

County approves money agreement with new windfarm

Orchard Wind Project to construct up to 16 towers

By David Sykes

The Morrow County Commission last week approved a SIP (Strategic Investment Program) agreement with a company planning to build a new windfarm just southeast of the bombing range. SIP agreements allow energy companies to receive a reduced tax payment over a 15-year period.

Under the agreement Orchard will pay the regular tax rate on the first \$25 million of investment, and then a reduced rate on value over that for 15 years. The amount starts out low at \$2,600 per year and gradually increases until the company will pay the county \$159,100 in the final year for a total of \$400,250 over the 15 years. In addition, the wind farm will pay the county a yet undetermined community service fee up to 25 percent of the taxes that would have been paid without the SIP agreement.

Before approving the agreement, the county discussed if the money should be earmarked for certain taxing entities within the county. Commissioner Don Russell said he didn't think he should be making decisions now for where money should be spent fifteen years from now. "Is it my decision to decide how that money will be spent?" he asked. "I don't think we should do that." Various entities will apparently get together later and decide how the community service fees will be divided up, however.

Robert Guertin, developing engineer on the project was at the meeting and talked about the long time-

line to put in a windfarm. "You have to find the wind, get the permits and get the investors." Guertin said he has been in the wind business for 35 years and still sees a strong future for renewables, however he sees more solar being built in the near future. In long term he said lots of wind power is still to be built, however. County officials say they may be seeing more of the smaller renewable projects in the future since they don't have to go through the more cumbersome state licensing process and can be approved on the county level.

Projected population growth and housing needs

In other business the county received a county housing report. Part of that report included a projection of population growth in various areas of the county. Morrow County population is expected to grow at .8 percent over the next 20 years. Boardman will grow the fastest at 1.4 percent followed by Irrigon at 1 percent and then Lone and Heppner each at .1 and Lexington at a minus .4 percent rate.

In housing, Heppner is expected to need 29 more housing units in the next 20 years, Lone 13 more, and Lexington 17 more units. Boardman is the largest with an expect need of 542 more units. Irrigon is second in the county with a need for 153 more housing units.

Need for more small land parcels

In further discussion on housing, County Planner Carla McLane said her department is trying to

"provide more opportunity" for south county residents to create small acreage parcels in the two to five-acre range for home sites. There are quite a few small farm parcels around Irrigon but not many in south county, she said. "I'm not sure if it will be easier," she said, "but maybe we can relieve some of the pent-up desire" for the small acreages.

Commissioner Russell said he thinks creating smaller parcels for home sites is perfectly logical. "I look at the nonproductive ground and think it's ok. I certainly wouldn't want to take productive farm ground for housing," he emphasized. He pointed out that a lot of ground in south county is out of production now in the conservation reserve program.

The commissioners also discussed a river front parcel owned by the Port of Morrow west of Boardman. "That is an extremely unique piece of property," said Commissioner Jim Doherty. McLane pointed out it might be possible for the Port of Morrow to put in a planned unit development on the parcel along the river located past Loves Truck Stop on Highway 84.

Flu shots

In other business the commissioners heard a report from County Health Nurse Sheree Smith who said her department would begin giving flu shots soon in preparation for the winter flu season. She was asked how the decision is made what kind of flu shots to give as there are many dif-

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Heppner weather slightly warmer in August

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 August.

The average temperature was 70 degrees, which was 0.5 degrees above normal. High temperatures averaged 84.3 degrees, which was 1.2 degrees below normal. The highest was 95 degrees on the 8th. Low temperatures averaged 55.6 degrees, which was 2.2 degrees above normal. The lowest was 48 degrees, on the 17th.

On three days in August, the temperature exceeded 90 degrees.

Precipitation totaled

0.53 inches during August, which was 0.14 inches above normal. Measurable precipitation, at least .01 inch, was received on four days with the heaviest, 0.33 inches reported on the 10th.

Precipitation this year has reached 11 inches, which is 1.62 inches above normal. Since October, the water year precipitation at Heppner has been 15.01 inches, which is 1.57 inches above normal.

The outlook for September from NOAA's Climate Prediction Center calls for above normal temperatures and near normal precipitation. Normal highs for Heppner fall from 82 degrees at the start of September to 71 degrees at the end of September. Normal lows fall from 50 degrees to 43 degrees. The 30-year normal precipitation is 0.56 inches.

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Walden rejects Green New Deal

Believes in man-made climate change, but favors more hydro and nuclear power



Rep. Greg Walden addresses a town hall meeting in Heppner last week.

By David Sykes

While he believes in climate change, and that humans are "contributing", Republican Rep. Greg Walden thinks legislation proposed by Democrats, and endorsed by most Democratic presidential candidates, to stop global warming is just too far reaching and expensive.

In response to a question from Heppner eighth-grader Hunter Houck at a town hall meeting last week on why he does not support the Green New Deal, Walden said that with a price tag of \$93 trillion, or \$285,000 per American citizen, it was just too expensive. He also says the Green New Deal includes much unrelated to the environment, such as nationalized health care which he doesn't agree with.

The Green New Deal is legislation proposed by Rep. Ocasio-Cortez Alexandria, a Democrat from New York, and calls in part for the upgrading of all existing buildings in the United States to achieve energy efficiency, working with farmers to eliminate pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, overhauling our transportation system to reduce emissions — including expanding electric car manufacturing and building charging stations everywhere, and expanding high-speed rail to a scale where air travel becomes unnecessary. The Deal also calls for more government spending unrelated to climate change such as a guaranteed job with a family-sustaining wage, adequate family and medical leave, paid vacations, retirement security for every American, and high-quality health care for all.

"I think climate is changing and I think we are contributing to it," Walden told a crowd of about 30 at the town hall, "but I think there are other ways to get there (reducing carbon emissions). He proposed more hydroelectric and small nuclear generation, both of which produce no emissions and are affordable. He said relying on just so called "green power" like windmills and solar, can cause brown outs and shortages because it's not a steady reliable source of energy. He said switching to lower carbon natural



Walden discusses an issue following the town hall with Kim Cutsforth of Heppner.

gas generation, which he supports, is already helping. "No other country has done more for emissions than when we started moving from coal to natural gas," he said. "The Green New Deal is overreach," he said on why he opposes the legislation.

Several questions from the public asked about the extreme partisanship they see in Washington DC. "Is there any chance the speaker (Speaker of The House Nancy Pelosi) will get a trade agreement passed?" asked Jeff Bailey. Walden said he didn't think enough votes were there to pass the Canada-Mexico trade deal although he thinks it would be good for America and is a better deal than the now defunct North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). On the on-going trade battle with China, Walden says President Trump is trying to isolate China, which he says has not been trading fairly. He said he originally voted to allow China into the World Trade Organization but actions since make him think we need to "revisit that."

He added he is "somewhat hopeful" a trade deal can be reached. After another question about the dysfunction most Americans see in the nation's capital, Walden says it isn't quite as bad as the mainstream media portrays. "We do a lot of bipartisan work, but the national news doesn't report on that," he says. "If we agree, it's not what cable (news) wants to hear. Walden also said social media has been a cancer on civility. "We reinforce our own beliefs and listen to only those who agree with us," he said. Walden says when one party tries to "cram something through" it doesn't work.

Morrow County Commissioner Don Russell

wanted to know why it is so hard to get a species off the endangered list once it is recovered. "There should be a mechanism to get them off," he told Walden. As an example Russell cited all the sea lions eating up the salmon run. Walden agreed it was hard to get a species off the list but said he was trying to get the wolf delisted.

In other questions, Al Osmin of Heppner wanted to know what could be done about all the scammers and robocall people stealing from people. "Why can't we put these outlaws in jail," Osmin asked. Walden took a scam letter Osmin had received in the mail and said he would look into it.

At the beginning of the town hall Walden went through some of the things he has been working on in Congress. He said there are 47.8 billion robocalls so far this year in the United States. He said the phone companies have the technology to determine where a call is coming from and that they should do more to help stop the calls.

On health care related issues, he said they have passed legislation to prevent pharmaceutical companies from blocking the release of generic drugs that want to compete and make drugs more competitively priced. He is also working on legislation to make hearing aids more affordable.

When asked if he enjoyed working in Washington DC, Walden said he did and especially liked meeting guests from his district who come to town. "Like those on the freedom flight." The freedom flight was veterans brought to Washington. He said he also liked when he gets to appoint people from his district to the military academy, and "I enjoy solving problems."

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