

County wants control of its transportation New state tax brings funds to Morrow County

By David Sykes

A new state employee tax earmarked for transportation projects goes into effect July 1, and Morrow County is deciding how it will receive and spend the money.

At its April 25 meeting the county commission heard a report from Transportation Coordinator Anita Pranger, who said she was approached by Umatilla County and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, CTUIR, to join together as a group, combine all of their new funds, and administer mission voted not to join transportation programs in both counties in this manner. After much discussion the commission decided not to join the group and instead administer the new funds on its own.

disclosed how much money the new tax will bring to the county, it was discussed that the funds will probably be used to set up a bus system transporting employees bejobs at the Port of Morrow in Boardman.

every \$1,000 of pay. public transportation improvement projects (except light rail) as determined by the Oregon Transportation purchase the cabins. Commission. Estimates show that the tax will raise more than \$125 million per year in the entire state. It was not announced how much of that would be coming to Morrow County. One reason the commission gave for "going it alone" rather than joining with the two other entities. was that Umatilla County does not have a transportation system and Morrow County already does. "Umatilla County wanting to control the money when they don't have any public transportation just doesn't make sense because they purse strings," said Commissioner Don Russell. Pranger said although free transportation for jobs mission, office employee in the Boardman area might Anne Alleman said she be a high priority, she said later a transportation line a week "because of having could be added in other areas of the county. The rity back as I was over the advantages to having its yearly limit for income." own advisory board to administer the program was hired for part time and had the tax money would come directly to Morrow County to help the Justice Court with decisions made here; out." She said if she goes to

would be able to prioritize and accomplish projects for Morrow County; support staff is already in place, and if more staff is needed they would be employees of Morrow County; Morrow County Transportation would be able to continue to grow and proceed forward with the program already in place without having to wait in line to proceed with projects; and it would be easier to show the state that Morrow County is getting good use of the projects.

Although the comwith Umatilla or CTUIR, Pranger said she would still attend their region transportation meetings and the county could join later if it wanted to.

In other business the Although it was not commission voted unanimously to purchase 10 A frame cabins from South Morrow Enterprises LLC at a cost of \$60,000. South Morrow, owned by Heppner resident Tom Wolff, tween Hermiston and their obtained the cabins years ago after the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh commune On July 1, 2018, em- near Antelope collapsed. ployers must start withhold- The cabins had been used as commission voted to award ing the new tax (one-tenth housing for the residents of a contract to Silver Creek the new year with an unex- set to add two new posiof 1 percent or .001) from the commune. Wolff moved Contracting for constructall employee paychecks. eight of them onto the OHV This will amount to \$1 for park, and two to Cutsforth Park where they had been The revenue from the used as rental cabins for new tax will be used for visitors at the park. Wolff had an agreement with the county until it was decided recently for the county to

the advisory committee part time she will work until 2020, but if she's made to remain full time will retire in August of this year.

> Commissioner Jim Doherty wanted to know if the county was tailoring a job description to a particular employee's needs. "I don't know whether to appreciate them (the employee) for telling us we are overpaying (the position) or be upset because we have been overpaying them for the past one and a half years," Doherty told Spicer by speaker phone at the meeting. Spicer said she didn't know if the job could have previously been done by a halftime person, and that she wanted to try the arrangement for 60 days and continue only if the work load is being completed. "If it is not working, Ms. Alleman will retire in August of this year and will help train her replacement before she retires," Spicer said.

> The commission voted to reduce the position to halftime. "It will be equally discouraging to find out it is, and has been a halftime position," Doherty said.

> In other business the public works grounds. Silver Creek's low bid was \$229,729.

Missing LaGrande man found

Jacob Aaron Cartwright, the CMV driver who was missing for four days, returned home on Apr. 28 and was taken to Grande Ronde hospital in LaGrande for medical evaluation.

Cartwright informed an OSP trooper that he had encountered snow and mud on the roadway and his vehicle began to slide toward a steep embankment. After the vehicle became unsafe to move, Cartwright departed the area and began traveling on foot along Forest Service Road 5125 in a northeast direction. He continued walking in what was estimated to be in excess of 14 miles before emerging from the forest at the 270 interchange of I 84, approximately nine miles south of LaGrande. He traveled at elevations from approximately 5000 to 6500 feet, crossing snowy mountain peaks back down to I 84, where he flagged down a passing motorist who provided him with a ride to LaGrande.



Jacob Aaron Cartwright's (inset) truck was located on Forest Service Road 5125. -Contributed photos.

The initial investigation revealed Cartwright of the name of the road that may have encountered a he had traveled onto, but problem with his navigational GPS system and was routed off of State Route 244 onto Forest Service Road 51 where he traveled approximately 12.5 miles before turning onto Forest Service Road 5125. Mr. Cartwright traveled an additional 9 miles on Forest Service Road 5125 before his vehicle spun out and began to slide toward the steep embankment along the shoulder of the road.

Cartwright was unsure said it began with the letter G. Grande Ronde River Road is located approximately 1.5 miles from the last known GPS location the night Cartwright went missing, so with the new information an OSP aircraft was deployed to the area and located the semi-truck and trailer.

This area is a remote and mountainous location that has very limited, if any, cellular service.

County proposes \$37.8 million budget Up 4.74% over last year

By David Sykes

The Morrow County budget committee has finished its work and sent a proposed \$37,857,309 2018-19 budget to a public hearing and approval by the county commissioners, Wednesday, May 16 in Boardman. The budget represents an increase of about \$1.7 million or 4.74 percent over last year.

Revenue for the county comes from various sources with \$8.7 million derived from local property taxes, and the remainder from a combination of fees, grants and reimbursements. The tax rate for property owners will remain the same the coming year at 4.1347 per thousand dollars of valuatax revenues were underestimated by that amount. Some other highlights include \$375,000 towards

construction of a new Boardman Public Works facility and \$400,000 for new county office buildings in Irrigon. The total cost of the new 12-thousand-foot facility in Irrigon has been estimated to be in the \$3.5 to \$4.5 million range.

Some other new expenditures are \$54,972 for a new vote counting machine in the clerk's office and an increase of about \$55,000 for the grants to cities program. Other new items include \$50,000 to the school district to fund behavioral classrooms at north end schools and \$40,000 for installation of new scales for the north end garbage transfer station.

In the personnel area, tion. The county also enters the sheriff's department is pected surplus of almost \$2 tions, a patrol deputy and a ing a foundation for a yard million, caused when last criminal investigation depbuilding at the Lexington year's expected property uty for an additional cost of \$191,758. The county finance office is adding a staff accountant for \$87,433 of the proposed budget per year and the three coun-

ty commissioners are each receiving a pay raise of \$11,436, raising their yearly salaries from \$39,564 to \$51,000. Other county elected officials, employees and staff received an across the board three percent cost of living increase with the Justice of the Peace receiving a \$2,504 per year salary bump.

In the debt department, the county still owes \$1,788,000 on a construction loan for the Bartholomew building in Heppner. The county is using Strategic Investment Program funds (money received from windmills located in the county) to pay down that debt.

A public hearing on the proposed budget will be held on May 16 at 9 a.m. at the Port of Morrow River-



County to purchase cabins at **OHV and Cutsforth parks**

In other business, the commission heard from Justice of the Peace Ann Spicer who asked that one of her employees in the office be reduced from fulltime to a halftime. Spicer said she thought the job could be done in halftime instead of fulltime and that the employee in that posidon't have any experience tion now only wants to but want to control the work halftime and will retire in August if it is not changed.

> In a letter to the comwanted to return to 24 hours to pay so much social secu-She said she was originally "only agreed to go full time

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

front Center, Wells Springs Room, 2 Marine Drive, Boardman. A summary of the 2018-19 proposed budget is also printed in this week's newspaper.

Personal-use firewood chainsaw equipped with permits for the Umatilla National Forest will go on sale Tuesday, May 1 at Forest Service offices and several local vendors.

Firewood permits can be purchased for \$5 per cord with a minimum purchase of four cords for \$20. The maximum limit for personal-use firewood on the Umatilla National Forest is 12-cords-per-householdper-year.

Local vendors will sell firewood permits in fourcord packets. An additional vendor fee, up to \$2, will be charged for each fourcord, \$20 firewood permit purchased at a local vendor. A list of vendors is available on the Forest Service website.

"Our vendors provide a great service to our woodcutters by selling firewood permits at times more convenient to the public," said Slater Turner, Acting Forest Supervisor. Most vendors are open early mornings, late evenings and on the weekends. An additional fee is not charged if you purchase a permit at a Forest Service office.

Firewood cutters are required to carry an axe, a shovel, an eight ounce capacity or larger fire extinguisher and have their an approved spark arrester when cutting wood.

Firewood permits available

During early spring months, many forest roads are still inaccessible due to snow. Forest visitors are asked to use extreme care to avoid getting stuck or causing extensive and illegal resource damage to the land and vegetation. Woodcutters are asked to:

-Contact the local Ranger District office before heading out to make sure the area you're traveling to is accessible.

-Avoid driving off roads and onto wet, unstable ground or fragile meadow environments to load firewood.

ditional food, water, cloth- fect. Weekend restrictions ing and other emergency will be announced by 6 supplies.

your destination and estimated time of return.

cising their Treaty rights are hours (i.e. 1 p.m. chainsaw reminded that permits are shutdown), restricted to not required but they must specific areas of the forest be in possession of valid or closed completely due enrollment identification to wildfire danger. Restricwhen cutting or transport- tions will also be posted ing firewood.

hot, dry summer months, public is responsible to Public Use Restrictions check if firewood cutting (PURs) may be imple- is allowed. mented. Restrictions will be announced by 6 p.m. Umatilla National Forest on the day prior to the will end Nov. 30, 2018.

-Be prepared. Pack ad- restriction(s) going into efp.m. on Friday. An updated -Let someone know recording at 1-877-958-9663 will let you know if firewood cutting is allowed Tribal members exer- all day, restricted to specific on the website at: www. As we move into the fs.usda.gov/umatilla. The

Firewood season on the

