HEPPNER 50¢

Gazette Times

VOL. 139 NO. 19 8 Pages Wednesday, May 6, 2020 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

Morrow County reports tenth case of virus, zero deaths

On May 4 and 5, Morrow County Public Health confirmed two more individuals tested positive for COVID-19, bringing the Morrow County total to ten. The eighth case was reported on May 1 and the seventh individual testing positive was confirmed the previous day. The seventh and eighth cases were a household contact with a previously reported positive case. Investigation continues regarding the ninth and tenth cases.

The May 1 press release stated, "With the current number of patients, we can now release demographic information, while still retaining patient anonymity." The positive cases currently include eight in Boardman, one in Irrigon and one in Heppner. There are no reported cases in Lexington or Ione.

Public Health also reported four patients have recovered and six are currently isolated at home. None of the cases are hospitalized and there have been no deaths in the county.

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, cough and shortness of breath. If you are experiencing these symptoms, you should stay home, except to get medical care. If medical care is needed, call first. Be extra cautious to limit your contact with people who are at higher risk for severe illness. Do not go to work, or to any public areas.

Morrow County Public Health reports that screening and testing are continuing.

Utility Commission to hold public hearing on property condemnation request

Umatilla Electric seeks approval to take property for new power line easement at Boardman

By David Sykes

The Oregon Public Utility Commission (PUC) will hold a public hearing next Tuesday to take public comment on a proposed Umatilla Electric Cooperative (UEC) plan to condemn certain property near Boardman for construction of a new 3.4-mile overhead power line. UEC has filed the required application with the Utility Commission to begin condemnation proceedings against several property owners along the route, which have not signed easement agreements with the co-op.

If the condemnation is successful it would clear the way for the co-op to apply to the Morrow County Planning Commission seeking approval to build a 3.4 mile overhead 230 Kilovolt transmission line from the planned Highway 730 switchyard near I-84 to a new Olson Road substation at Boardman.

The electric co-op says the new line is needed to service a surge in customer growth in the area, however critics say the line is mainly to service one customer, Vadata, a subsidiary of Amazon which is building a new data facility in the area and needs the additional power. Critics, including Morrow County Commissioner Jim Doherty, say the proposed property condemnation is the result of poor planning for construction of the new data facility, and that another route north of the I-84 freeway would be better and not require any condemnation.

However, according to reports filed with the PUC, engineers did look at two other routes and found them unacceptable because of a combination of costs, safety issues, environmental impacts, impacting new properties or adverse effects on agricultural land. The engineers also looked at increasing the size of existing 115kV lines in the area to the larger 230kV but found that economically unfeasible because of a cost of over $30 million. UEC has already obtained consent from about 64 percent of the landowners along the transmission line route, which covers about 80 percent of the property needed for construction of the new line. However, there are still some holdouts which may require the condemnation to obtain easements on their land, and UEC is preparing for that with the PUC filing. The UEC says it does not want to go through the condemnation process, pointing out the co-op is just doing its job providing electricity to consumers, and is still negotiating with the affected landowners to avoid the process.

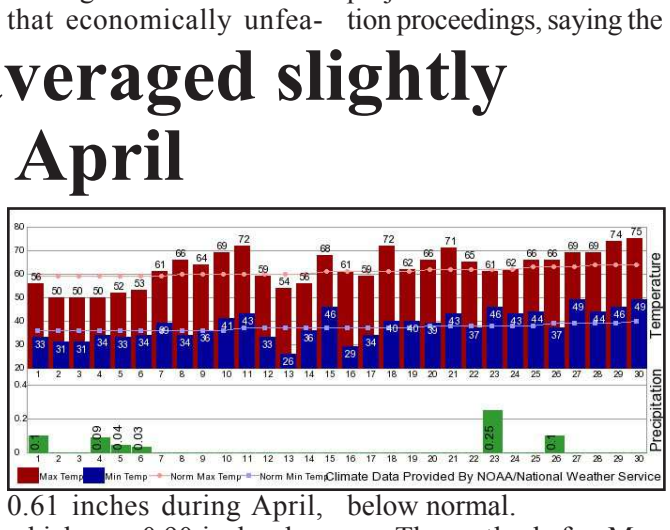
One of the main landowners whose property is actually needed for an easement, but so far has not consented, are former county judge Terry Tallman and his wife Cheryl. The Tallmans are critical of the project and the condemnation proceedings, saying the power line is being sold as a transmission line when it is "clearly a power distribution line coming from a switch yard directly to an end user (Amazon)." The Tallmans also said when it comes time to redistribute power from the end of the new line, there will be more negative impacts which must be addressed. They suggest all distribution lines be placed underground to lessen the impacts on the city and surrounding commercial, residential and farmlands. Tallmans say there may be damage to humans and plant life when exposed to strong electrical fields like those produced by the overhead power lines. The Tallmans operate a family farm on land needed for the new line, so their property would be subject to condemnation if unable to come to agreement with UEC. They also cited lack of planning as a reason condemnation proceedings are even being considered.

The public hearing next Tuesday, May 12 will be held over the phone in the evening from 6 to 8 p.m. and the public can call in to give comment. The phone number is 866-390-1828 and the access code to join the hearing is 2252868. According to a notice on the PUC web site: "The public comment hearing is an opportunity for customers and members of the public to offer unsworn testimony to the commissioners and Administrative Law Judge. Because the purpose of this hearing is to take comments from the public, Umatilla Electric Cooperative (UEC) and the other parties to the

-See CONDEMNATION/ PAGE THREE

Heppner averaged slightly warmer in April

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 April.



The average temperature was 50.5 degrees which was 1.4 degrees above normal. High temperatures averaged 62.6 degrees, which was 1.7 degrees above normal. The highest was 75 degrees on the 30th. Low temperatures averaged 38.3 degrees, which was 1.1 degrees above normal. The lowest was 26 degrees, on the 13th. There were four days with the low temperature below 32 degrees.

Precipitation totaled 0.61 inches during April, which was 0.90 inches below normal. Measurable precipitation, at least .01 inch, was received on six days with the heaviest, 0.25 inches reported on the 23rd.

Precipitation this year has reached 3.51 inches, which is 2.11 inches below normal. Since October, the water year precipitation at Heppner has been 4.89 inches, which is 4.79 inches below normal.

The outlook for May from NOAA's Climate Prediction Center calls for above normal temperatures and near normal precipitation. Normal highs for Heppner rise from 64.0 degrees at the start of May to 73.0 degrees at the end of May. Normal lows rise from 40.0 degrees to 47.0 degrees. The 30-year normal precipitation is 1.66 inches.

Glen Diehl seeks to retain Justice of the Peace position

Glen Diehl

Glen Diehl, Morrow County's current Justice of the Peace, is a former law enforcement officer with more than 35 years of criminal justice experience.

Glen graduated from Heppner High School in 1978 and studied Criminal Justice at Blue Mountain Community College. He is a graduate of the OSSA Command College, Oregon Executive Development Institute and the Oregon Executive Academy. Glen has also earned his basic, intermediate and advanced police certifications.

Glen has been married to his wife Tracie for over 25 years and they have raised two grown children. He has volunteered as a cubmaster, Boy Scout master, Girl Scout leader, 4-H advisor and a Pendleton Round-up volunteer. Glen is an avid outdoor sportsman and lifetime member of the NRA.

Glen has lived in both Heppner and Boardman and currently resides on a piece of property in the mountains south of Heppner that he purchased seven years ago. Glen said, "I have a lot of memories associated with this property when my father, (Dr. Joseph H. Diehl) first purchased it in the late 1970's. I cannot wait for my wife Tracie to join me here full time when she is able to fully retire."

Glen believes it is important for the Justice of the Peace to have a well-rounded background and believes that his combination of education, training and experience makes him the best candidate. His record of commitment to the law, in addition to his balance and fair-minded approach makes him uniquely qualified to continue serving the citizens of Morrow County as their Justice of the Peace. Glen says that his time serving as the Morrow County Justice of the Peace has been the pinnacle of the criminal justice career and he is looking forward to continuing to serve the citizens of Morrow County.

$81,790 in CREZII community grants disbursed

The Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group (WCVEDG) has completed another round of grant disbursement, giving out $81,790 to communities and groups in the south Morrow County area. WCVEDG awarded the funds with money it received from the Columbia River Enterprise Zone II (CREZII). See below for details.

Grant funds recently awarded by Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group

Grant Recipient	Grant Funds Awarded	Project Cost
City of Heppner: Upgrade and improve Main Street by replacing sidewalk lighting to LED, replacing garbage can receptables, new information board by post office, adding a restroom, new H2O fountain and new trees.	**$43,200.00**	$ 86,400.00
City of Ione: To create a Recreational Vehicle (RV) septic site and link additional sewer hook-up to the current city owned RV Park.	**$10,000.00**	$ 20,000.00
Farm Foundation: Complete rehab of one room schoolhouse with the new roofing, one repainted sign and also put new roof on Kiosk listing names of donors to the murals of. the Ag Museum	**$2,240.00**	$ 4,480.00
Heppner Daycare Center: Painting or interior ceiling, walls and bookshelves on the inside of the daycare; painting the porch, doors and posts on the outside front and back. Beautification of the front outside with flowers, etc.	**$425.00**	$ 850.00
IOOF Willow Lodge #66 – Heppner: Reconstruction and Painting: The Lodge would like to improve the appearance and integrity of the building's rear side wall, which is very visible to the public along Willow Street. It is planned to rebuild the sheet metal, replacing the rusted and decaying current materials; installing raised, gravel-filled four-foot wide sidewalk; remove swamp cooler and install efficient and functioning windows to serve the leased area (Sage Clothing); removal of oil furnace tank; repairing concrete wall; full painting of all the side walls with a uniform color.	**$4,925.00**	$ 9,850.00
Neighborhood Center of South Morrow County: Funds will be used for client services (rent, RX, utilities) and to purchase food from CAPECO and other grocery items are purchased locally at Heppner Market Fresh. This enables us to provide a weeks' worth of emergency food to the low income families of South Morrow County.	**$6,000.00**	$ 18,000.00
Oregon Trail Library District Heppner Branch: Purchase a new circulation desk and table for the adult public computers. The new table will have short dividers between computers to allow a small amount of privacy. Staff will be able to perform tasks better and will create a better ergonomic flow to their work.	**$10,000.00**	$ 20,000.00
Town of Lexington: The construct/make an addition to the existing structure that the Town of Lexington uses as their shop/equipment storage area. The addition would house equipment and supplies that does not fit in the existing structure (i.e) backhoe, piping, lumber, etc.	**$5,000.00**	$ 10,000.00
Community Requests	**$81,790.00**	**$169, 580.00**