the HEPPNER GAZETTE TIMES

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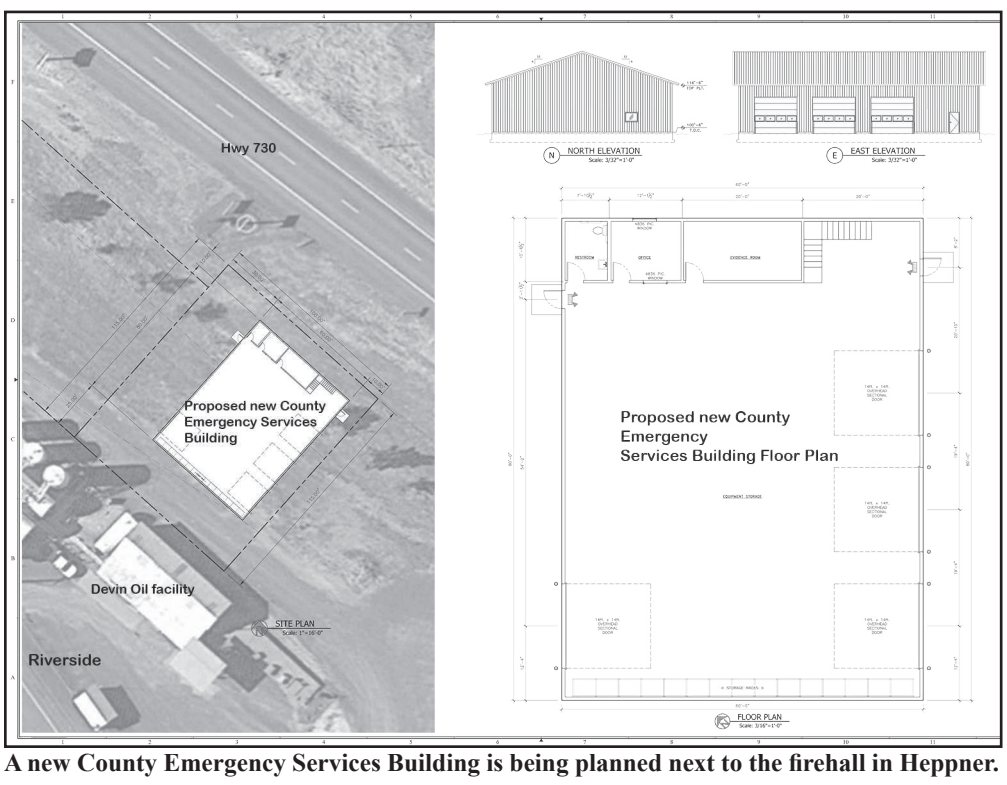
VOL. 139 NO. 36 8 Pages Wednesday, September 2, 2020 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

County moves forward with new Heppner sheriff's building



A new County Emergency Services Building is being planned next to the firehall in Heppner.

By David Sykes

The county is moving forward with a plan to build a new Emergency Services Building in Heppner after losing its current facility at the old Kinzua Mill Site. The building will be used to mainly store sheriff office vehicles and equipment such as the mobile emergency command center vehicle.

The county currently leases a building at the former mill site for its emergency building, however the current owner, the Port of Morrow, has sold the building for $100,000 to local businessman Jay Coil who plans on moving his fabrication business there from its current location on Riverside Ave. The county had the right to match the offer and buy the building but opted instead to find a location and build its own new emergency building. Subsequently the city of Heppner offered to donate a lot next to the current firehall located between Riverside and Hwy 74 behind the Devin Oil facility for free.

The county engaged Engineering Northwest from Ontario to come up with a price estimate for a new building. The engineers came back and said a new 60 X 80 ft wooden structure would cost the county an estimated $549,000.

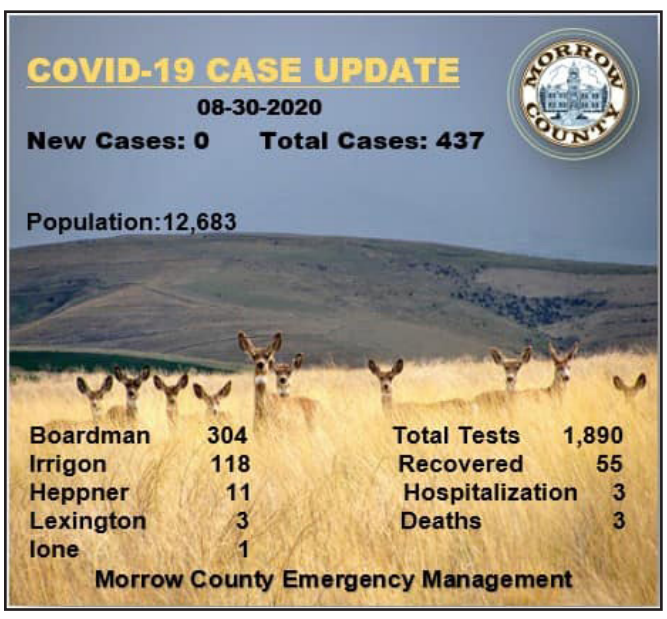
Commissioners at their August 22 meeting debated whether the price was too high and if the new building should even be built in Heppner. Commissioner Don Russell said the building originally belonged to the Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program (CSEPP) for use when the Umatilla Army Depot decommissioned its chemical stockpile near Irrigon. The site was chosen because it would have been outside the impact area if there was an incident during decommissioning, Russell said. "That is why they didn't build it at Boardman or Irrigon. We started storing stuff in that building, and now that we are going to have to build a new building, Is that really the right spot?" he asked. "I use the analogy we certainly wouldn't store snow mobiles in Boardman and Irrigon and would it make sense to store a 24 ft marine patrol boat in the south county," Russell asked. Sheriff Ken Matlack was at the meeting and he said having the building located in south county has worked well. "It seemed like it worked pretty well right where it is at," Matlack said. "The times we had communications issues we have been able to use the portable command center. South county has been a logical place to keep it and I don't see any reason to move it up north. We use it a lot down south," Matlack told the commissioners.

All the commissioners seemed to think the price

-See NEW COUNTY BUILDING/PAGE THREE

County COVID stats explained

376 cases still considered 'active'



Morrow County Emergency Management posts the COVID-19 updates on the Health Department Facebook page daily.

By Bobbi Gordon

According to the report from the Morrow County Health Department on Monday, August 31, there are no new COVID-19 cases in the county. Currently they report a total of 437 positive cases county-wide, with the majority of those in Boardman.

Currently the report shows 304 positive cases in Boardman, 118 in Irrigon, 11 in Heppner, three in Lexington and one in Ione. With the cities in the south end of the county lumped together for reporting for several months, a request was sent asking when the cases were actually reported in Heppner, Lexington and Ione. The breakdown shows Heppner as having one in March, five in June, four in July and only one in August. Lexington had two in July and one in August and Ione had just one in July.

Many county residents have wondered why the categories showing recovered, hospitalized and deaths do not add up to the total positive cases. A request with that question sent to the health department did not receive a response but County Commissioner Melissa Lindsay explained the definition of recovered. "These numbers correlate with the amount of cases that started 60 days ago," she stated. OHA defines a person as recovered as follows, "Any confirmed or presumptive case who is alive 60 days after the earlier of their onset of symptoms or collection of their first positive test will be considered recovered (§7)." She also explained how hospitalizations are counted. "The daily numbers reported indicate the amount of people in the hospital on that given day, not total hospitalizations. These numbers are usually in flux as people are discharged and admitted," she added

With those explanations, the statistics currently would count 55 as recovered, three hospitalized, three deaths and 376 still considered active. If the person does not meet the definitions of recovered or hospitalized, they are still active.

New board member sworn in

John Murray, chairman of the Morrow County Health District Board, swore in new member, Andrea Fletcher, Heppner, at the August 30 meeting at the Pioneer Memorial Clinic conference room. Fletcher was selected by the board to fill the spot vacated by long-time member, Leann Rea, who is moving out of the district.

Andrea Fletcher, left, is sworn in by Morrow County Health District Board Chair John Murray at their Monday night meeting in Heppner.

CEO Bob Houser reported the district has narrowed the search down to five applicants for the CEO position. Houser, who is slated to retire by December, said that onsite interviews are being set up for the first part of September. The board voted to approve a motion to pay for travel, lodging and meals for the candidates and their "significant others" to come to Heppner for interviews.

In other business, the board:

-learned from Houser that Todd Schmidt has accepted the offer to serve as the next director of radiology. He said Schmidt, who was previously working for Curry Health in Gold Beach, has had over 20 years of experience. He also reported that an MA/X-ray tech has resigned and accepted a position at Columbia River Health in Boardman and the position has been posted internally.

-learned from Houser the district has purchased a pre-made 10x12 building to be used as a COVID screening site at Irrigon Medical Clinic. He said the maintenance department will complete the inside work, which will include installing a heating and cooling unit. COVID funds were used to pay for the shed and improvements.

Todd Schmidt, new MCHD director of radiology

-heard from Houser that Patti Allstott, Human Resources director, is now part of the executive team, joining Chief Financial Officer Nicole Mahoney and Director of Nursing Jamie Houck, RN.

-approved renewal of the commercial and medical malpractice insurance from Parker, Smith and Feek, Inc., broker and Coverys, their current carrier, for $52,522. The district had budgeted $57,583.

-approved the consultant agreement for review of the clinic processes from Harris Consulting.

-approved a motion to appoint board member Marie Shimer to the Compliance Committee, with any available board member to serve as an alternate in the event that Shimer cannot attend.

-approved Mahoney's plan to reverse $490,000 from the 2019-2020 budget to settle the district's cost report, close it out, and then move the funds to the 2020-21 budget, when COVID details and reimbursements are more defined.

-approved a resolution regarding the CEO's spending authority/limit.

-approved the low bid from Direct Supply for $19,263 for replacement of the district's current dishwashing unit for the dietary department. They also received a bid from Curtis Restaurant for $20,190.

-approved the district's revised code of conduct.

-approved a bid from

-See NEW BOARD MEMBER/PAGE TWO

G-T closed Labor Day

The Heppner Gazette-Times will be closed for the Labor Day holiday on Monday, September 7. The deadline for all news and advertising for the September 9 issue will be Friday, September 4, at 5 p.m. Normal business hours will resume Tuesday, September 8.

The G-T wishes everyone a happy and safe Labor Day weekend.

Census takers to gather information

Census takers will be set up in Heppner at the Murray's Garden between Sage Clothing and Kuhn Law office on Thursday and Friday, September 3 and 4 between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. to gather census information. The Morrow County response rate is currently at 44.6 percent, lower than the state average of 67.8 percent.

Currently Heppner's response rate is 35.4 percent, Lexington's is 43.9 and Ione's is 30.7. Commissioner Jim Doherty is working with the county's lead census taker to set up census takers at each end of the county as soon as possible to increase the response rate.

County Commissioner Melissa Lindsay reported, "Not only are a great deal of dollars at stake but also redistricting of our representation is at stake with the population count."

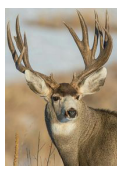
The Loop is available for transportation to the site in Heppner by calling 541-676-5667.

Gazette-Times Trophy Corner

Trevor McLaren, 13, Heppner, shot this bear at his home at Blake Ranch. He was reportedly bringing the garbage can in when he saw the bear. Since he had a bear tag, he got his gun and shot the bear. Trevor is the son of Matt and Tara McLaren and attends Heppner Junior High School. – *Photo by April Sykes.*

DEADLINE: MONDAYS AT 5PM

The Heppner Gazette-Times wants to see pictures of your trophy animals from this hunting season. Stop by to have your picture taken, drop off photos, mail them to PO Box 337 in Heppner, email them to editor@rapidserve.net or text cell phone photos to 541-980-6674.



GOING ON NOW!

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

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