

# COMMUNITY PRIDE

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every youth, adult and senior to eliminate poverty and promote independence through education, employment, and the sharing of resources that move individuals from surviving to thriving." County Commissioner Melissa Lindsay is a board member of CAPECO and also helped organize the large community meeting in August. She chaired last week's community pride meeting by encouraging discussion and writing ideas on large sheets of paper as people spoke. Former Heppner resident George Koffler is also involved with CAPECO as its vice-chair.

Although CAPECO offers a host of services, including many for low income people, some in the audience who had experience with the agency said they were very hard to deal with. One person said the agency is "hard to get ahold of and extremely difficult to work with." It was suggested that perhaps CAPECO might

establish an office in Heppner. It is based in Pendleton and serves Umatilla, Gilliam, Morrow and Wheeler counties.

The State employment office was also discussed with some wondering if they might set up a branch office here instead of people having to travel 45 miles to the Hermiston. One person's opinion was that people move to Heppner because there is no employment office and they don't have to look for work and still receive benefits. They said people live here for a reason when they are unemployed, adding that most non-working people that are here, are unemployed by choice. Others said that if people want jobs in Heppner there is no central place to look and it is difficult to know what jobs are available. It was suggested that some way be developed to let people know what the community has to offer.

On the schools place in the community it was brought out that 16 years ago 25 per-

cent of the students were on free and reduced lunches. Now that amount is 40 percent, so the demographics of the county has changed. Parenting classes have been offered to help families, but it was said that many of the parents that need help don't think they do.

It was discussed that possibly a program could be set up where community members could volunteer to be on call and if a student was being a behavioral problem or needed academic help, the volunteer could be called to come to the school and help them. It was pointed out that coaching was a good way for volunteer to become involved in kids lives and make a positive difference.

The lack of good housing in Heppner was also discussed and it was mentioned that there is currently no person doing property management. If a community member took up this job it would make it easier for investors to purchase and rent out homes in Heppner.

## Heppner couple joins Columbia River Christmas Boat Light Parade



Ashli and John Gould of Heppner, pictured above on their boat, the Lilly May, participated in the Clover Island Yacht Club Christmas Boat Light Parade this year. They decorated their boat with Christmas lights and paraded along with 21 other boats Friday and Saturday, November 30 and December 1, starting at the Clover Island Yacht Club in Kennewick. The boat parade went 10 miles up past Columbia Park, passing the Richland Marina and all the hotels along the way. Then they came back down, doing another spin by the Crow's Nest Restaurant in Kennewick.

"The shore was crowded with people and cars," said Ashli. "It was such a blast. There were bonfires, music and markets. And it was all free to the public." "I cannot believe the people and cars," she added. "They were cheering, waving their phone lights and flashing their brights for all of the boats. It was amazing."

Ashli says that they had hoped to do a live feed, but it was hard connecting on the water.

"We cannot wait for next year, as it was a huge success," she exclaimed.

## Commission queries treasurer on county investments

By David Sykes

At its October 3 meeting the Morrow County Commissioners discussed the process by which county funds are invested. A recent \$1 million investment made without commissioners' knowledge, brought the subject to the forefront. Friction between Treasurer Gayle Gutierrez and the commission over handling of county funds has been going on for some time now, and the \$1 million investment, apparently unknown to the commissioners, put the issue back on the agenda. Commissioners felt they should have known about the investment, and in addition wanted to know why no one in the county administration, other than Gutierrez, had access to some of the county's accounts.

The million-dollar investment first came to commissioner's attention at an earlier September 5 meeting, at which time Commissioner Melissa Lindsay used the opportunity to question the entire county investment process. Gutierrez did not attend that meeting but had submitted a written report. Lindsay, who has experience in the banking industry prior to being elected to the commission, has been looking at, and making changes to, the county's money handling procedures since her election. One question she asked was if Finance Director Kate Knop knew the source of the \$1 million that had been invested by Gutierrez? Knop said she did not know the money had been invested until she read Gutierrez's report.

At the Oct 3 meeting, Gutierrez was in attendance, and reminded the Commissioners that each year they vote to authorize her office to invest the county's funds, and pointed out they did this in June of this year. Gutierrez, whose job as treasurer is an elected position and as such she is not a staff member, also said that County Clerk Bobbi Childers has full access to the State Treasury Pool in which the county has over \$13 million invested.

Lindsay said it was her understanding an account at US Bank had been opened for the purpose of county investments, but this information had not come up in Gutierrez's reports. Lindsay also wanted to know who reconciles the US Bank account? Knop said her department does not have access to or reconcile all of the county's accounts, a duty she thought should be part of the Finance Department to ensure a proper separation of duties when handling funds.

At the September meet-

ing Lindsay said she was very concerned about how the county's investments were being reported, saying it was "not acceptable that only one person is aware when a million dollars has been moved." At the Oct 3 meeting when commissioners questioned Gutierrez on who in the county administration could also have access to county investment accounts, Gutierrez said anyone can come to her office at any time and she would show them what they wanted to see. As far as reconciling she added that she didn't care which department did that, as long as it was done in a "timely manner."

About the June vote authorizing the treasurer to invest, Lindsay said she did in fact vote in favor, but only with the understanding that an as-yet unwritten investment policy would guide these investments. Lindsay said she wouldn't have voted for the approval without the understanding an investment policy was going to be written, and a committee formed to guide investment activity such as the recent million-dollar action. Lindsay was concerned that neither approval of an investment policy, nor the formation of an investment committee has as-yet taken place. Commissioner Jim Doherty seemed to believe the commissioners where at an impasse with the Treasurer regarding the investment policy and asked that Lindsay work with County Counsel to find a way beyond it. Commissioner Don Russell added that someone such as the Administrator, Finance Director or Board Chair should be notified when a large amount such as one million dollars is being invested.

### Approves "enhanced law enforcement" contract with Corps

At the October 10 meeting the commissioners approved an "enhanced" law enforcement contract between the sheriff department and the Army Corps of Engineers for added patrols in certain areas belonging to the Corps in the county. The Corps will pay the county \$11,999 to add 150 patrols between April and October of next year at the Willow Creek office building and compound, fishing access, wildlife management area and Willow Creek Dam. Also, to see more coverage is Quesnel Park at Threemile Canyon, Paterson Ferry Landing and in the Irrigon area Columbia River frontage between the Irrigon Marina west to the Irrigon Fish Hatchery.

Also at the meeting the

commissioners approved signing a letter of support for Sandi Pointer, Public Works Management Assistant to apply for a grant to build a new hanger at the Lexington Airport. Pointer explained the current hanger has a long-standing waiting list and there is interest in constructing a new 54'x204' hanger to house seven more units. The estimated cost is approximately \$350,000 and she said she is in the process of applying for a \$150,000 grant from the Oregon Department of Aviation. She said she also applied to the Wildhorse Foundation for a \$15,000 grant.

### Hears juvenile report including three school shooting threats

The commission heard a report from, Juvenile Director Tom Meier who said between July and September there were 51 referrals to his department associated with 22 juveniles. Of those, 27 were for one juvenile running away multiple times. Meier also said there were three separate school shooting threats during the months of September and October. Two of the three juveniles behind those threats were detained at Northern Oregon Regional Correctional Facility.

In other discussion at the meeting Commission Chair Russell said he was contacted by Senator Ron Wyden's office about the recent fire on the Bombing Range. Russell said he later received a call from the Commander at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, which operates the Bombing Range who told Russell the Navy is looking into reimbursing for the Boardman Rural Fire Protection District for expenses incurred fighting the fire. Payment for fighting fires at the Bombing Range has long been bone of contention with the fire district, because the Navy refuses to pay reimbursement for firefighting on its property. Russell also discussed his trip to Washington, D.C. at the invitation of the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, which serves as a liaison between the White House and state and local elected officials. He said the day started with a tour of the White House, followed by lunch. The speakers in the afternoon included Vice President Mike Pence, Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke and White House Counselor to the President, Kellyanne Conway. He said local officials were given the opportunity to ask questions of federal agency personnel in order to help them cut through the bureaucratic red tape.



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