the HEPPNER
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Lexington gets new signs for town hall and shop

By David Sykes

The Town of Lexington has ordered two new signs, one for its shop building and one for the town hall. At its November 3 meeting the council instructed maintenance man Scott Lamb to purchase the new 2 X 4 signs for the town buildings so they will be better identified to the public. The council had first considered only one sign for the shop building, but then decided to add one for the town hall which currently doesn't have a good one. "It would be nice to have a sign here," Mayor Juli Kennedy said about town hall. Lamb said there was enough money left from the grant money the town received for signs to purchase both, so the council moved forward.

In other business, the council voted to retain VanKoten & Cleaveland, LLC Attorneys at Law from Hood River to use "as needed" for city legal business. The town previously did not have an attorney. Ruben Cleaveland of VanKoten & Cleaveland said in a letter to Lexington that he is currently the city attorney for Cascade Locks, Arlington, Moro, Wasco, Vernonia, Gaston and Spray. Cleaveland will bill the town $175 per hour for legal services on an "as needed" basis. "I represent a wide variety of local governments in Oregon and I would be very pleased to serve your city," Cleaveland said in a letter to the town. "I have a hands-on experience in a wide variety of law topics, including but not limited to, contract law, Oregon Public Employees labor laws, Oregon land use laws and Oregon law governing governmental agencies," he added.

In other action the council voted to retain the accounting firm of Solutions, CPAs from John Day to do the town audit. "While the State Board of Accountancy requires only one of the firm's partners to be a licensed Municipal Auditor for the firm to conduct municipal audits, Solutions currently has three Municipal Auditors," the firm said about its qualifications.

In other business the town learned that it had received $100,000 from the State of Oregon for use on streets. The Small City Allotment Funds are an annual allocation of state funds to be used for transportation projects. Oregon Department of Transportation, ODOT, sets aside $5,000,000 each year (half from city gas tax revenue and half from the state highway fund) for cities with population of less than 5,000. Projects are selected for funding per a competitive process. The maximum award is $100,000 and there is no match requirement. The city of Ione received $94,478 this year and the city of Heppner was also awarded $100,000. Lexington plans on using the money to repave Arcade St., part of C St. and part of Water St..

The town of Lexington has two new signs. *-Contributed photo.*

City gets Jones Street grant

$100,000 in state money for reconstruction

By David Sykes

The city of Heppner has received a state grant of $100,000 to be used toward reconstruction of Jones Street. Jones is located between Church and Water Streets behind the Catholic Parish Hall.

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The city of Ione received $94,478 this year and the town of Lexington was also awarded $100,000. At its November 9 meeting the Heppner City Council voted to accept the funds.

In other business at the meeting:

The council authorized the transfer of property at 911 Riverside Street to Morrow County. The county plans to build a new storage facility there to house sheriff's office equipment and supplies. The 100 X 100-foot lot will be donated to the county at no cost.

The council reviewed the recently completed annual city audit by Hermiston accountants Barnett & Moro, PC. The city received good marks except for its handling of cash transactions. The audit said Heppner lacks "segregation of accounting duties" within city hall when receiving and recording cash transactions. The city receives the warning each year because there is a small staff who handle multiple duties. The audit did not find any irregularities in the finances of the city. "The city has done its best to rectify this situation," the mayor said in a letter to the Secretary of State. "We have assigned separate staff members to open the mail, review invoices and bank statements." The city also pointed out all city checks require two signatures, the person that signs the checks does not write them, all deposits are reviewed by two staff members and all city financial statements are reviewed by management and the city council. "The City of Heppner is a small community. We employ only 2.7 full time employees. We do not plan to hire any additional employees," the mayor's letter concluded.

The council reviewed minutes of a November 2 planning commission meeting where the commission approved a variance allowing William Mahon of 430 Frank Gilliam Drive to put in a 10 X 20 foot outbuilding next to his home. The commission also approved a variance for Mike and Kay Proctor to construct either a 12 X 12 shed attached to the side of their house, or up to an 8 X 30 ft attachment to the existing carport on 475 Morgan St. The planning commission said the work needed to comply with flood plain requirement rules.

They heard a report from City Manager Kraig Cutsforth who said among other things, he ordered a new phone system for city hall and public works. He also said he emptied the city hunter water fund box twice. The city offers hunters free water fill-up at the city park, and there is a donation box there if hunters want to put money in for the water. "The bird and bow hunters are the best (money donators)," Cutsforth said. "Elk hunters don't pay much for water. And they leave the most garbage," he added. The city also puts out garbage cans for hunters to dump their trash in on the way out of town. The water and garbage are done as a service because of the large positive economic impact out-of-town hunters have on the city's economy. Cutsforth said they must remind some local people trying to dump their garbage in the hunter bins located at the city park, that the service is only for hunters' use.

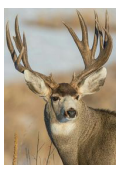
The state of Oregon has given money to the city to reconstruct Jones Street. Jones runs between Water and Church Street behind the Catholic Parish Hall.

~ G-T Trophy Corner ~

The Heppner Gazette Times would like to see pictures of your trophy animals from this hunting season. Please send a photo along with your name, age, town you live in, location of the hunt and a description of the animal to editor@rapidserve.net, upload to Heppner.net or text to 541-980-6674.

Scott Lamb, Heppner, took this spike elk in the Heppner unit.

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.



Morrow County has lowest rental rate in Oregon

Rental rate averages $524 per month for one bed/one bath

The 2020 edition of "Oregon by the Numbers" recently published, is full of fascinating statistics on Oregon's counties.

Rent Costs (One bedroom, one bath): Morrow County ranks last of all counties with a rate of $524 per month. Clackamas, Columbia, Multnomah, Washington and Yamhill are all tied for first at $1,132 per month.

Population: According to the publication, Oregon has a population of 4,081,943, of that, Morrow County's population is 29th out of 36 counties at 11,215. Umatilla County is 14th with 76,898; Gilliam is 34th with 1,907, Sherman is 35th with 1,605 and Wheeler is 36th and last with 1,426.

Rural: Morrow County is 12th in the percentage of people living in rural areas, with Gilliam, Grant, Sherman, Wallowa and Wheeler all ranking first with 100 percent of their population rural. Multnomah County is last in that category with only 1.3 percent living in rural areas.

Migration: In terms of net migration (change in population due to people moving in or out of an area over a specific time period), Morrow County is 34th out of 36 counties with a 1.6 rating. First is Deschutes County with a 162.9 rating; last is Malheur with a -12.4 rating.

Largest Communities: Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties rank highest in the "largest communities"

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Rank	County	Amount
1	Clackamas	$1,132
1	Columbia	$1,132
1	Multnomah	$1,132
1	Washington	$1,132
1	Yamhill	$1,132
6	Hood River	$901
7	Deschutes	$806
8	Benton	$801
9	Wasco	$798
10	Lane	$727
11	Clatsop	$706
12	Josephine	$697
13	Lincoln	$695
14	Curry	$689
14	Linn	$689
16	Jackson	$676
17	Marion	$668
17	Polk	$668
19	Coos	$636
20	Tillamook	$632
21	Grant	$607
21	Jefferson	$607
21	Sherman	$607
21	Wallowa	$607
25	Harney	$586
26	Crook	$579
27	Klamath	$576
28	Umatilla	$572
29	Douglas	$571
30	Gilliam	$559
30	Union	$559
32	Lake	$539
33	Malheur	$537
33	Wheeler	$537
35	Baker	$529
36	Morrow	$524

Source: US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research, Fair Market Rents, 2018, updated annually. Released 2018.