

# Lexington mayor seeks ideas for welcome signs

## Vacant council seat still goes unfilled

By David Sykes

Lexington mayor Marcia Kemp says she wants public input for the three new Welcome to Lexington signs going up in town. At last Tuesday's council meeting Kemp announced the town had received a \$2,000 grant to help pay for the signs and that she wants to hear from people what they should look like. "Bring your ideas," she encouraged the public. Councilmember Bill Beard suggested that the town send out a notice with its water bills asking for public input about the signs.

The grant for the signs came from the Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group community enhancement program, which has given out money to communities for improvements. Kemp said she was happy the city got the money and she plans on applying for this grant, and others, in the coming year. "We are going to be ready next year to apply for grants," saying the city "needs to get projects ready to apply for a variety of grants. I am going to be very aggressive and go after grants in the coming year," she said. Kemp identified nine different places she would try for grants including the Wildhorse Foundation and Northwest Farm Credit.

In a related matter Kemp invited the public to come and be part of the town's budgeting process. She said the first meeting is May 29. "Everyone is invited. It's your town and your money," she told the public. "It will be fun and interesting." The council also voted unanimously to appoint Keven McCabe to the budget committee. McCabe has experience in budgeting and money management.

### Council position still unfilled

In other business the council revisited making an appointment to fill a vacant council position. How to make the position caused some friction at last month's meeting when Kemp said she would not allow one of the names put forward, Curtis Thompson, to be considered for the empty position. At this month's meeting she said that was incorrect, and she did not have the authority under the town charter to block a name for consideration. In the meantime, another person has expressed interest in the being on the council. Sheila Miller re-submitted her letter of interest. In January Kemp had also denied Miller's request for

consideration. Apparently, Tim Schulte withdrew his request from last month to be a councilmember.

A motion was subsequently made to vote on the two candidates. The vote was two yes, councilmembers Bobbi Gordon and Bill Beard, and two no, councilmember Marcia Sticka and Mayor Kemp. Gordon and Beard said that according to the town charter Kemp does not have the right to vote with the council except in the case to break a tie. Kemp disputed that interpretation and produced a letter from 2004 in which a lawyer for the League of Oregon Cities gave an opinion apparently saying the mayor can vote with the council in the case of filling council vacancies. The current town charter, however, wasn't adopted until 2012.

The issue was not resolved at last week's meeting, and the empty council position remained unfilled. Kemp asked the council to wait until she gets another legal option on whether the mayor has the right to vote. "I am going to the League of Oregon Cities and get a legal opinion. If I am wrong, I'm wrong." Several members of the audience including past mayors and councilmembers said they couldn't remember the mayor ever voting except to break a council tie. One member of the public and past councilmember, Will Lemmon pointed out that with the current makeup of the council, "Wouldn't this result in continued deadlocks?" Kemp said the public could decide and make its decision at the ballot box. "Wait until election then get rid of us." Lemmon urged the council to try and work together. "Can't it be better to work together for decisions. We will see if this continues to be a deadlock situation," he said.

### Jake brakes making noise

In other business the council discussed a truck that comes through town regularly making noise using its "jake" brakes. It was suggested to contact the sheriff about the offending truck, but no one had a license number. For those unfamiliar, jake or jacob brakes are compression release brakes on diesel trucks. When a diesel engine slows down using its jake brake, it opens the exhaust valves on top of the exhaust manifold. In commercial trucks, when the jake brake is used to slow down, the truck makes a deep rumbling noise which can be disturbing

when used in residential areas. There are no signs in Lexington prohibiting jake brakes and apparently there is no town ordinance against it. One person suggested just contacting the driver of the truck and asking him to stop using them so much.

In other action the council sent a letter to Federal Signal Corp asking for a refund of \$6,639 the town spent in 2018 with the company for a new fire siren that never operated. Federal Signal admitted that it advised the town wrong when it bought the siren, however the fire siren has not been replaced or sent a refund. The town needed to have its attorney send a letter demanding the refund. The old fire siren on the previous fire hall had been sold so the town has been without a siren for some time. "When we get a new one have someone install it and make sure that it works," Kemp said.

### County thanked for funds

In other business the council was presented with a letter Mayor Kemp wrote to the Morrow County Budget Committee thanking them for the \$55,463 provided to the town by the county. Kemp said the town will use part of the money to replace old and worn out water meters, and the rest to pave two badly needed streets.

In the letter Kemp also talked about projects she hopes to see get done with the help of grant money. "We have a priority list and have identified projects that need funding. Some of our projects include street repairs, a park, new well, Lexington Community Days, railroad right-aways, and other projects. We will be applying for grants to help achieve these goals when possible. In addition we have some reserve funds coupled with grant matching funds to accomplish some of our goals," she said in the letter.

"Lexington is now entering a new era - We are inviting the citizens to 'Make Lexington Great' and we are off to a great start since January of this year. We govern with the help of our citizens who have been involved in not only our town council meetings but have been active in our two community goal setting/grant meetings. We have had a good turnout for our meetings, ranging from 8 to 20 citizens eager to get involved as we move forward to a more prosperous Lexington," Kemp said.

# Local teachers receive Crystal Apple awards



Sue Gibbs



Petra Payne

Four local teachers were recently chosen as the 2019 Crystal Apple winners. Sue Gibbs, a fourth-grade teacher at Heppner Elementary School; Petra Payne, the Spanish/Senior Transition/Health teacher at Heppner Jr/Sr High School; Stephanie McElligott, the Instructional Aide/District Test Coordinator/Next Steps Counselor for Ione Community School and Paul Neiffer, a Spanish teacher/ESL Director at Ione Community School were awarded 2019 Crystal Apple Excellence in Education awards by the Intermountain Education Service District (IMESD). A total of 45 individuals

from eastern Oregon school districts were honored at events held in La Grande and Pendleton.

Each year, the IMESD partners with its school districts to recognize outstanding administrators, teachers, educational assistants and office and building staff for their dedication and commitment to students and for their willingness to go above and beyond their regular duties. Nominations are submitted over a two-month period by administrators, coworkers, parents, students and community members. Winners are selected from these nominations by school district administration.

Sue Gibbs has worked for the Morrow County School District for 21 years. Her nomination stated, "She works hard to help each student reach their full potential and is committed to individual instruction for every student who needs it."

Petra Payne has worked for the district for 16 years. According to her nomination, "Tireless in her devotion to students, Petra goes the extra mile to ensure they are well prepared for future success."

Stephanie McElligott has worked for the Ione district for seven years. Stephanie's bilingual skills are greatly valued, as she is integral in communicating to non-English speaking students and their parents. Her nomination stated, "She is one of those employees we cannot do without."



Paul Neiffer



Stephanie McElligott

Paul Neiffer has worked for the district for two years. According to his nomination, "Paul is a great asset in working with Ione's non-English speaking students and works with the adult Hispanic Club. His vast knowledge of so many subjects is impressive, and students and co-workers alike highly respect him."

"We are so pleased to celebrate all of this year's Crystal Apple winners. Each of these individuals are contributing greatly to the success of students in eastern Oregon," said Michele Madril, IMESD director of communication.

# Awning to be replaced at local store



(L-R): Doug Klock, Dale Bates, Darlene Klock and Richard Hainline load up the old awning to send it off for repair.

The awning at Peterson's Jewelers on Main Street in Heppner was removed Monday and the frame was transported to Walter's Upholstery in Walla Walla, WA to have the new awning installed. Not only will the awning be replaced, but the front and side of the building will be pressure washed, boards replaced, sanded and re-painted.

Heppner community members expressed an in-

terest in making donations to assist with enhancing the Peterson's Jewelers building to show Mr. Peterson that he is appreciated for the great service he has provided to the community for many years. Willow Creek Valley Economic Group has approved funding for a business enhancement grant for 50 percent of the cost of the project. The community donations will pay the other \$3,350 of the cost.

The Heppner chamber is in charge of the project and will be accepting donations. Contact the chamber at 541-676-5535 for additional information. Checks payable to Heppner Chamber can be dropped by or sent to PO Box 1232, Heppner, OR 97836. Peterson's Jewelers should be indicated on the check. There is also a donation jar at Murray's Drug in Heppner.

# G-T closed Memorial Day

The Heppner Gazette-Times will be closed for the Memorial Day holiday on Monday, May 27. The deadline for all news and advertising for the May 29 issue will be Friday, May 24, at 5 p.m. Normal business hours will resume Tuesday, May 28.

The G-T wishes everyone a happy and safe Memorial Day weekend.

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