

HEPPNER

50¢

Gazette Times

VOL. 139 NO. 9 8 Pages Wednesday, February 26, 2020 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

Commissioner upset radioactive waste hauled through Boardman without notice

“How did you (railroad) allow this to happen?”

By David Sykes

Over the past three years an Arlington waste management company brought train carloads of radioactive material through Morrow County, but against all previous protocol didn't bother to notify anyone. And Morrow County Commissioner Jim Doherty isn't happy about it. “We need to ask the rail people ‘how did you allow this to happen?’” Doherty said at a commission meeting last week.

News recently came out that Waste Management, which runs a large chemical dump in Arlington, had been in violation of Oregon law over the past three years by taking in over 2.5 million pounds of radioactive waste. And unlike other hazardous material, it came through without notifying any local officials. The sheriff's office is normally told about hazardous materials, so in case of a train accident, emergency personnel will know for their and the townsfolk's safety what they are up against.

However, for the last three years trains have been going through Boardman with no one locally even aware of the potentially dangerous radioactive cargo. Doherty was upset because first responders and others who would go to an accident scene would have no idea the banned material was waiting for them. “How can the rail folks be assured what is going through this town?” he asked at last week's county commission meeting. “What do we do if there is a radiation challenge (accident)?”

Normally the sheriff's office is given notice that shipments of chlorine gas, for instance, are coming



Radioactive material was transported on the rail line running through Boardman.

through so the fire department, sheriff and EMS can all be prepared for an accident. Doherty was particularly concerned since just last week the commission had met with two representatives of the Local Emergency Planning Committee, LEPC, to talk about accident preparedness and they said nothing about it. At that meeting Undersheriff John Bowles said the railroad normally informs them of what is coming through. He said last year they were told 6,000 rail cars of crude oil, 200 carloads of chlorine gas and 139 loads of anhydrous ammonia used in fertilizer were coming through Morrow County. LEPC chairman Ken Kraus and Scott Burn were at the commission meeting and neither mentioned knowing anything about the radioactive material.

When the undisclosed shipments were discovered by the Oregon Department of Energy (ODOE) to being dumped at Arlington against state law, they issued a notice of violation to Waste Management. But even though it's against the law to dump radioactive material in Oregon, it doesn't appear the company is going to be fined. ODOE has said the incident doesn't meet the criteria to qualify for a fine.

The radioactive material is a byproduct of frack-

ing from oil drilling in North Dakota and ODOE has determined there is no current threat to landfill workers, the public or the environment from dumping the waste in Arlington. Commissioner Don Russell said at the meeting that although it's illegal to dump in Oregon and a danger, he didn't think it was quite as dangerous as other chemicals that come through by rail. “Radioactive Radon doesn't scare me as much as the chlorine gas that comes through,” said Russell who is a long-time board member of the local rural fire protection district who are the ones having to deal with a potential train accident and chemical release.

Doherty chastised the ODOE for saying there was no danger. “What's rolling through this town on any given day? When that material came through this town it was not covered by 10-feet of material,” he said as it would be once buried at the waste dump in Arlington. He asked Bowles to reach out to the railroad and find out what is coming through Boardman. Bowles said he would try to find out why the sheriff's office wasn't notified. “I think the public works should bring their grader down, park it on the tracks until we can be assured of what's coming through here,” Doherty said tongue-in-cheek.

Filing deadline nears for county candidates

Candidates wishing to be considered for positions in Morrow County must file by March 5. Positions available are county clerk, county commissioner, justice of the peace, sheriff and treasurer.

The following people have already filed: Morrow County Clerk, Bobbi A. Childers; Morrow County Commissioner, Position 1, Joseph B Armato, Jim Doherty, Michael H Sweek and Joel R Peterson; Morrow County Justice of the Peace, Theresa Crawford

and Glen G. Diehl; Morrow County Sheriff, Kenneth W Matlack and Mark Pratt and Morrow County Treasurer, Sabrina L Bailey Cave.

Mike Sweek files for county commissioner position

By Bobbi Gordon

Mike Sweek, 65, of Heppner, has thrown his hat into the ring for Morrow County Commissioner, position one. The number of candidates for the position is now up to four.

When asked why he decided to run for the office, Sweek told the Gazette, “I have been talking about running for an office for years. I'm not getting any younger and when this position came up, I decided since I am now semi-retired, it is the best time to do it.” He said if elected he plans to first find out what the problems are as he can't fix anything until he is in the position.

Sweek has been a resident of Heppner for most of his life, with his parents moving to the area in 1959. His father worked for the



Mike Sweek

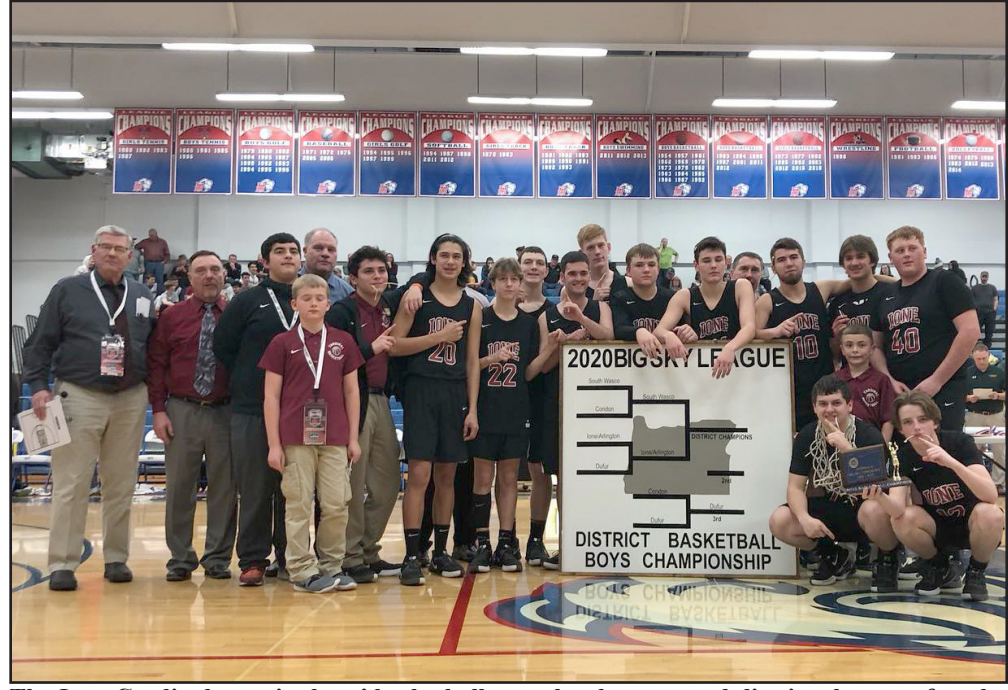
Morrow County road department and his mother, Evelyn, was a dietician at the hospital.

He reported he attended Eastern Oregon State College and was in the US Army. He is a Vietnam veteran, 1973-76, Iraqi Freedom veteran, 2004-05, earning the Combat Medic Badge and was a member of the Oregon Guard 3-116 from 1998-2006.

Sweek feels his experience working with the public as a former Heppner police officer, firefighter and EMT in Hermiston and security guard at the Umatilla Chemical Depot will help him in his job as commissioner if he is elected. He has also worked as a CNA at Pioneer Memorial Hospital in Heppner and currently works for Gar Aviation in Lexington.

If he wins the election, he says he plans to do a good job and keep working for the people of Morrow County. He said, “I know a lot of people, have worked community-oriented jobs and have common sense.” All are traits he feels are necessary for the job. “Sometimes you need to get new people in the positions to get new ideas,” he continued.

Cardinals district champs



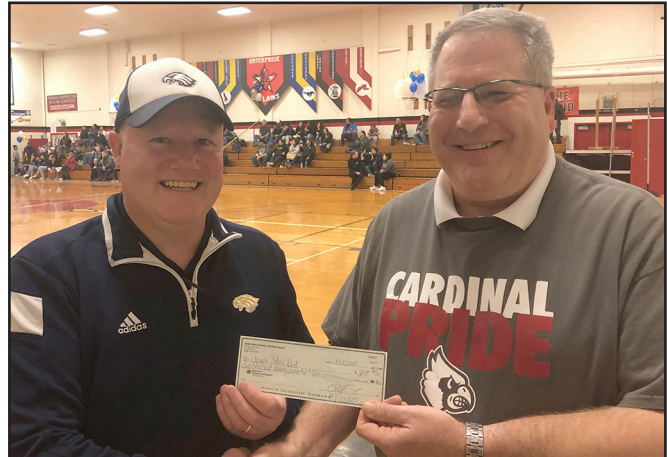
The Ione Cardinals varsity boys' basketball team has been named district champs after the tournament held in Madras last week. Hunter Padberg was named to the Big Sky first team, Jace Troutman and Wesley Goad to second team. Wesley Goad also received the Jason Halvorson Memorial award and the Big Sky scholarship award. (Names of people pictured was not available. The editor apologizes for the lack of information.)

Ione students donate to area districts

The Ione School District is reaching out to a couple of area schools recently affected by catastrophes.

Ione students recently held a fundraiser entitled “Help the Joseph Eagles Fly Again.” The gym of Joseph Charter School in Joseph, OR, was destroyed by fire in January. At a recent basketball game, the Ione School district donated funds from admission tickets, the “gate,” plus students supplied a number of auction items that were auctioned between the games.

All told, the efforts raised \$2,077.37 for Joseph School. Ione Principal Rollie Marshall presented the check to Joseph School District Superintendent Lance Homan, who was humbled by the donation,



Joseph School Superintendent Lance Homan (left) receives the donation check from Ione Principal Rollie Marshall.

Marshall said. Ione High School students are not finished with their desire to help. After hearing about the damage to the Umatilla High School Sports-Complex from recent area flooding, Ione students will be volunteering their time, effort, shovels, power washers and more to

help clean up the mud and debris left after the flood waters recede.

“I am so proud of how our students have stepped up to reach out to area schools. This just reinforces the values and empathy our kids have been raised with,” Marshall said.

Mustangs named to All Stars



At the end of the Blue Mountain Conference season five Mustang athletes were named to the All-Stars. Sydney Wilson and Mason Lehman were selected for first team. Madelyn Nichols, Jayden Wilson and Jackson Lehman received honorable mention. Pictured (L-R): Sydney Wilson, Madelyn Nichols, Jayden Wilson, Jackson Lehman, and Mason Lehman. -Photo by Susan Hisler.

POLARIS
NEW YEAR'S
SALES
EVENT

REBATES
UP TO
\$500*

— AND —
FINANCING
AS LOW AS
3.99%
APR FOR
36 MONTHS**

POLARIS RANGER

POLARIS SPORTSMAN

M.C.G.G.
Morrow County Grain Growers, Inc.

MORROW COUNTY GRAIN GROWERS
350 MAIN STREET, LEXINGTON, OR 97839
CONTACT: JUSTIN BAILEY 541-256-0229, 541-989-8221 EXT 204

*Offers vary by model. Rebates and financing offers valid on select 2019-2020 new and unregistered Polaris® RZR® 4000™, Freedom®, CROSS™ and ACE™ models purchased between 1/1/20-2/28/20. **Based on \$1,000 to \$32,000 financing at 3.99% for 36 months. Example: 30-month payment plan requires 20% down payment (\$10,000) with a 60-month term at a 3.99% APR rate. \$33.99 per \$1,000 financed. An example of a monthly payment with a 60-month term at a 3.99% APR rate for the month of \$127.89 is \$3,849.00. Total cost of financing of \$796.97 with a total obligation of \$13,850.17. Down payment may be required when financing. Offers may vary. See your local dealer for details. Minimum interest financed \$1,500. Maximum Annual Finance Fee \$25.00. Other qualifications and restrictions may apply. Financing promotions and where provided, the title transfer and registration are separate and may not be financed. Promotions may be modified or discontinued without notice at any time in Polaris' sole discretion. POLARIS® Polaris® off-road vehicles can be hazardous to operate and use and require the operator and passengers to be at least 16 years old with a valid driver's license to operate. Passengers, if permitted, must be at least 12 years old. All riders should always wear helmets, eye protection, and proper clothing. Always use seat belts and seat belts on drivers are required. Never engage in stunt driving, and avoid excessive speeds and sharp turns. Riding and stunts should only be done on closed course only. Safety training course. Call 800-243-2414 for additional information. Check with local laws before riding on trails. ©2020 Polaris.