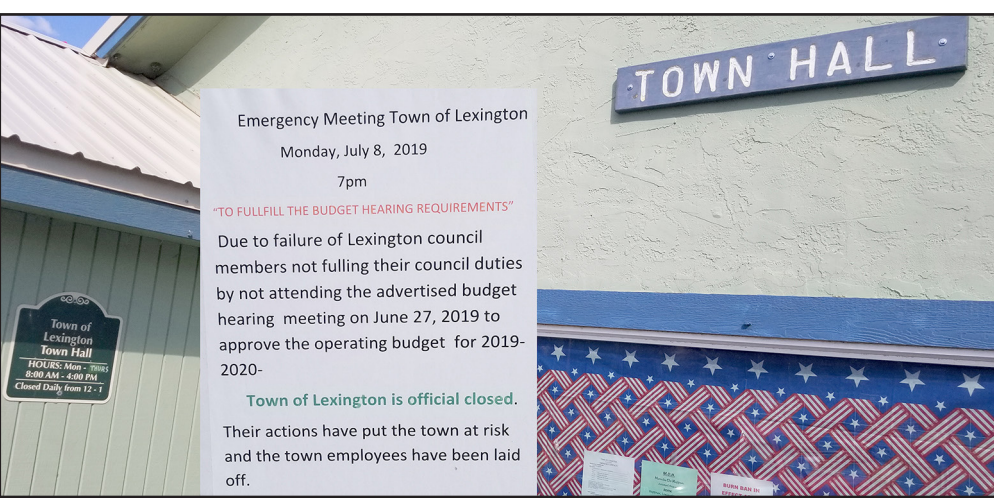


Gazette Times

VOL. 138 NO. 27 8 Pages Wednesday, July 3, 2019 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

Lexington shuts down after failure to approve budget

Office closed; employees laid off

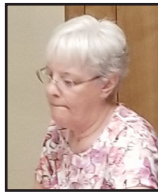


Lexington town hall is closed with a sign on the door.

By David Sykes

The town of Lexington has closed, and it's not clear when it will re-open.

The closure came after the town council did not approve its 2019-20 operating budget. Not enough councilmembers were present at a June 27 public hearing, so according to state law, if a budget is not passed by June 30 the town cannot spend money.



Mayor Marcia Kemp

Due to failure of Lexington Council members not fulfilling their council duties by not attending the advertised budget hearing meeting to approve the operating budget for 2019-2020, the Town of Lexington is officially closed. The town employees have been laid off. The State of Oregon has been contacted and is offering aid," Kemp said in an email to the Heppner Gazette-Times.

The town has two employees a town clerk and a maintenance man, and both were laid off, Kemp said. "I went in Sunday, signed their paychecks and they no longer have jobs," she said. Both are eligible for unemployment she added. She also collected the keys to the city properties.

Until the city is open again the city cannot pay its bills nor can residents come to town hall to pay their water bills. The bills can be mailed but Kemp said she is not collecting the city's mail at this time.

Following the closure Kemp immediately began contacting state agencies and other officials on what to do. Kemp said the State Revenue Department didn't have much advice

as there is little precedent for municipalities missing their budget deadlines. In addition to awaiting word back from the state, she has also contacted the League of Oregon Cities for legal advice. The town does not have a designated legal attorney. She said Representative Greg Smith's office was also contacted Sunday and was told he would check with state agencies Monday.

Kemp said a community meeting is planned for Monday, July 8, at 7 p.m. at Town Hall, but even if a quorum of councilmembers is present, the budget cannot be passed at that time. "Because we are past the deadline, we don't have the legal authority at this time to hold a budget hearing," she said.

There are four members of the town council and only one of them, Marcia Sticka, attended the June 27 budget hearing. Councilmember Bobbi Gordon was out of town on a planned vacation, and Bill Beard and Curtis Thompson said they just forgot.

Councilmember Bill Beard later told the Gazette that he simply has a busy life and forgot about the meeting. Curtis Thompson also said, "I forgot about the meeting or I would have been there." Both Beard and Thompson stated that a simple reminder phone call would have allowed them to attend the meeting. Beard reported, "The town recorders we have had in the past always called or sent reminder emails for special meetings and that no longer happens."

Bobbi Gordon said, "I made it very clear to the mayor and the council at the June council meeting

that I was going to be out of town on the night of the scheduled meeting but would be happy to attend if they could schedule it for another date. When I returned from my vacation, I received a message saying a special meeting would be held July 2. I then found out that there is a meeting to be held July 8 by reading the notice on the door at the town hall. I didn't ever receive another message stating the July 2 meeting would not be held and it was going to be held on July 8 instead."

By not passing the \$737,549 operating budget, Kemp said she is also concerned about bond payments on the firehall and whether the city is considered to even have fire coverage at this time. There is even a question if the city will lose its tax levy for the year. Kemp said she hoped to have answers to many of these questions at the community meeting.

The missed budget deadline and failure to approve a budget is just the latest problem facing the city. Previous council meetings have been filled with arguments over filling a vacant council seat, with Kemp insisting she had the authority to vote on council replacements. Beard and Gordon argued that according to town charter the mayor cannot vote on filling council vacancies unless there is a tie. Kemp and Sticka disagreed. After much arguing amongst councilmembers, members of the public and various legal opinions, the seat was finally filled at a June 11 meeting when Thompson was voted in by a vote of two to one. Beard and Gordon voted for Thompson and Sticka voted against. Kemp did not vote.

Lexington gets OK to hold budget hearing July 9

In a late breaking development in the Town of Lexington closure story (see above), Mayor Marcia Kemp has informed the Heppner Gazette-Times she has received legal advice to reschedule the town's 2019-20 budget hearing for Tuesday, July 9 at 7 p.m. at the Lexington town hall. Kemp said legal counsel from the League of Oregon Cities informed her to proceed with a new hearing date, which if then passed by the town council, will give the city its new budget and allow it to re-open. A copy of the proposed city budget is published on page five of this week's Gazette-Times.

Local jewelry store gets new awning



Randall Peterson, owner of Peterson's Jewelry in Heppner, shows off the new awning recently installed on the front of the business. The awning replacement project was a community effort to help one of Heppner's oldest and well-liked businesses.

Funding for the new awning came from community members and businesses. Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group awarded a matching Business Enhancement Grant of \$3,350. Also helping out was the city of Heppner Public Works crew, Les Schwab Tire employee Richard Hainline, Doug and Darlene Klock and Dale Bates. Seth Moses Roofing and Restoration pressure washed and painted the front part of the building after the awning frame was removed and donated the paint. They will be pressure washing, replacing boards and repainting the side of the building. The Heppner Chamber of Commerce coordinated the project. -Photo by David Sykes.

Ione's 4th of July Schedule

Wednesday, July 3

- Golf Tournament Willow Creek Country Club
Heppner July 3rd, 9 am
Volleyball Tournament Ione City Park July 3rd, 4 pm

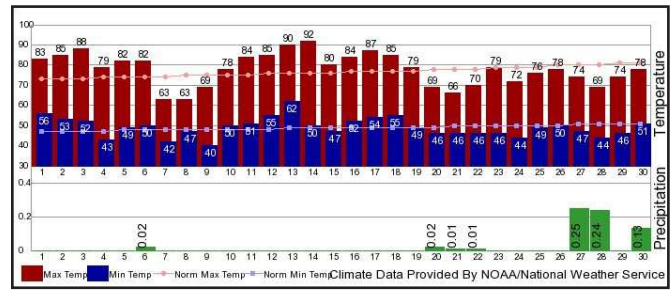
Thursday, July 4

- Fireman's Breakfast Ione Fire Hall 7:00 -10:00 am
Creative Care Preschool 5k Walk/Run (\$10 Registration) Ione City Park 7 am Reg./Walk starts at 7:30 am
Ken Turner Memorial Horseshoe Tournament Horseshoe Pits 9:00 am
Cruz-In Car Show Ione City Park 10:00 am
3-on-3 Basketball Tournament 2nd Street, In Front of Legion Hall 10:00 am
Vendors & Booths Ione City Park 11:00 am
Fish Pond, Frog Jump, Bike Raffle Fire Hall/Park 11:00 am
Altar Society Pie Sale Ione Fire Hall (or Church Basement) 11:00 am
Parade (Grand Marshal: Joe & Anita Orem) Main Street 1:00 pm
Free Swimming Ione Swimming Pool 1:30-3:30 pm
Bingo Ione Legion Hall 2:00-4:00 pm
Talent Show Amphitheatre Stage 3:30 pm Reg./Show at 4 pm
Game On! Video Game
Trailer & Laser Tag Ione City Park 5:00-8:00 pm
Boat Trip Auction/Raffle Drawings Amphitheatre Stage 8:00 pm
Fireworks Display Dusk

Heppner was slightly warmer in June

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 June.

The average temperature was 63.6 degrees which was 0.8 degrees above normal. High temperatures averaged 78.1 degrees, which was 1.5 degrees above normal. The highest was 92 degrees on the 14th. Low temperatures averaged 49.1 degrees, which was 0.2 degrees above normal. The lowest was 40 degrees, on the 9th. On one day, the temperature exceeded 90



degrees. Precipitation totaled 0.68 inches during June, which was 0.70 inches below normal. Measurable precipitation, at least .01 inch, was received on seven days with the heaviest, 0.25 inches reported on the 27th. Precipitation this year has reached 10.20 inches, which is 1.54 inches above normal. Since October, the

water year precipitation at Heppner has been 14.21 inches, which is 1.49 inches above normal. The outlook for July from NOAA's Climate Prediction Center calls for above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation. Normal highs for Heppner during July are 85.7

Advertisement for Polaris Summer Sales Event featuring RZR, Ranger, and Sportsman vehicles. Includes text: 'REBATES UP TO \$2,000 + FINANCING AS LOW AS 3.99% APR FOR 36 MONTHS SAVE NOW!' and 'TAKE SUMMER BY STORM!' with contact info for Morrow County Grain Growers.