

FAA nixes county participation in airport maintenance work

Change in policy results in delay of runway maintenance

By David Sykes

A change in policy by the Federal Aviation Administration, FAA, will likely result in the delay of maintenance at the Lexington Airport, the county commissioners learned at their November 27 meeting. The commissioners were not pleased, with one even saying elected representatives should be called.

In the past the FAA has allowed the county to do work at the airport and count that work toward its contribution in the federal or state financed projects. The work is called in-kind or "account-reimbursed construction" and is performed by the county public works department.

"Federal design standards for airfield construction work can be very stringent," the FAA office in Des Moines, Washington said in a letter to the county turning down the contribution. The FAA said even though the county had done good work on the airport in the past it was not going to approve the county doing work on this project. "I understand that the ADO has approved and Morrow County has performed work on several past AIP projects using force account reimbursement, and to be clear, we have no reason to believe that the work in question does not meet standards," said Kevin Latschaw of the Seattle Airports District Office. But he said, "We are not inclined to approve the request."

The approved maintenance project is over \$1 million for seal coating and installing lighting on the runway. The county's

work would have counted towards a 10 percent required local match to receive the large grant. Not allowing the county to match funding with work will probably not kill the project, but most likely throw the whole project off by a year as the county will now have to come up with \$100,000 cash in next year's budget. "We don't want to turn down a million-dollar project over a 10 percent match," Public Works Director Matt Scrivner told the commissioners. The project was scheduled to have been started soon but may have to be moved out to 2021. The county will first have to come up with \$100,000 cash and include that in the 2020 budget before it can move forward.

Two of the county's airport engineers from Bend were at the meeting and expressed disappointment with the FAA ruling. "Your public works has proven capable of doing this kind of work," Tom Headley of Century West Engineering told the commission. "Crack seal and pavement removal are perfect for in-kind work for the county," he said. The county has relied on in-kind work by public works extensively in the past at the airport, and this policy change was a surprise and blow to future plans.

Commissioner Don Russell, himself a pilot, was not pleased with the FAA action. "The FAA want qualified contractors. Morrow County is a proven contractor, but they are still saying no," he said. He asked if the engineers wanted him to contact a

congressional representative about it. "I can do this," he said. Headley said no he didn't think going political would help on this project, adding, "This is a big blow to us. It came out of the blue." Commissioner Melissa Lindsay was surprised the FAA turned it down, saying since everything had already been approved, she had hoped they might just say go ahead with this project, but say no more in-kind work on the airport in the future.

Lindsay also pointed out the airport is important for economic development. "This is a high economic development for this end of the county. This is huge. They (the government) talk about helping rural counties and then they do this," she argued. Public Works Management Assistant Sandi Pointer has been working on writing and receiving grants for the Lexington airport development and maintenance for many years. "There are millions of dollars that have gone into that airport and then we just can't do this? What about all the money we put into the airport already?" she asked.

After discussion the commissioners decided to write a letter to the FAA expressing their disappointment. "Tell them we are very disappointed and if it happens again, we will call our congressional delegation," Commissioner Russell said. "We have the manpower and the expertise, and we have trained people and bought equipment for this type of work," he added.

USDA opens Conservation Reserve Program signup

Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue announced the U.S. Department of Agriculture opened signup for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) on December 9. The deadline for agricultural producers to sign up for general CRP is February 28, 2020, while signup for continuous CRP is ongoing.

Farmers and ranchers who enroll in CRP receive a yearly rental payment for voluntarily establishing long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as "covers") to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat on marginally productive agricultural lands.

"The Conservation Reserve Program is one of our nation's largest conservation endeavors and a critical tool to help producers better manage their operations while conserving natural resources," Secretary Perdue said. "The program marks its 35-year anniversary in 2020, and we're hoping to

see one of our largest signups in many years."

CRP has 22 million acres enrolled, but the 2018 Farm Bill lifted the cap to 27 million acres. This means farmers and ranchers have a chance to enroll in CRP for the first time or continue their participation for another term.

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest private-lands conservation programs in the U.S. The program was originally primarily intended to control soil erosion and potentially stabilize commodity prices by taking marginal lands out of production. This Farm Bill program has evolved over the years, providing a variety of conservation and economic benefits from coast to coast. CRP has:

- Prevented more than 9 billion tons of soil from eroding, enough soil to fill 600 million dump trucks;
- Reduced nitrogen and phosphorous runoff relative to annually tilled cropland by 95 and 85 percent respectively;

- Sequestered an annual average of 49 million tons of greenhouse gases, equal to taking nine million cars off the road;

- Created more than 3 million acres of restored wetlands while protecting more than 175,000 stream miles with riparian forest and grass buffers, enough to go around the world seven times; and

- Benefited bees and other pollinators and increased populations of ducks, pheasants, turkey, bobwhite quail, prairie chickens, grasshopper sparrows and many other birds.

By enrolling in CRP, producers are improving water quality, reducing soil erosion, and restoring habitat for wildlife. This in turn spurs hunting, fishing, recreation, tourism and other economic development across rural America.

To enroll in CRP, contact your local FSA county office or visit fsa.usda.gov/crp. To locate your local FSA office, visit farms.gov/service-locator.

Christmas Music Fest planned

A festival of Christmas music featuring musicians from around the community, will be held at Hope Lutheran Church (in Heppner near the dam) on Sunday,

December 15, at 4 p.m. The program will conclude with an opportunity to sing your favorite carols.

Admission is free, but donations of canned goods

for the Neighborhood Center will be welcome. More information about the concert is available by calling the Hopeful Saints Ministry office at 541-676-9970.

St. Patrick's Parish to host Christmas event

St. Patrick's Parish will host a Christmas potluck and children's musical play December 15. Mass will be held at 11 a.m. followed by the potluck at noon and the performance at 12:45 p.m.

The new musical, Follow the Star, performed by the children of St. Patrick's tells the story of the birth of Jesus and includes new songs, solos and music.

Everyone is invited to join the celebration of the Christmas season.

Sheriff's Report

The Morrow County Sheriff's Office has released the following information:

July 22: Morrow County Sheriff's Office received a report on Lewis and Clark Dr, Boardman that earlier today a newer white Ford Explorer with three individuals took pictures of the site. 35 minutes later they wandered the property. One of the individuals appeared to be carrying a weapon.

-MCSO received a report on I 84 W, Boardman that there is tire tread all over both lanes. Referred to other agency.

-MCSO received a report on SE Utah Ave, Irrigon that gold Dodge short bed pickup went past his house at a high rate of speed.

-MCSO received a report on NE Ninth St, Irrigon that neighbor is blaring music and rattling RP's windows.

-MCSO received a report at Green Acres on Paterson Ferry Rd, Irrigon that her car was stolen at the Butter Creek apartments. Vehicle was recovered by UCISO unoccupied.

-MCSO received a report on Washington Ln, Irrigon that there has been a dog at her house all day, she has been trying to find the owner. Hasn't had a problem all day but now her chickens are slaughtered.

-MCSO received a report on SE Utah Ave, Irrigon that a silver Honda CRV goes up to a house near his every day and parks out front going into the driveway or waiting by the driveway. RP advised that someone waits in the car and other person goes inside before leaving. RP thinks they have to be buying dope.

-MCSO received a report at Bank of Eastern

Oregon on S First St, Irrigon that a guy is trying to get into the drop box at the bank. Unable to locate.

-MCSO received a report at Bucknum's on N Main St, Heppner that there is a female behind the bar that is high and is bothering her customers.

July 23: Morrow County Sheriff's Office received a report at Hwy 730/I 84 W, Boardman that RP hit a deer. The deer is well off the road to the left. Referred to other agency.

-MCSO received a report at E Hwy 730/First St, Irrigon that a white car driving through Irrigon is all over the road. Unable to locate.

-MCSO received a report that Johnney Allen Hedge was arrested by MCSO on CA DOC parole and community service warrant. No bail, lodged at NORCOR.

-MCSO received a report on SE Utah Ave, Irrigon that a gray Chevy pickup went by his house at a high rate of speed. Unable to locate.

-MCSO received a report on W Seventh Rd, Irrigon of a 60-year-old male, diabetic and semi-conscious.

-MCSO received a report at S Birch St, Ione of a subject threatening suicide and has access to two handguns.

-MCSO received a report at Miller Rd/Hendegart Ln, Boardman that there is a toilet in the road. Referred to other agency.

-MCSO received a report at MCGG Boardman on Rail Loop Dr, Boardman that a silver Jeep with Idaho plates is digging a hole, walked down and they

drove off. -MCSO received a report on NE Third St, Irrigon that subject is headed back from Hermiston to Irrigon driving on CO plates and license. RP is concerned that the subject is driving without a license because his is void after 30 days.

July 29: Morrow County Sheriff's Office received a report on Hanna Arbuckle Rd, Heppner that RP is 25 miles outside of Heppner towards Penland Lake and needs assistance. Is dehydrated.

-MCSO received a report on NE Quaid St, Heppner of debris on the sidewalk and trailer parked the wrong way.

-MCSO received a report on NW Gale St, Heppner that RP had two bags stolen. States unknown when it went missing. RP called back and advised he left the bag at the grocery store yesterday.

-MCSO received a report on Meadow Loop, Boardman that she got a check mailed to her and states she believes it is a scam.

-MCSO received a report at Agri Northwest on Paterson Ferry Rd, Irrigon of a female parked off of Frontage/Pole Line who is advising she is out of gas and going to stay there until she dies. RP would like her off the property and if it is truly a gas situation, they would be happy to fill her up and get her along.

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Happy 90th Birthday GENE ORWICK

Gene's family invites his friends to join us for a 90th birthday celebration at Heppner Elks Club on Saturday, December 14th, at two o'clock in the afternoon.

A luncheon will be served in honor of Gene. You are invited to share a story from the past and make a new memory to treasure.



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