

# Gazette Times

VOL. 139 NO. 26 6 Pages Wednesday, June 24, 2020 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

## 'Greater Idaho' group gathers signatures for ballot question

### Group seeks to separate Oregon's rural counties to join with politically similar Idaho

By David Sykes

A group seeking to break off rural Oregon counties and join them with the more politically like-minded conservative state of Idaho, had its petition approved and

nature petitions to move the Oregon/Idaho border. Signature collection has begun in thirteen, soon to be fifteen counties," they said. "If enough signatures are submitted by August 5, the issue will be on ballots

both a web site greateridaho.org and a Facebook page. The website has links to each county-specific petition and a copy of the complete Greater Idaho proposal.

In other business at the

## Local couple starts push for dog park



Sally and Ralph Walker, along with Midge and Daisy, check out the proposed spot for a dog park. -Photo by David Sykes.

Sally and Ralph Walker of Heppner have begun a feasibility study to establish an off-leash dog park in Heppner for residents and visitors. According to the Walkers, creating an off-leash dog park has become a necessity due to many other fenced areas being posted with "no dogs allowed" recently. "This only leaves open public parks, sidewalks and people's yards for dog's use," Sally Walker said.

The city of Heppner has indicated that a strip

of vacant land between the old swimming pool park and Shobe Creek at Cannon Street and South Main Street might be a possibility for the park if it is acceptable to nearby residents. "The plan at this time is to acquire the land and financing for the development of the area. We plan to raise money by selling name tags of sponsors to be attached to a fence post, by taking donations and then 'in kind' donations of volunteer help on the construction," the

Walker's told the Gazette. They estimate the cost to be less than \$1,500.

"Cleanliness, convenience and easy accessibility are some of the reasons the planning of a dog park has begun. The dog park could be a great addition to the many other amenities the city of Heppner has to offer," they continued.

For additional information, suggestions or to volunteer, please contact Ralph and Sally Walker at 541-676-9112.

## Ione to hold July 4 fireworks display

Although this year's Ione Fourth of July Celebration festivities have been cancelled, the fireworks will still light up the sky, weather permitting.

Thanks to a grant from the Morrow County Unified Recreation District, a fireworks crew led by Ed Reitmann will shoot off fireworks from a hill overlooking town on the west side of Ella Road. The display can be viewed from most places in town.

Weather permitting, the first firework will be shot at dusk.

Fireworks are provided by Western Display Fireworks, an Oregon based, family-owned business. The Ione Volunteer Fire Department will be on patrol as well.

Attendees are encouraged to follow the existing phase requirements and prioritize the health and safety of the community members.



If a move-Oregon's border group gets enough signatures on an already approved petition, voters in Morrow County will see a non-binding question on the November ballot.

will begin gathering signatures. The group officially known as "Move Oregon's Border for a Greater Idaho," had asked the county commissioners to approve a non-binding advisory to voters questioning if Morrow County should "establish a committee to investigate and promote the possibility of making Morrow County a county of Idaho?" Commissioners did not discuss the proposal at their June 10 meeting, nor did they call for a vote on whether to refer the question to voters. The group was not asking commissioners to take a position. Since the commissioners refused to refer the question to voters, the Greater Idaho group will now be required to gather the needed 230 signatures to get it on the November ballot. The ballot title has already been filed with the county clerk and it reads "Shall the Morrow County Board of Commissioners be required to meet three times annually to discuss promoting Morrow County's interest regarding relocation of the state border?"

According to a recent news release from the Greater Idaho group: "County clerks in fifteen Oregon counties, with a combined population of 710,000 residents, have given the go-ahead for sig-

in those counties in November."

The group was formed over frustration in dealing with Oregon's super majority Democrat-controlled legislature and Democrat governor, whose liberal political viewpoints vary greatly from those of rural Oregon. "Rural counties have become increasingly outraged by laws coming out of the Oregon Legislature that threaten our livelihoods, our industries, our wallet, our gun rights and our values. We tried voting those legislators out, but rural Oregon is outnumbered, and our voices are now ignored. This is our last resort," Mike McCarter, one of the chief petitioners, said. The group is hoping rural Oregonians would prefer Idaho's more conservative governance to the current liberal Oregon.

Of Oregon's 36 counties, only 14 in the Willamette Valley will remain if the group succeeds. Moving the border would still be a tough job as it would require approval from the U.S. Congress as well as the Idaho and Oregon state legislatures. However, the group determined that moving the border would still be easier than trying to form a new state as some other areas of the country in similar situations have considered. The group has established

June 10 meeting, the commissioners heard a request from the city of Umatilla Police Department that the Morrow County Sheriff Office contract to handle their 911 call taking and dispatching services. Umatilla is currently contracting with Umatilla County and representatives at the meeting said the charges for the service have been going up steadily and are set to take a big jump in the next year.

Morrow County Sheriff Ken Matlack said providing the service would be a good thing financially for Morrow County. City of Umatilla manager David Stockdale said he would like to see a three-year agreement with Morrow County for 911 but would be "more interested" in a five-year. He said their current contract doesn't expire for another year so there is time to work out the details. Morrow County Commissioners said they were interested but wanted to have contract details in front of them before giving a final ok.

In other business the commission heard from North Morrow Vector Control District Manager Greg Barron who gave a report on activities of the district, and also asked the commission to approve an appointment to the board. Barron said his district covers a 274

square mile area in North Morrow County and deals primarily with keeping the mosquito "genera Culex" under control. That breed is the main disease transmitter in the area. They use a variety of methods including surveying mosquito populations, larvaciding, or eliminating in the larva stage, adultciding, or controlling once they reach adult stage and biological control.

Barron says one of the big concerns of the vector district is preventing the West Nile virus which is transmitted by mosquitos. "We are the perfect environment with high temps and a dry climate," he said, adding that mosquitos like dry climates and water to breed.

Barron said the district

has two full time employees and six summer techs that work on mosquito control. He said they have one of the best surveillance operations finding and identifying mosquitos as anywhere in the state. He said once mosquito's density is identified samples are sent to a diagnostic lab at Oregon State University for analysis. The district contracts with a helicopter operator out of Pendleton when needed.

Barron also said there was a recent mosquito problem identified in Irrigon and they thought part of the infestation was from Washington. "If they are hatched on the Washington side there is no control," he says, so they will come across the river. After hearing the report, the commission voted to approve Pat Tolar to the board. Tolar is a former chair of the fair board and currently works at the Sage Center in Boardman.

Commissioner Don Russell is from Boardman and he recalled how in high school "I couldn't go out in the summer without getting

bit. It's much better now," he said. Russell also pointed out that the vector district is 100 percent funded by its own tax base and does not receive money from the county general fund.

In business at its June 17 meeting, the commissioners heard a report from Diane Kilkenny, RN, Community Health Nurse, who said she and other health care professionals in the county are preparing for a possible wave of Coronavirus cases. "We are being very proactive. We are trying to be ready," she told the commissioners.

Commissioner Russell said the county seemed "just lucky" that we had not gotten a large outbreak of COVID-19 at the food processing plants in the Boardman area. Kilkenny said Morrow County was surrounded by outbreaks and on the edge of Umatilla County and the Tri-Cities which have seen quite a few cases. "We are working hard at it," she said about preparations.

REBATES UP TO **\$1000** AND FINANCING AS LOW AS **3.99%** FOR 36 MONTHS\*

THERE'S NO BETTER PLACE TO BE AND NO BETTER WAY TO GET THERE.

**POLARIS** SUMMER SALES EVENT

**GOING ON NOW!**

**Morrow County Grain Growers**

**MORROW COUNTY GRAIN GROWERS**  
350 MAIN STREET LEXINGTON OR 97839  
CONTACT JUSTIN BAILEY 541-256-0229, 541-989-9221 EXT. 204

**POLARIS**