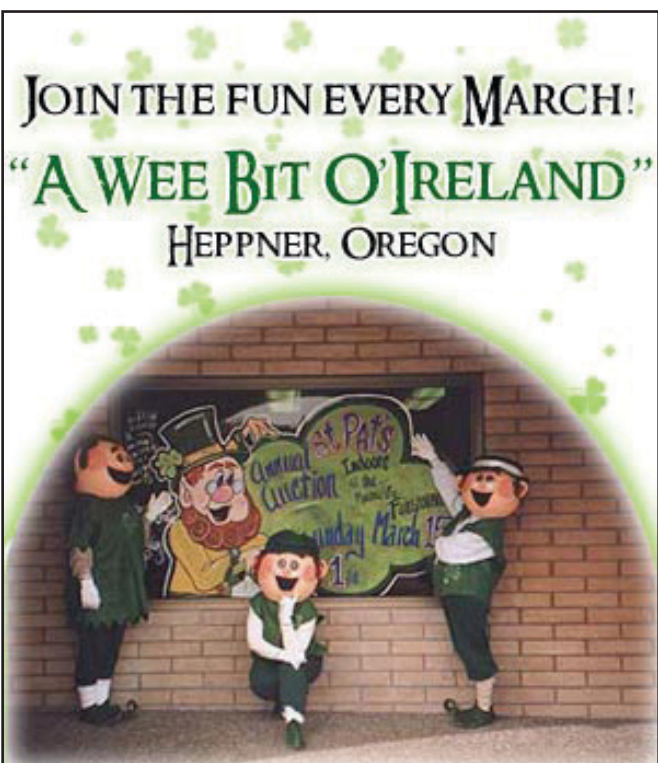


Gazette Times

St. Patrick's events announced



The 37th annual Wee Bit O' Ireland St. Patrick's celebration will be held the weekend of March 15-17 this year. The celebration of the town's Irish roots has turned the heritage into an annual tradition that is always held on the weekend nearest to St. Patrick's Day.

The celebration welcomes everyone who is Irish or just wants to enjoy the fun of the Irish weekend. Family flags will be visible hanging around in town and leprechauns will be busy.

On Friday, Mar. 15 the festivities will begin with a 3 on 3 basketball tournament and Murray's Irish Beer and Wine Fest. Saturday events will include the sheep dog trials, the

Remembrance Walk, Irish Coffee Hour and a traditional Gaelic social gathering called a Ceili, which involves Gaelic folk music and dancing.

Everyone is invited to participate in the Polar Plunge, Welly Toss, O'Ducky Race, Ewe-Do-Bingo, Bed Races and O'Planky Races that will be scheduled for Saturday. The Great Green Parade will travel down Main Street and the Cruz-In car show will take place.

There will be arts and crafts on display as well as a book sale and activities for children, youth and adults, including a Leprechaun Run and Bouncin' Leprechauns Fun Zone. St. Patrick's buttons will be



Jacob and Lizzie Finch took advantage of the deep snow by building an igloo.

Grant recipients announced

The Morrow County Cultural Coalition, supported by Oregon's Cultural Trust Foundation, recently announced the grant recipients for 2018 projects in Morrow County. Grants can be awarded for up to 50 percent of the total project cost.

Recipients for 2018 are Inland Northwest Musicians for an associate director; Lexington Grange #726 for basement refurbishment; Heppner Elementary school for an art

program; FARM Foundation for mural restorations; Heppner High School Art and Cultural Club for pottery classes and the Morrow County Historical Society for printing of the Morrow County Chronicles.

Applications for 2019 culturally based activities in Morrow County are now being accepted. Projects supported in the past have included quilting, art displays, historical library books, cultural entertain-

ment structures, kid's activities for parks, drama and musical workshops. For complete guidelines and an application form, please contact Gayle Gutierrez at 541-676-5630 or ggutierrez@co.morrow.or.us.

available for sale and will include a chance to win \$100 in two separate drawings during the weekend. There will be plenty of Irish food, Irish music and entertainment including a local youth talent show, old time fiddlers and Tiller's Folly as the main entertainment for the evening. All entertainment for the weekend is funded by the Morrow County Unified Recreation District with free admission for everyone.

The sheep dog trials will continue on Sunday and the Irish Road Bowling team competition will close out the weekend celebration Sunday afternoon.

For schedules and other information about "Wee Bit O' Ireland," visit www.heppnerchamber.com. For information you can call the Heppner Chamber of Commerce at (541) 676-5536; check out the event Facebook page at St. Patrick's Celebration Heppner Oregon USA.

State informed of city budget 'deficiencies'

'Over expenditures' noted

By David Sykes

Interim city manager Kim Cutsforth has written a letter to the Oregon Secretary of State Audits Division, laying out "deficiencies" she says were recently found during an audit of last year's city finances. Her letter was presented to the city council at its Feb. 12 meeting.

In the letter Cutsforth blamed high turnover in the city treasurer position as reason for the city's budget problems. "In the fiscal year 2017-18 the city treasurer abruptly left and the replacements (two of them) stayed a very short time. This loss of experience and change was part of the reason that there was so much lack of oversight and so many errors," she told the state. "We are actively recruiting a permanent replacement for our treasurer position. We do not anticipate these issues in the future," she added. Each year the state is informed of any deficiencies found by auditors, so this year's letter was not out of the ordinary, Cutsforth said. She downplayed the problems found and said they were mostly "clerical errors" that would be easily corrected.

Although the letter cited turnover in city staff, Cutsforth did not point out any actions by the previous city manager Edie Ball as reasons for the budget problems, even though the council fired Ball Jan. 11 for what it said was inadequate handling of the city's budget process. A new city manager is currently being recruited and Cutsforth is filling in part-time until the

replacement can be found. In her letter Cutsforth said long-time city auditors Barnett and Moro, P.C. of Hermiston had reported they found three instances of over expenditure of budget appropriations, including \$1,904 in the debt service fund, \$6,227 in the water utility fund and \$8,997 in the sewer utility fund. Details were given of the over expenditures such as a double payment of the city hall loan, where two payments were made in one month. A transfer to the city general fund of a new franchise fee collected by the city from local utilities, with no line item having been created to accept the new fees, and a duplicate transfer to the sewer utility fund caused the entire fund to be off by a significant amount.

The city is in middle of completely replacing its computer and bookkeeping systems, moving away from the old software it has used for many years. Cutsforth said that process is going as well as can be expected.

In other audit news the council learned that Barnett and Moro would be increasing their yearly fee to the city by \$8,000, from \$10,000 to \$18,000, with not less than \$14,000 per year, depending on the amount of work required. Reason given for the increase was "the extensive work they did on the audit."

In other business at February's meeting the council learned that Sherron Woodside is filling in as city treasurer until a permanent person can be hired. Cutsforth reported that the city received four applications

so far for the job. The council agreed to give the owner of a pig who is keeping the animal inside the city limits a warning about the animal getting out of its pen multiple times. Neighbors have been complaining of the escaped hog.

The council learned that the police commission talked about upgrading the cameras at the city park to try and catch vandals damaging the restrooms. The new cameras will be similar to the ones at the Fit Park on Riverside and can be checked remotely with every incident being flagged so they can be more easily reviewed. The footage from the cameras can be downloaded to a thumb drive and given to the sheriff's department. This is how the vandals at the Fit Park were caught. The cameras are expected to be installed by the end of February and the library has agreed to let the city use their wi-fi for the cameras.

The police commission also said the city might require all residents to have garbage collection because of all the garbage accumulating around town. According to a spokesperson, some cities do this.

The commission also talked about making sure all police who go on dog calls in the city are checking to see if those dogs are licensed. If they are not, the owners need to be notified that all dogs are required to be licensed within the city limits, that citations can be given for dogs running at large and that unlicensed dogs can be taken to Pet Rescue in Hermiston.

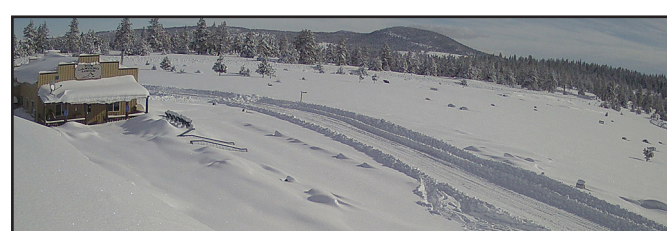
Snow wreaks havoc around the area



Morrow County Public Works was working hard to keep roads passable after several inches of snow fell Sunday and Monday. Above: Drifts on Carlson Lane. Below: A grader on Liberty School Road breaks through the deep drifts.



A semi jackknifed and was blocking the highway near Cutsforth Corners on Monday.



Above: The Morrow County OHV Park was blanketed with snow under sunny skies on Tuesday.

Below: Morrow County's Cutsforth Park was covered with snow.



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