 meeting. "We need to hold the legislature accountable to the agreement they made years ago (when the lottery was first instituted). The Morrow County commissioners went on to vote in favor of joining an effort by AOC to pass legislation forcing the state in the future to distribute the full amount owed. The AOC had not asked for funding, but only asked the county to send in its logo to be used on promotional materials advocating the proposed legislation.

In other business at the Dec. 27 meeting, the commission heard a report from Public Works Director Matt Scrivner who said as of Dec. 20, Coalmine Hill has been closed to traffic. The county does not remove snow and maintain the road past Cutsforth Park and will reopen the road in the spring.

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Deputy injured in crash

Morrow County Sheriff's Deputy Lance Bose was injured when his patrol vehicle rolled several times after hitting ice. -*Contributed photo*

Morrow County Sheriff's Deputy Lance Bose was involved in a single vehicle accident on 1-84 eastbound on the morning of Dec. 30, while responding to an emergency call for a rollover crash involving tow semi-trucks and trailers.

While enroute to the reported truck crash, Deputy Bose was advised by dispatch of an ongoing dispute and fight involving approximately 15 people at Bucknum's Tavern in Heppner. Deputy Bose was diverted from the truck crash and reversed direction, heading eastbound on I-84 to respond to the fight in progress.

Initial information indicates that Deputy Bose passed through an area of icy conditions and lost control of his patrol vehicle, resulting in the vehicle spinning off the interstate and rolling several times in an area that consisted mostly of dirt, sagebrush and larger rocks. When the vehicle came to rest, Deputy Bose was trapped inside due to the damage to the vehicle.

Deputy Lance Bose

Boardman Fire and Ambulance responded to the scene and was able to extricate Deputy Bose from the vehicle who was then transported to Good Shepherd Hospital in Hermiston with non-life threatening injuries.

The crash is being investigated by the Oregon State Police and further information will be handled by the state police.

Sheriff Kenneth W. Matlack said he is very thankful for the assistance given by Oregon State Police, Boardman Police Department, Boardman Fire and Boardman Ambulance with this incident.

Deputy Bose will be recovering for a few months and is expected to make a full recovery.

Defendants from Oct. 31 chase through Heppner released

Defendants involved in the high speed chase through Heppner on Oct. 31, Buddy James Buoy, 42, Michelle Carol McLean, 40 and Julia R. Kraus, 37, have all been released and returned to Portland. Each faces multiple charges stemming from car thefts of Washington dealers.

The court granted conditional releases for all three defendants while the investigation continues by the Morrow County Sheriff's Department, Boardman PD and law enforcement agencies in other Oregon and Washington counties.

They each face five counts of first-degree aggravated theft for stealing a 2015 Ford F250 and a 2016 Ford F350 from Dave Smith Motors in Spokane, and a Chevrolet Camaro, Corvette, and Silverado pickup from McCurley Integrity Chevrolet in Pasco.

The state also charged Buoy and Kraus with fleeing or attempting to elude, reckless driving and multiple counts of second-degree criminal mischief and second-degree criminal trespass stemming from a police chase. McLean also faces one charge of unauthorized use of a vehicle.

The defendants have pleaded not guilty to all charges.

According to court records, Buoy's next hearing is Jan. 4; McLean and Kraus have hearings Jan. 25. The hearings will take place at the Morrow County Courthouse in Heppner.

Gunshot victim released from hospital

Kyle Ulrich, 47, found last week in Morrow County suffering from a gunshot wound, has been released from the hospital.

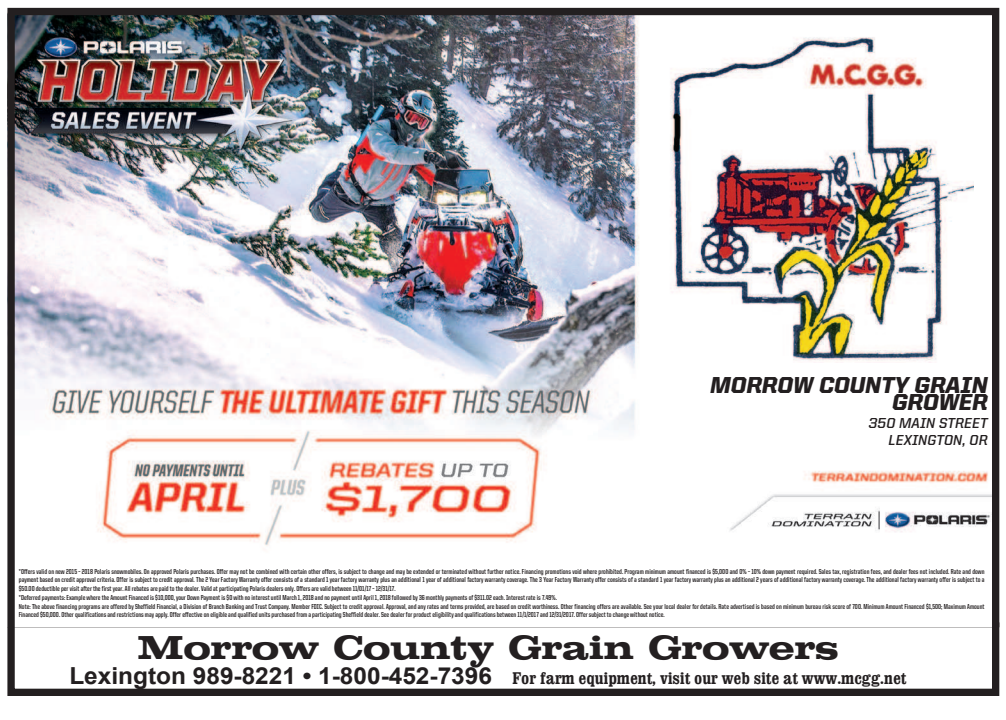
Oregon State Police responded to Love's Travel Stop on Dec. 21 for a report of a man that had reportedly been shot. Ulrich, injured, had flagged down a passing motorist a few miles from Love's and they transported him to the truck stop and called 911.

Ulrich told police that he had been kidnapped in another part of the state and held captive in an unknown location for several days before being taken to Morrow County where he was shot. According to information provided by OSP, detectives are still investigating the case and trying to substantiate those claims.

Oregon State Police does not believe there is a threat to the general public.

Ballots to be mailed Jan. 3

Ballots for the Oregon Special Election will be mailed from Heppner on Jan. 3. Typically, Oregon does not hold elections in January. However, the legislature chose to call a special election for Measure 101. Since this election is solely on Measure 101, no candidates or other measures will appear on the ballot.

Ballots must be physically received by the county elections office no later than 8 p.m. on Jan. 23. Postmarks do not count.

Ballot drop boxes can be found in the parking lot of the Bartholomew building in Heppner, at the public works offices in Lexington and on Spring Street in Ione. The ballot box at the courthouse has been moved to a new location near the Bartholomew building and the box at public works in Lexington has been relocated to another section of the parking lot.