

# Amazon still county's top taxpayer at \$9.4 million

Total county assessed valuation up 163 percent over 15 years

By David Sykes

With its string of server farms constructed in the Boardman area over the past several years, Amazon still remains Morrow County's top property taxpayer, eclipsing all others to the tune of \$9,381,154 paid this year. The next biggest payer is Avista Corp, operator of the gas-powered electrical generating plant at Boardman, which wrote a check for "only" \$3,625,850 this year.

Rounding out the county's other top tax payers are Portland General Electric at \$3.3 million, Threemile Canyon Farms at almost \$3 million, Lamb Weston food processing at the Port of Morrow paying nearly \$2 million in taxes, and Tillamook Cheese whey plant (Columbia River Processing) coming in at \$768,000. See table below for the top 20 property taxpayers in Morrow County.

The tax information was presented to the Morrow County Commissioners at their Nov. 12 meeting in a power point presentation by County Assessor Mike Gorman. "We've grown substantially in the last 15 years," Gorman told the commissioners.

Gorman also showed how the county's total assessed valuation (the values used to figure how much taxes will be paid) has increased significantly over the past 15 years from a little over one billion dollars in 2005 to over \$2.7 billion in 2020, an increase of 163 percent. The real market value, a valuation higher than assessed value, and representing a more realistic picture of the county's property worth, stands at a whopping \$6.4 billion, up 437 percent since 2005. All the increased valuation means the county now collects 126 percent more property taxes than in 2005.

The increased valuations generated over \$41.5 million in tax money for all taxing districts in the county including schools, cities, health district, county, etc., up from only \$18.4 in total taxes collected in 2005. Morrow County government received \$11 million of the total tax money this year.

Handling much of the increased tax income has been the Columbia River Enterprise Zone II, which gives tax breaks to businesses building or expanding in the zone mainly at

the Port of Morrow near Boardman. For example, Amazon will pay the CREZ II approximately \$8 million this year for its four server farms located near Boardman. The company received a 79 percent tax exemption on the server facilities, or an almost \$40 million break if it had been taxed at the full county rate. See below table for a breakdown of each server farm location and its taxes and exemption rate.

He said the only way to know what Amazon's true tax reduction percentage is, will be to wait until all the tax exemption contracts with CREZ expire and then do a final analysis.

Other businesses receiving tax breaks from the CREZ II include Lamb Weston and Columbia River Processing (Tillamook Cheese). See table below.

The Columbia River Enterprise Zone II (CREZ-II) expired in June after

and city of Boardman. The members have a wide latitude on how to spend the funds, and in the past have used four broad categories of education, housing, community enhancement and public safety on where to allocate the money. The county and the port are currently in negotiations hammering out the operating rules on a new CREZIII to take its place.

Enterprise zones are an especially important recruitment tool used by the Port of Morrow to offer tax breaks and attract new businesses into the area. The tax breaks have also been used by existing businesses for expansion at the Port, and has been used by the Morrow County Grain Growers for its rail grain car unloading facility at the Port of Morrow, for which it started receiving a \$94,969 exemption this year on a \$7 million investment.

Another tax abatement tool used in the county is the Strategic Investment Program, SIP, used mainly for the big renewable energy projects such as wind and solar coming into the county. Money collected through the SIP agreements comes through the county budgeting process, with some money divided amongst various taxing districts such as the schools, and a portion going into the county budget. For example, the first big wind project in Morrow County was Shepherd's Flat. Its 2020 SIP payment is about \$1.7 million which is divided amongst various taxing districts and the county. Shepherd's Flat receives a



"We've grown substantially," says Morrow County Assessor Mike Gorman.

\$3 million tax exemption from its SIP agreement and has six years remaining.

PGE's Carty Gas Co-Gen Plant has a SIP payment this year of \$2.3 million with about \$6.7 million in exempted tax payments. There are two other smaller energy projects, Willow Creek Energy and Echo Winds, also receiving SIP tax reductions on a smaller scale. Those SIP agreements and projects are shared with Gilliam and Umatilla counties, respectively.

With the construction of the new Wheatridge wind and solar facility now up and running, next year will see even more SIP money begin coming into the county. And development shows no sign of slowing down either. With the announcement of a planned new 5,000 acre solar facility in the county, and Amazon currently constructing a new server farm at Boardman, and making plans for smaller data facilities tucked between its existing facilities, how much more future tax money will be generated in Morrow County is at this time unknown.

OWNER NAME	TAX AMOUNT	ASSESSED VALUE	REAL MARKET VALUE
AMAZON DATA SERVICES, INC	\$9,381,154.32	\$661,869,690	\$3,471,764,810
AVISTA CORPORATION	\$3,625,850.32	\$208,550,000	\$208,550,000
PORTLAND GENERAL ELECTRIC CO	\$3,330,250.55	\$220,435,180	\$726,272,000
THREEMILE CANYON FARMS, LLC	\$2,952,009.48	\$220,618,821	\$272,083,022
LAMB WESTON, INC	\$1,911,821.88	\$117,665,580	\$384,033,840
GAS TRANSMISSION NORTHWEST CORP	\$1,327,472.60	\$94,959,000	\$94,959,000
COLUMBIA RIVER PROCESSING, INC	\$768,005.43	\$53,945,490	\$54,035,460
PORT OF MORROW	\$539,180.00	\$35,825,310	\$38,210,680
RDO/CALBEE FOODS LLC	\$434,412.73	\$30,657,000	\$30,657,000
UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD CO	\$378,061.41	\$27,069,290	\$88,707,544
PACIFIC ETHANOL COLUMBIA, LLC	\$372,388.21	\$26,279,860	\$26,279,860
CENTURYLINK PROPERTY TAX	\$370,324.87	\$24,065,000	\$24,065,000
FARMLAND RESERVE, INC	\$355,779.65	\$25,567,914	\$48,004,354
OREGON POTATO COMPANY	\$298,086.78	\$17,412,186	\$17,808,267
PORT VIEW APARTMENTS, LLC	\$270,127.94	\$14,445,660	\$15,779,260
WILLOW CREEK ENERGY LLC	\$228,759.12	\$15,870,840	\$43,750,000
EASTERDAY FARMS DAIRY LLC	\$201,900.25	\$15,201,684	\$15,484,248
PACIFICORP (PPGL)	\$199,739.88	\$15,084,000	\$15,084,000
CLEAVER LAND, LLC	\$188,827.22	\$13,494,291	\$16,316,631
ECHO PROJECT	\$167,132.75	\$12,830,410	\$22,787,000

Above are the top 20 taxpayers in the county.

Amazon Site	EZ Payment	Exempt Tax	% Exempt
L&C I	\$1,289,140.47	\$13,742,340.41	91%
Rippee Rd	\$950,024.93	\$15,863,835.15	94%
L&C II	\$3,380,327.50	\$8,283,908.35	59%
Olson Rd	\$2,484,817.50	\$1,568,492.80	-58%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$8,104,310.40</b>	<b>\$39,458,576.71</b>	<b>79%</b>

Above is the amount of tax money each Amazon server facility pays this year and how much the company is exempted from paying

Gorman cautioned against picking the 79 percent tax exemption out as the permanent Amazon tax reduction rate. This year's exemption will not remain the same over the years, Gorman said, explaining that the reduction rate varies from year to year with some years the company paying more than the regular tax rate at one of its facilities.

a 10-year run. However, it will continue to generate millions of tax collection dollars, and tax exemptions too, into the future from agreements already in place. How the CREZII millions have, and will continue to be spent around the county, is decided by a six-member board made up of two representatives each from the port, county

Columbia River Technologies	EZ Payment	Exempt Tax	% Exempt
	\$483,495.50	\$1,041,767.20	54%

Lamb Weston	EZ Payment	Exempt Tax	% Exempt
	\$1,087,399.43	\$2,963,822.00	63%

Enterprise zone payments from Tillamook Cheese (Columbia River Technologies) and Boardman food processor Lamb Weston

## Instead of program, students send cards to local veterans

Because of the COVID restrictions against gatherings and holding classes, Heppner High School did not hold its annual Veterans Day Program this year.

For many years the students and staff would invite local veterans up to the school to first go into the classrooms and speak to the students about their experiences in the military, then to a program in the gym with speakers and a slide show of all the veteran's pictures. Students would sing patriotic songs, and taps would be played before the veter-

ans were treated to a lunch in the school cafeteria. The program is always extremely popular and anticipated by local veterans.

This year because of COVID the program was cancelled, however students did the next best thing and sent veterans a personal card with a handwritten message thanking them for their service. "That was very nice of them," one local veteran said about his card. "I missed the program but was very happy to get my card," he added.

## Sheriff's Report

The Morrow County Sheriff's Office has released the following information:

**August 28 (cont.):** Morrow County Sheriff's Office received a report at Boardman Select Market on Main St S, Boardman of a 36yo male unresponsive, foaming at the mouth. Patient transported to GSH.

-MCSO received a report on I 84 E, Boardman of a ladder in the middle of the road.

-MCSO received a report at Irrigon Skate Park on NE Main Ave, Irrigon that a husky is running around. Owner was located and dog was returned.

-MCSO received a report at Heppner Shell Station on N Main St, Heppner that a male subject is causing issues and needs to be trespassed.

-MCSO received a report at Willow Creek Campground on Willow Creek Rd, Heppner that gold SUV is driving the road behind his house server times going really fast. Deputy made contact with the driver and he will slow his vehicle.

-MCSO received a report on I 84 E, Boardman that a red SUV is unable to maintain lane. Afraid to pass.

-MCSO received a report on Kunze Ln, Boardman of loud music a couple blocks away. Deputy made contact with residence with the music and advised them to turn it down.

**August 29:** Morrow County Sheriff's Office received a report on I 84 W, Boardman of tire debris on the roadway. Hazard was removed.

-MCSO received a report on Gale St, Heppner that last night he had cans stolen.

-MCSO received a report on I 84 E, Boardman of a grey Toyota Tacoma all over the road. Referred to other agency.

-MCSO received a report on Hwy 207 Echo, Lexington that a motorcyclist went off the road. They are somewhat blocking. Patient refusal.

-MCSO received a report on Hwy 207 Echo, Lexington that there is a large piece of metal blowing on the road. RP is worried that it will hit a car or cause an accident.

-MCSO received a report on SE Utah Ave, Irrigon that a dark grey Jeep

Cherokee sped towards Tenth. Unable to locate.

-MCSO received a report on Hwy 207 Spray, Heppner that there is a male on the side of the road, not vehicle around. RP found this suspicious. Cancelled, male was ok.

-MCSO received a report on SE Utah Ave, Irrigon that a two-door dark green Lexus is driving fast up and down Utah, doing California stops at the stop signs. Unable to locate.

-MCSO received a report that Patrick Wayne Tedrick was arrested by UPD on MC warrant.

-MCSO received a report on SW Second St, Irrigon that there was a dog fight in her yard. Her dog is mildly injured and the other dog is seriously injured.

Continued on page five...

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