VOL. 137 NO. 51 8 Pages Wednesday, December 19, 2018 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

Taking stock of Heppner's strengths and weaknesses

Lack of housing, limited growth and no industry seen as negatives. Good health care, senior center and recreation are pluses

Judy Moore from Greater Eastern Oregon Development Corporation goes over Heppner's pluses and minuses at a recent Chamber of Commerce meeting. -*Photo by David Sykes.*

By David Sykes

Heppner has a lot going for it, and some things not so much, a discussion at a Chamber of Commerce meeting revealed recently.

The Greater Eastern Oregon Development Corporation, GEODC, came to the Chamber luncheon Dec. 6, where Community Development Officer Judy Moore led an interactive discussion with those present about the community.

Revealed were people's thoughts on some of Heppner's pluses: They included presence of county government offices, good health care facilities, assisted living center, senior center, lots of recreation, mental health facility, off highway vehicle park, Oregon State Extension office, fee hunting businesses, a newspaper, swimming pool, child care and headquarters of a strong regional bank.

Weaknesses came out as lack of transportation and housing, limited growth, flood plain issues, no major industries, no radio station, isolation from state and federal agencies, distance from freeway, lack of buildable lots, delay in police response times, not enough restaurants and not enough motel/hotel accommodations.

Moore also asked the group to come up with what they would like to see in a five-year plan of improvement for the city. People mentioned restoration of the Gilliam-Bisbee building, development at the old mill site, development of a small business incubator, sewer, street and pedestrian walkway improvements, increased residential broadband Internet service, new businesses locating here, more available housing, continued improvements to the health care facilities and growth of existing businesses.

Moore came to Heppner as part of a tour she is taking to many cities in GEODC's service area assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the towns. She said in order to help move communities forward they must first address what they have in assets and liabilities and formulate a vision for the future.

Knowles finishes third in average at NFR

Blake Knowles takes down the steer at the National Finals Rodeo.

Heppner cowboy Blake Knowles ended up in third in the average in the steer wrestling event at the National Finals Rodeo held last week in Las Vegas. His total earnings for the week topped $34,000 and his total time was 68.2.

Knowles finished the week ninth in the 2018 PRCA/RAM world standings for his event, with earnings of $162,699.26.

G-T available Thursday next week

Due to the Christmas holiday, the Gazette-Times will be distributed on Dec. 27 instead of the 26th. The deadline for that issue will be Friday, Dec. 21 at 5 p.m.

ALL NEWS AND ADVERTISEMENT DEADLINE:
FRIDAY, DEC 21 AT 5:00 P.M.

Sheriff objects to governor's $4 million to sue Trump and defend illegal immigrants

Matlack says money could be better spent on homeless and other social programs

Morrow County Sheriff Ken Matlack appeared with Peter Doocy on last Tuesday's "Fox and Friends" arguing against Governor Kate Brown's plans to spend millions suing President Donald Trump and defending illegals.

By David Sykes

Oregon Governor Kate Brown recently rolled out her 2019 budget and included is a plan for Oregon to spend $4 million suing President Donald Trump and defending illegal immigrants.

Morrow County Sheriff Ken Matlack took exception to the plan, and last week on the national cable news show "Fox and Friends" told host Peter Doocy the money could be better spent on social programs, especially in the Portland area. "The thing that is difficult is the dollars are tight and it just seems like an awful lot of money that could be used for other projects in Oregon, especially on that side of the state as it relates to the homeless population. We have a great drug problem, a great mental health problem. There are just a lot of things those dollars could be used for," Matlack said.

Doocy said the state was going to work in partnership with an organization called the Innovation Law Lab to identify who would get the legal help money from the Oregon budget, but the state did not do an independent analysis to determine the funding.

The Law Lab is a Portland organization that according to its web site "… is a nonprofit organization dedicated to upholding the rights of immigrants and refugees. ….the Innovation Law Lab empowers advocates to scale their impact and provide effective representation to immigrants in detention and in hostile judicial jurisdictions across the country."

The lab also is working on a project called "The Big Immigration Project," which is intended to "create a paradigm shift in immigration representation, immigration litigation and immigration advocacy." The web site has links to training materials on how to do such things as fund a refugee rights program, shut down an immigrant detention center and links to other "sites of resistance."

Matlack said during the interview that immigration laws turning Oregon into a sanctuary state make it more difficult for local agencies to partner with and receive funds from the federal government. "I know immigration continues to be a big deal in Oregon. We are an evenly divided state as it relates to immigration. We have had partnerships with the federal government for a long time," he told Doocy. "Drug task forces, major crime teams, we work well together and have for years and years. Laws that Kate brown has implemented have made those partnerships more difficult," Matlack said.

Matlack also related how he and other Oregon sheriffs and chiefs of police, had a meeting with Attorney General Jeff Sessions a year or year-and-half ago, and Sessions was talking about the federal money Oregon wasn't getting at that time. Matlack says Oregon law enforcement is caught in the middle. He said the officers asked Sessions to just "be kind" and let the grants go through, but Sessions told them "no way, there has to be more cooperation." "The state wants the grants, but they are not going to help the federal government in any way dealing with the immigration problem," Matlack added.

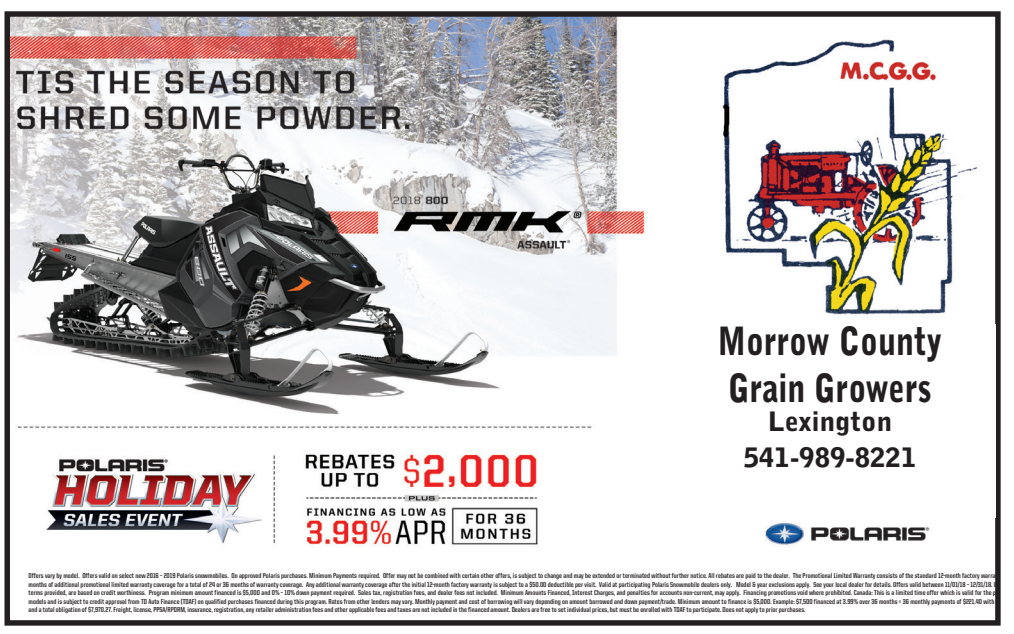
Scrooge and Santa show up at Celebrate Christmas

Lots of gifts distributed during annual event

Townspeople look over the prizes and deposit their tickets for the ones they hope to win.

By David Sykes

Both Santa and Scrooge made their appearances last Thursday night, as the town of Heppner turned out to enjoy a spaghetti dinner and then receive the lots of gifts donate by businesses for the popular event.

For those who collected their rewards cards at local businesses the past few weeks, many were rewarded when the drawings were held and the many, many gifts were given out. From a big screen TV to complimentary dinners, lucky people won sacks full of prizes. Prior to the drawing people walked around, looked at the available prizes and then deposited their rewards cards in the appropriate sack next to the prizes. Later Jeff Bailey and Matt Coombe rounded up a crew of helper elves, drew the lucky winners names and distributed the gifts.

Earlier, Mr. and Mrs. Santa took requests and sat for pictures with the children. Later, Scrooge showed up in a black outfit and top hat. He was a nice Scrooge, however, handing out reward cards to many people there. There was a penny drawing for the biggest prize of the night, a 55-inch big screen TV and other drawings for various prizes.