HEPPNER Gazette Times

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County talks ways to help clean up properties

Car crusher, tire drop and cleanup days discussed

By David Sykes

The Morrow County Commission at its May 22 meeting discussed several possible ways to put a dent in properties around the county that need to be cleaned up. Commissioner Don Russell said one resident in the West Glen area near Irrigon suggested maybe a portable car crusher could be brought in to get rid of junk cars in the area. Having junk cars on property is against county ordinances, and there are apparently "hundreds" of them around the county. "When you have some people with 50 abandoned cars, they don't have the money to clean them up," Commissioner Don Russell said at a previous commission meeting. "We let them go on for years and then it only gets worse." Undersheriff John Bowles said a portable car crusher had been brought in by the Sheriff's Office in the past and that had worked well.

The issue had come up before when County Planner Carla McLane reported the extent of "code" or trash violations there is around the county. "It took us 25 years to get here and it will take us 25 years to turn the boat around. It all depends on how much resources do you want to devote to it," McLane said of the enormity of the problem. It was pointed out that disposing of junk cars and other scrap metal is not as easy as it once was when the scrap metal market was good, and people could get money for old vehicles and metals. Russell said he counted eight trashed RVs on one property alone. It was pointed out that the West Lynn area of north county is especially in need of clean up.

Bowles talked about maybe setting up a drop off site for old tires, saying they are expensive to get rid of and people just pile them on their properties and leave them there. "We have tons of tires around," Bowles said. There was also discussion about paying for dumpsters and having free dump days when the public could clean up their properties. "Maybe we could have a cleanup day for county residents like some of the cities do," Russell suggested.

In other business the county approved a 9.6 percent rate increase for garbage collection to Sanitary Disposal of Hermiston. President Mike Jewett said the increase is necessary because "cost of operations continue to rise in all phases of our operation and our recycling income continues to decline due to depressed markets." The new rates mean residential curb service for a 90-gallon can will go up $1.46 to $17.10 per month. The rate increase will take effect July 1 and will also affect other rate schedules such as commercial. There are about 1,000 customers on the Sanitary Disposal route and the company has not had an increase since July 2016. Heppner residents are not serviced by Sanitary Disposal of Hermiston but by Miller & Sons Disposal.

Jewett said part of the reason for the rate increase is a large drop in the recycling market. "We have three thousand tons of cardboard in our yard right now," Jewett told the commissioners. He said the market dropped 17 percent and there is no place to sell recycled material now. China has cut back on the amount of recycled material it now buys. Money from the sale of recycles goes into Sanitary Disposal's rate schedule to offset costs, but with the down market that revenue has been lost he said. It has been reported that the market is so bad many Oregon cities are no longer recycling material, just dumping it in the landfill.

In other action the county held a public hearing on its proposed 2019-20 budget. The total budget for the county is $43,618,361 a 15.2 percent increase over the current year. The county receives money from many sources including fees, licenses, permits, fines, grants, etc. The amount of the budget estimated to be received from property taxes for the coming year will be $9,128,284 up $418,303, about a 4.6 increase over the current year. The budget has been approved by the county budget committee, and the county commission is expected to vote on its adoption at its June 19 meeting. No one from the public attended or commented on the budget at the May 22 hearing.

In other action the commission voted unanimously to approve hiring David Rabiner of Portland to facilitate a goal setting workshop for the county at a cost of $5,500. Commissioner Jim Doherty praised a previous session held by the county as getting the various departments and people in county government working together. "We had a lot of silos when I came in. Seems a lot of those silos came down and people are willing to work more together," he said in support of the goal setting sessions, which he credits with building team work and a more efficient government. Commissioner Melissa Lindsay agreed saying it is hard to spend public dollars on team building, but she finds this beneficial.

In other business the commissioners appointed Kalie Davis to the Eastern Oregon Workforce Board to fill the position vacated by Debbie Radie. Morrow County has two representatives on the board with the other being Heppner Chamber of Commerce and Willow Creek Valley Economic Group executive director Sheryll Bates.

May averages slightly warmer

According to preliminary data received by NOAA's National Weather Service in Pendleton, temperatures at Heppner averaged slightly warmer than normal during the month of May.

The average temperature was 57.7 degrees which was 1.6 degrees above normal. High temperatures averaged 69.9 degrees, which was 1.2 degrees above normal. The highest was 83 degrees on the 12th. Low temperatures averaged 45.5 degrees, which was 1.9 degrees above normal. The lowest was 37 degrees on the 2nd.

Precipitation totaled 1.90 inches during May, which was 0.24 inches above normal. Measurable precipitation, at least .01 inch, was received on 12 days with the heaviest, 0.50 inches reported on the 20th.

Precipitation this year has reached 9.52 inches, which is 2.24 inches above normal. Since October, the water year precipitation at Heppner has been 13.53 inches, which is 2.19 inches above normal.

The outlook for June from NOAA's Climate Prediction Center calls for above normal temperatures and near normal precipitation. Normal highs for Heppner rise from 73 degrees at the start of June to 81 degrees at the end of June. Normal lows rise from 47 degrees to 51 degrees. The 30-year normal precipitation is 1.38 inches.

ALL NEWS AND ADVERTISEMENT DEADLINE:

MONDAYS AT 5:00 P.M.

Baby dies, child injured in car accident

Mother's blood alcohol content measures 0.15

Veronica Andrade, 39, of Boardman has been arraigned in Morrow County Superior Court on charges that include manslaughter, assault and driving under the influence in the crash early Sunday that took the life of her 7-month-old son and seriously injured her 3-year-old daughter according to information released by Justin Nelson, Morrow County District Attorney.

"This individual was at a graduation party and, at some point, had consumed alcohol and then was driving back after the party," Nelson said.

Court records indicate Andrade's blood alcohol content measured 0.15 when she was taken into custody at Good Shepherd Medical Center after she was treated and released. Her daughter was air lifted to a hospital in the Portland area in critical condition, and Nelson says it appears she will recover from her injuries.

He said that the Morrow County Sheriff's Office and Boardman officers were the first on the scene after receiving the call shortly after 3 a.m. on June 2. Preliminary investigation revealed a silver 2003 Cadillac CTS, operated by Andrade, was traveling eastbound on I 84 when it veered off the road onto the right shoulder and rolled. The 7-month-old was ejected from the vehicle and sustained fatal injuries.

Oregon State Police troopers arrived and took command of the incident since it occurred on the freeway. I 84 was reduced to one lane for approximately three hours to allow for scene investigation. OSP and MCSO were in touch with Nelson from the beginning.

Veronica Andrade

"I received calls from the Morrow County Sheriff's Office and the Oregon State Police, filling me in about the status of what was occurring and the condition of Ms. Andrade, then the 3-year-old child and then the infant," Nelson said.

Nelson said he will present the state's case against Andrade to a Morrow County grand jury either late this week or early next week. Andrade is currently lodged at the Umatilla County Jail with total bail of $525,000.

2019 seniors graduate

Ione High School class of 2019 held their graduation ceremony on Friday, May 31.

Heppner High School class of 2019 attended their graduation ceremony on Saturday, June 1.

Heppner High School seniors attended Baccalaureate at the St. Patrick's Parish Hall on Wednesday, May 29.

Heppner Jr High holds end of year fun time at fit park

Seventh and eighth grade students from Heppner Jr High held their end of year event at the fitness park learning to play pickle ball. The PE classes were taught how to use the equipment so they continue to stay active and healthy.