HEPPNER 50¢

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Fire hall gets new flag

Fire Chief Rusty Estes with Don Bennett and Whitney Haguewood. -*Contributed photo.*

The Heppner Fire Hall recently received a new custom-made American flag for use in their conference room. Hand crafted and painted by Whitney Haguewood, the flag was created from used fire hose complete with brass connections.

The flag was presented to Fire Chief Rusty Estes by Haguewood in honor of her grandfather Donald Bennett, who has served as chair of the Heppner Rural Fire Protection District for many decades. Bennett recently stepped down as chair but continues to serve on the rural board. The large flag will hang in the hall's conference room.

The Heppner Fire Hall serves both the city of Heppner's Volunteer Fire Department and the Heppner Rural Fire Protection District.

Council hears plans for new RV park in Lexington

12-15 spaces on former school property

By David Sykes

The Lexington town council last Tuesday heard plans for a new recreational vehicle park planned for the former school property. The park would be owned by Sam and Mary Kay Bellamy, owners of Lexington Pump.

Sam Bellamy was at the meeting to answer questions from the council and the public. The main questions to come up about the planned 12-15-unit park was how it would be kept clean, not become run down and an eyesore. Some town residents were worried about "trash, transients and trouble" and mentioned several times not wanting the facility to end up like the one in Heppner. Bellamy said he would not let that happen both through his written lease agreements, and regular inspections of the park. "I'm interested in windmill workers and tourists," he emphasized.

Bellamy said he wanted to get the park completed by the end of the year and be ready for the big new windmill construction project starting soon near Lexington, so he could provide spaces for some of the estimated 300 construction workers expected to be on the job. After that he said the park would be mainly for short term stays, except for one or two spots to be used by caretakers.

The meeting last Tuesday was a public hearing on the project which is required before details of the park are completed and sent to the town planning commission for approval. The four-member town council also serves as the planning committee. Bellamy said he has also received approval from the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality for installation of a septic system. He said he would be doing most of the construction of the park himself.

Access to the RV park was also discussed and Bellamy said he plans to use an existing town street that runs alongside the property. Lexington resident Sid Kennedy who lives across from the proposed park said he would be upset if the park turned into some kind of camp with the people causing trouble. He was also concerned the park might bring down his property values. Other residents said they did not want to see kids running all over the place, getting on other people's properties and causing trouble.

Bellamy said he would monitor the property and make sure it was orderly and kept up. "Sam will keep it nice," one audience member said. "He will do the right thing." The council was prepared to vote on the proposal, but it was then decided to wait one month for additional information about the park, including a proposed lease agreement Bellamy plans on using.

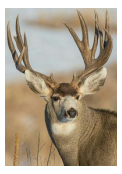
Land donated for new town park

In other business Mayor Marcia Kemp announced that Sam and Mary Kay Bellamy have agreed to donate land on the former school property for use as a city park. Kemp has been advocating for some time for a new park "where our children can play." She said the town needs a place for kids and said she would immediately begin submitting grant applications for new playground equipment. The Bellamys said they would lease the ground on the west side of the old school building for the new town park. Some towns people wondered if the town had the resources to maintain the park once built, and others said they thought volunteers would step up to do maintenance once it was built.

In other business the council reportedly voted via email to hire Kevin McCabe as part time town recorder. The previous recorder had turned in her resignation. Mayor Kemp had suggested at the meeting that the town refrain from hiring a permanent recorder until the "turmoil" involving city government is resolved. "I don't want to put whomever we hire into this situation," Kemp said. Councilmember Bill Beard agreed but said to Kemp: "Keep us informed on what you are doing. When we have questions please get back to us," he implored.

At this time there is a recall petition against the mayor and councilmember Bill Beard. A third recall petition has also reportedly been started against councilmember Bobbi Gordon. Beard's and Kemp's petitions have been submitted and the signatures verified, however only Beard's recall vote has been scheduled (see related story).

The Heppner Gazette-Times wants to see pictures of your trophy animals from this hunting season. Stop by to have your picture taken, drop off photos, mail them to PO Box 337 in Heppner, email them to editor@rapidserve.net or text cell phone photos to 541-980-6674.



ALL NEWS AND ADVERTISEMENT DEADLINE:

MONDAYS AT 5:00 P.M.

Sheriff Matlack seeks re-election in 2020

Morrow County Sheriff Kenneth Matlack has announced that he will run for re-election in 2020. Matlack was elected the 16th sheriff of Morrow County in 2004, taking office in 2005. He has over 40 years of law enforcement knowledge and experience serving eastern Oregon and the citizens of Morrow County.

"It has been an honor and my pleasure to serve the people of Morrow County as their elected sheriff. I wish to announce my 2020 re-election efforts to seek the will of the people to be retained as the 16th person to be elected Morrow County Sheriff," Sheriff Matlack said.

Matlack grew up in the Irrigon/Umatilla area and graduated from Umatilla High School and Eastern Oregon State College with a Bachelor of Science Degree in education. He was a public-school teacher and coach at Powder Valley High School in North Powder until he was recruited by the Oregon State Police. During his career with the Oregon State Police he was assigned and promoted to a variety of different positions including trooper, detective, detective sergeant, patrol sergeant, assistant station commander and outpost commander. As the outpost commander, he supervised state police field operations in Gilliam, Wheeler and a portion of Morrow County.

Upon retiring from the Oregon State Police, he received a private investigator license and worked as a private investigator in Oregon and Washington. He also worked for several years as a contract investigator with the Oregon Department of Corrections.

Matlack reported, "The office of sheriff is one of the oldest and most unique elected positions in the United States. The sheriff by Oregon state statute is defined as "The Chief Law Enforcement Officer and Conservator of the Peace" in each of our 36 counties. His only true boss are the people who place him into office. The sheriff serves at their will. If the sheriff is faithful to the people and develops an agency that the people trust and find him to be approachable and willing to answer their questions, and accessible either at the office or at his home by phone or personal contact then they most likely can see for themselves if he has the character and

Sheriff Kenneth Matlack

leadership abilities to protect and serve them. If not, then he will not be elected and that is the way it should be. I have done my best to serve the people whether in the office or working in the field supporting our deputies. It has been a wonderful job and I seek to continue serving you."

To monitor the current activities and actions of the sheriff's office on Facebook search the Morrow County Sheriff's Office Facebook page. Matlack's current and future goals and plans are available by visiting www.aworkingsheriff.com.

"I will continue to keep you informed with articles and activities and answer your questions or concerns as we go through the election process. I appreciate your support and sincerely seek your vote," Matlack stated.

FCC authorizes $67.6 million to expand rural broadband

Representative Greg Walden (R-Hood River) released the following statement after the Federal Communications Commission authorized $67.7 million for rural broadband in Oregon over the next 10 years for rural broadband. These funds will support Oregon for the next decade by helping to maintain, improve and expand affordable broadband for rural Oregonians. Ten counties in Oregon will receive funding, nine of which are in the Second District, including, Baker, Gilliam, Grant, Jefferson, Malheur, Morrow, Wallowa, Wasco and Wheeler.

"Expanding access to rural broadband in Oregon brings us closer to narrowing the urban/rural digital divide and ushers rural Oregonians into the 21st century," said Walden. "There are still too many Oregonians who lack access to reliable broadband internet service and thus access to things like telemedicine, remote learning, next generation emergency services and video streaming because of insufficient internet service. I am grateful that the FCC recognizes the need to expand rural broadband in Oregon. I look forward to continuing to work alongside Chairman Pai and my colleagues in congress to ensure all Americans are connected to high speed broadband."

The funding Oregon received is part of a larger national authorization of $4.9 billion across 39 states and the American Samoa. In return for the support the FCC is offering, carriers must maintain, improve and expand broadband through their service area.

In his statement, FCC Chairman Ajit Pai said these funds will help 4,700 homes and small businesses in Oregon and help close the digital divide.

"Our action today will help close the digital divide and is a win-win for rural Americans and taxpayers, including nearly 4,700 homes and small businesses in Oregon," said FCC Chairman Ajit Pai. "Carriers get the predictable support they need to deliver broadband to their customers in these high-cost rural areas. And taxpayers, who fund this support through a fee on their phone bills, are getting more bang for their buck."

Walden invited Chairman Pai to eastern Oregon last year to discuss efforts to improve connectivity in rural communities, including making sure patients in remote areas have access to the best doctors through technology like telehealth.

Walden continues to partner with Chairman Pai and the FCC to expand broadband infrastructure to rural communities in Oregon, which is a priority for Representative Walden. Walden led the effort to pass the RAY BAUM'S Act into law, which reauthorized the FCC and gave the agency additional tools to enhance broadband expansion.

Burglary suspect in custody

Kristopher Enrique Roggiero, 20, of Hermiston was arrested by Morrow County Sheriff's Office September 3 after a Heppner burglary investigation identified him as a suspect.

The Morrow County Sheriff's Office received a report of a burglary at a residence in Heppner on September 2. Deputies conducted a follow-up investigation the next day, contacting neighbors in the area and reviewing security camera footage which identified the suspect and his vehicle.

After locating the suspect vehicle on Highway 207 at MP 15A Roggiero was taken into custody and lodged at Umatilla County Jail. He was arrested on charges of Burglary I (felony), Theft I (felony) and Criminal Mischief II (misdemeanor). Total bail was set at $65,000.

Kristopher Enrique Roggiero