

Hearing set on new county code laws

Rules cover 'chronic nuisances' like junk, cars and noise

David Sykes
The Morrow County Commissioners will hold a public hearing Wednesday, April 3 on proposed updates to the county's code enforcement laws. Code laws cover things like junk, garbage and debris on properties, abandoned and hazardous vehicles as well as noise disturbances. As an example, "We regularly receive complaints about a neighbor that is not using the approved sanitary waste hauler and letting solid waste accumulate on their property," says County Planner Carla McLane. "That is a violation of both the Solid Waste Ordinance and the Code Enforcement Ordinance."

Other types of problem areas include:
Use of Recreational Vehicles: Morrow County allows the use of a recreational vehicle in the following instances: during the construction of a primary dwelling (not to exceed six months); for up to 30 days in a calendar year for guests adjacent to a primary dwelling; in the Forest Use zone for recreational

purposes when a zoning permit and rural address have been issued; and when approved as part of a medical hardship variance. The only other lawful use of a recreational vehicle as a residential unit is when in a leased spot within an approved recreational vehicle park.

Dogs as a Public Nuisance: Morrow County is a Dog Control District which means dogs cannot run free off the dog owner's property. Specifically, "all dogs shall be kept within the real property limits of the keeper of the dog and under control of the responsible person or contained with a fence that maintains control of the animal. While off the property of the keeper of the dog, a dog must be on a leash or be under control of a responsible person or be contained within a portable kennel."

Noise: My neighbor is having a party. When do they have to turn down the music? According to the code, they have to be quiet from 11 p.m. until 7 a.m. But if the farmer next door

is cutting hay at 3 a.m. he is exempt as are all agricultural actions.

How to lodge a complaint: You can contact the Sheriff's Office at 541-676-5317 or you can call the Planning Department at 541-922-4624. Complaints can be submitted through the web form on the county planning web page, and you can also email the Planning Department at scase@co.morrow.or.us for additional details on how to file a complaint. The code only covers areas of the county outside the limits of towns and cities, so do not contact the county about violations inside your city.

Anyone wishing to speak out about the new law can attend the hearing at the Bartholomew building in Heppner Wednesday, April 3. A current proposed draft of the new law is available on the Morrow County website, or you can contact county planners Carla McLane or Stephanie Case at 541-922-4624 or by email at cmclane@co.morrow.or.us or scase@co.morrow.or.us.

Morrow County reaches solar and wind agreement

During its March 20 meeting, the Morrow County Board of Commissioners approved the signing of an amended Strategic Investment Program (SIP) agreement between Morrow County, the Wheatridge Wind Energy LLC, and Wheatridge Solar Energy Center LLC. The amended SIP agreement allows for the addition of up to 150 megawatts of solar electricity to be added to the potential 450-megawatt wind energy project. If the solar and wind project is fully built out, it could lead to nearly \$5 million dollars each year in SIP payments for the 15-year SIP agreement period.

With the signing of the amended SIP agreement, Morrow County continues as a leader in renewable energy projects with several approved wind projects already operational, and other solar projects in the approval process.

The county studied the issue hard before negotiating the agreement. The Morrow County SIP team spent several months learning about solar energy. The team wanted to understand fully how a solar panel program with battery storage operates and is taxed. This led to conversations with numerous officials from Oregon and other states. The team was led by Commissioner Jim Doherty.

In discussing the amendment process, Commissioner Doherty commented, "I was cautiously

optimistic when asked by my fellow commissioners to head up the second of two consecutive SIPs. These renewable energy projects are surrounded by many competing interests. With landowners, constituents, and potential future renewable interests looking on, we needed to set the standard. It was no less daunting that we were tasked with understanding emerging technologies and the values to Morrow County of this one-of-a-kind energy project. Justin Nelson, acting as county counsel, and I along with staff assistance from Assessor Mike Gorman and Administrator Darrell Green were able to finalize an agreement that most felt was a perfect template for our future. As 'energy central,' we wanted to show that we are willing to partner with renewable energy programs at an equitable return.

The amended SIP agreement continues the prior SIP agreement's provisions that would provide substantial funding on an annual basis to the Morrow County School District and Ione School District for arts, music and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) programs.

Commissioner Jim Doherty commented, "With outside-the-box, imaginative foresight we were able to build into the agreement a heretofore unimaginable future for Morrow County schools. What began with

visits to Congresswoman Susan Bonamici, Governor Kate Brown, local educators and planned visits to Delta High School and Lake Oswego's robotics program; the vision for a STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and math) program shimmered in the distance. We are in the process of putting together committees to work with the county to construct the framework of the arts, design, music, science, technology, engineering and math courses of study that make up the STEAM curriculum. This holds the potential of making these humble schools and home-grown students the envy of Oregon. I am thrilled to shepherd this forward and thank my fellow commissioners and all whom shared our reverie."

Oregon Governor Kate Brown is also pleased with what the SIP will mean to education in Morrow County saying, "I am so pleased to see that as Oregon looks to its future in renewable energy infrastructure, we are also planning ahead for the future of the Oregonians who will drive innovation in this field for generations to come—our students." Governor Kate Brown added, "Every student in our state should have access to hands-on learning, and in STEAM courses, they can connect classroom to career and build skills that will serve them well beyond high school graduation."

Forest Service seeks volunteer campground hosts



Bull Prairie campground is located 36 miles south of Heppner.

The Umatilla National Forest is looking for volunteers to spend the summer as campground hosts at the Jubilee Lake, Woodward, and Bull Prairie Lake campgrounds.

A camp host greets campers, provides information on the surrounding area and generally makes campers feel at home. Hosts will visit with campers and day-use visitors, clean and maintain restrooms, restock supplies, occasionally clean up after campers and carry out minor maintenance as needed. They keep an eye on things and set a good example for others in the campground.

Individuals or couples can apply to be hosts. Retirees often apply to the camp host program, finding it the ideal way to spend the summer in a beautiful setting. Hosts need to be friendly, flexible and responsible and may be subject to a criminal background check.

Those who apply will need to supply their own trailer, camper or motor home. Camp hosts will be provided a campsite, usually near the main entryway to the campground. Though the host program is a volunteer program, a food allowance and propane are offered and personal vehicle mileage associated

with hosting duties is reimbursed.

Bull Prairie Lake Campground is located 36 miles south of Heppner and offers 30 tent/trailer sites, 12 picnic areas, a beautiful 28-acre lake with four floating fishing docks and a 1.5-mile paved accessible trail. This campground is typically hosted from Memorial Day through mid-October, though a shorter duration is negotiable. For more information on becoming a Forest Service volunteer campground host at Bull Prairie Lake Campground, please contact Ben Walker at the North Fork John Day Ranger District (541) 427-5326 or benjamin.walker@usda.gov.

Jubilee Lake Campground is located 12 miles NE of Tollgate and is the largest developed campground on the Umatilla National Forest offering 53 campsites, four picnic areas and a 2.8-mile accessible hiking trail around the 92-acre lake. This campground is very popular for overnight camping as well as day-use activities. Campground hosts are typically on-site from early-July through mid-September.

Woodward Campground is located right off Highway 204 at Tollgate and offers 14 tent/trailer

sites, four picnic areas, four accessible toilet facilities and views of Langdon Lake (however Langdon Lake is a private lake and access to the lake is not allowed). Hosts are typically on-site from early July through the end of September. The hosts at this campground are also responsible for taking care of Target Meadows and Woodland Campgrounds, which are both located nearby.

For more information on becoming a Forest Service volunteer campground host at Jubilee Lake or Woodward Campground, please contact Kiyoshi Fujishin at the Walla Walla Ranger District (509) 522-6277 or kiyoshi.fujishin@usda.gov.

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