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of the City of Heppner and the County of Morrow

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**GAZETTE-TIMES**  
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# Amazon top county taxpayer

Data centers pay over \$6.4 million a year, but are exempt from another \$32 million

By David Sykes

It used to be Portland General Electric and the coal-fired generating plant in Boardman were the largest property taxpayers in Morrow County. Not anymore. Amazon's web services company is by far now the largest payer of property taxes in the county. With a real market value of close to \$2 billion dollars the company will pay close to \$6.5 million in the current tax year, but that's after breaks it receives for locating in the Columbia River Enterprise Zone.



An explosion of data center construction like this one along Interstate 84 in Boardman has made Amazon the top taxpayer in Morrow County.

Drive by the Port of Morrow near Boardman along Interstate 84 and you see a large collection of non-descript concrete-walled buildings with

big electrical generators attached to the side. Amazon has been putting these up at a furious pace over the past six years to the point where it is now the highest valued company in Morrow County.

All this new building and business didn't arrive here without some concessions, however. The data farms have located in the Enterprise Zone not only for the availability of cheap hydroelectric power,

but also for the tax breaks they receive. According to figures from the county assessor's office Amazon Data Services is exempt from paying over \$32 million in yearly county property taxes. Its real market value before exemptions is set at \$2.8 billion of which close to \$2.3 billion is exempt from taxation. The data farms end up having an assessed value, or the value their property taxes are actually based upon, of \$458 million.

# Ione Community Clinic coordinator receives

community star recognition



Clair Arnold, Clinic Coordinator, Morrow County Health District

Stars. "Clair Arnold brings her community together with her kindness, enthusiasm, and passion for caring for others. Clair dedicates much of her time to the health and well-being of children in Ione, OR with her summer lunch program, Youth Advisory Council leadership, collaboration with Morrow County Public Health and the Ione School District, and her help with other student peer-to-peer community health projects. In this spirit, we celebrate National Rural Health Day with educational sessions in local schools about rural health each year. We are thrilled she has been chosen as Oregon's Community

Star this year," reported Bob Houser, CEO.

On the third Thursday of November every year, the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH), the member organization for each of the 50 State Offices of Rural Health (SORH), leads National Rural Health Day (NRHD), an annual day of recognition, shining a light on those who serve the vital health needs of the estimated 57 million people living in rural America.

SORHs, including Oregon Office of Rural Health, provide support to rural hospitals, clinics and first responders in several ways including technical assistance, funding that supports workforce development,

population health management, quality improvement initiatives and more.

In 2015, NOSORH invited its members to nominate hospital and emergency first responder teams, community health and volunteer service heroes on the front lines of rural health who were making a positive impact on rural lives. Soon after the stories started coming, the book of Community Stars was published on NRHD.

Rural communities, health organizations and schools are all invited to participate in NRHD. Free tools, ideas and details about NRHD events occurring across the United States are also available on PowerofRural.org.

Clair Arnold, clinic coordinator for Ione Community Clinic, has been recognized as a "Community Star" in conjunction with

National Rural Health Day 2019. Arnold was nominated and her story was selected to appear in the 2019 edition of Community

# Cutsforth appointed to county budget committee

Commission wants to keep 'regional representation'

By David Sykes

Kim Cutsforth of Heppner has been appointed to the Morrow County budget committee replacing long-time member and Heppner resident Larry Mills, who stepped down from the volunteer position following last year's budget work completion.

There were two applications for the vacant position and the commissioners opted to retain "balanced regional representation" on the committee by appointing Cutsforth over a Boardman resident. "I wish there were two spots," Commissioner Jim Doherty said about the qualifications of the candidates. He said the last time a vacancy came up on the budget committee he voted for a north end candidate over a Heppner applicant to keep all areas of the county represented. He said to remain consistent he would vote for the Heppner candidate, Cutsforth.

Commissioner Don Russell also voted for Cutsforth citing similar reasons. "I was a big advocate (on the last budget committee appointment) for regional representation and having different viewpoints on how county money should be spent," he said. "Both are qualified but there always seems to be limited resources with unlimited wants," he added. "What's important for people to spend money on is different in Heppner



Kim Cutsforth takes Larry Mills' place.

than in Boardman," he said in supporting the Heppner applicant. Commissioner Melissa Lindsay joined the two others in voting unanimously in favor of Cutsforth.

In her application letter for the position Cutsforth pointed to her experience saying, "I have municipal budget experience. I have prepared the Willow Creek Park District Budget for over twenty years. I was the past Heppner City Manager and prepared the budget there for six years. I served as acting interim Morrow County Administrator in 2017. This time with the county allowed me to work with the department heads and to have a reasonable understanding of the workings of the county and the needs of the departments. I recognize the commitment required for this position and I am willing to dedicate my time to this very important task. I hope that yourself

2. Portland General Electric, which operates a gas-fired electrical generating facility and pays about \$3.9 million in taxes. It operates under a different tax-exempt program called the Strategic Investment Program or SIP and is exempt from paying property taxes of about \$7.7 million.
3. Avista Corporation, an energy company which has no tax breaks and pays about \$3.4 million per year.
4. Threemile Canyon Farms, an agricultural business near Boardman pays about \$2.7 million and does not receive any tax reductions.
5. Lamb Weston, Inc., the large food processing plant at the Port of Morrow and the county's biggest employer, pays \$2 million per year in taxes, is located in the Enterprise Zone and has \$3 million in exempt property taxes.

and the commissioners will consider me for this committee."

In another appointment, the commission named Marie Cain of Boardman to the county Compensation Board. She replaces Lisanne Currin who stepped down. The compensation committee meets and determines recommendations to make to the commission on salaries and wages for county employees. Cain is a controller at Threemile Farms for Dairy Operations. "I would like to have an impact within the county and share my expertise as I can," she wrote to the commission. "Attracting people and keeping them representing the county can be difficult and compensation plays a role in that," she added.

In other appointments the commission had earlier appointed the following people to the fair board: Dawn Eynetich of Ione, Ashley Strzelewicz of Ione, Sarah Smith of Heppner and Shelby Krebs of Irrigon.

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