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Search for health provider reaches dead end, says MCHD CEO

Ryan Fowler, Morrow County Health District CEO, told the MCHD board in a memo prior to the regular board meeting Monday night in Lexington, that the search for an additional full-time provider for the district has reached a dead end. "Unfortunately at this time we have no providers in the pipeline," said Fowler.

"The few that we had have opted out regarding concerns about the remoteness of the community, limited medical staff support or focusing their search geographically in areas that do not include our community." "We continue to work with Pacific Companies and multiple contingency firms to complete this search," he added. Fowler was not present at the Monday night meeting.

It was earlier reported that Dr. Emily Jack (Thompson) has officially signed on as a physician for the district beginning in September of 2022.

Concerning recent personnel issues, following a lengthy executive session, the board approved a motion to "direct our compliance officer to move forward in the process regarding personnel matters." The specific personnel issues were not discussed outside executive session.

In other personnel matters, the district has hired Kathleen Greenup, R.N., Heppner, as chief nursing officer to replace Jamie Houck, R.N., CNO, who has accepted the position of informatics analyst with the district via telecommunication. Houck has resigned as CNO and will be moving out of the district.

One registered nurse, Sean Adrasik, started full time with Pioneer Memorial Hospital on March 17 and another R.N., Shanana Carter, will start full-time in July. Two other R.N.s, Jennifer Nobles and Kimberly Steele, have joined the nursing staff as per diem nurses. Other new

hires include Michael Metzler, MD, a temporary emergency room technician, Mary Duchek, a lab tech, and Mark Kerns, a radiology tech who will provide Xray and Ultrasound services at the Irrigon Medical Clinic, in addition to providing Ultrasound services at PMH one day a week and filling in there as needed.

In other personnel moves, Donna Sherman has been promoted to the general laboratory manager and Cynthia Johnson, was hired as the dietary director at PMH. Several people, Barb Coiner, Mindy Coster, Lori Jones, Laura Huizar, Jazmin Haak and Jennier Ohlde, have all passed their CNA-2 class, "which will allow them to have a larger scope of practice."

Houck told the board that as of April 16, 3,596 Morrow county residents have been vaccinated against COVID 19, with 2,855 fully vaccinated and 741 who have received the first dose of a two-dose series. She said that "MCHD PPE (personal protective equipment) and testing supplies remain adequate." The board learned that Pioneer Memorial Hospital will participate in a "simulation resource team development event" which is a live hands-one trauma training event May 17-19. With this event, MCHD will team with the Morrow County Sheriff's Office, Emergency Services, hospital staff and Life Flight to "work through a trauma scenario as a team from start to finish."

In other business, the board:

- established an 11-step physician assistant pay scale as follows for clinics only, based on years in the profession, from \$48 an hour for zero years in the profession to \$58 an hour for 20 years in the profession.

- earlier received communication from Rusty Estes with EMS of his "frustration with the ongoing challenges in regards to the ambulance service area and challenges presented by the Boardman Rural Fire and Rescue."



Kathleen Greenup, RN



Jamie Houck, RN

- approved the purchase of a flexible nasopharyngoscope, a scope for examining the nasal and throat passages for \$28,750.

- approved the expenditure of \$12,945 for the removal of a heat pump and air handler at the Boardman Clinic and installation of a new heat pump and air handler for Thews Sheet Metal-Heating, Air & Mechanical

- received the following profit and loss statement for March from Chief Financial Officer Nicole Mahoney: gross patient revenue-\$1,278,369, \$83,904 in revenue deductions, \$185,460 in tax revenue and \$14,607 in other operating revenue for \$1,394,532 in total operating revenue; \$1,361,998 in total operating expenses and a \$41,203 non-operating gain for a \$73,737 gain for the month and a \$201,643 average monthly year-to-date gain.

- Mahoney earlier reported that the district is overall "financially stable for the year, largely due to the influx of COVID money from the CARES act."

- received input from Kris Jones, chief operating officer, that Centriq, the district's current computer system, is being phased out and the district will likely be moved to an updated version, CPSI Thrive, in the fall of 2022. The district is also examining alternatives.

- approved policy on Compliance Program Oversight and Oregon Consumer Information Protection Act Compliance.

- received the following Pioneer Memorial Hospital statistics: five in-patient admissions in March, six swing bed admissions, seven admissions for observation, 765 out-patient admissions, 73 emergency room encounters, 2,014 lab tests, 111 x-ray/ultrasound tests, 36 CT scans, five MRI scans, 21 EKG tests, two lower endoscopy procedures, 45 respiratory therapy encounters.

- received the following clinic reports: Pioneer Memorial Clinic in Heppner-436 patient visits with five new patients, 28 seen by a nurse, 16 no-shows and 29 cancellations; Irrigon Medical Clinic-460 patient visits with 14 new patients; Ione Community Clinic-57 patient visits, 27 seen by a nurse and zero no-shows.

- received the following reports: Home Health-206 patient visits; Hospice-three admissions, two deaths; Pharmacy-2,366 drug doses for \$89,184 in revenue.

- received the following ambulance reports: Heppner-25 total page outs with 18 transports for \$26,891 in revenue; Boardman-44 page-outs with 27 transports for \$53,307 in revenue; Irrigon-44 page-outs with 23 transports for \$38,152 in revenue; Ione-no transports; four life flights.

Weiss POM Commissioner candidate



Rick Weiss

Rick Weiss is a candidate for the Port of Morrow Commission, Position #3. He is the pastor of the First Baptist Church in Boardman.

Rick, his wife, Shara, and their three children moved to Boardman in November of 2019 from Gresham, Oregon. In addition to their work for the church, Rick and Shara have been freelance internet specialists. Rick does web development and Shara has done social media marketing. Both have spent most of their lives in Oregon but met in Arizona.

Rick is a graduate of Arizona State University with a degree in political science. While at ASU he served as student body president, activities vice-president and as a student senator. He received his master's at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. For several years he also worked in public policy as a part of a lobbying group for state and county issues in the greater Phoenix area. Serving the community is considered a significant part of how Rick sees his work. Shara and Rick were fully involved in getting the Boardman Food Pantry started at the beginning of the pandemic lockdowns. They spent hours each day (sometimes seven days a week), delivering boxes of food, gathering donated items and organizing volunteers. They continue to serve on the Pantry Board and volunteer each Monday morning. Shara is the communications director for the Pantry. Rick also serves on the Board of the Boardman Senior Center. "My primary reason for running is to continue to seek ways in which I can serve the community. The Port of Morrow makes such an impact on the whole community, it seemed right to want to be a part of the process of advancing the great work that the POM does," Rick said.

Since deciding to run, Pastor Weiss has also "realized how important it would be for a commissioner like him to be a part of the board." He recognizes that the commission makes decisions that impact the Port as well as businesses within the county. "When the

commissioners are also business owners, the potential for conflicts of interest are always present. Even though they regularly recuse themselves when votes are taken the potential for conflict is still present," says Weiss. "Most of the hard work of negotiating and planning is done before the vote is taken at the board meeting. If the commissioner is involved in that early process, the potential for conflict is still present," says Weiss. "While I don't know that this has been the case, it seems wise for the commission to have people on the board who are without potential conflict of interest."

Another concern that Weiss recognizes is how communication is made with the community when there is a potential impact on the property of those not involved in the Port. He says that there appear to be some decisions made that affect neighboring properties, but the property owners are not aware of the changes until decisions have already been made.

For example, if a person invests significant funds into their property, not knowing POM plans will affect the value of their property, it seems like a very unfortunate chain of events. The Port keeps those decisions private until the deal is done. "Something needs to be done to protect the interests of affected neighbors."

"One way of doing this, and a way it can be done before negotiations require privacy, is to let the public know what the long-term plans are for a POM property. Even if the Commission is only at the initial stage of planning, it would help the trust level of the POM with the community if these potential plans are discussed and made known," he says.

One of the requirements of the POM Commissioner is to seek public opinion in order to serve the entire citizenship of the district." Weiss says he has not observed that this is being done effectively. "Our role is not only to advance the Port's development. The role of the POM is to enhance the entire district seeking ways to build economic development and quality of life throughout the area we cover." Weiss says it is important to develop a broad focus when looking at each potential new business. "The issues are more than what a particular business brings to the table, but how that business relates to the overall plan for the region and how it impacts other businesses and the quality of life for Morrow County citizens."

Port candidates discuss issues at forum

Topics include cooperation, transparency and Port accomplishments

By David Sykes

Candidates for the upcoming Port of Morrow Commission election attended a candidates' forum last week and expressed their opinions on a wide range of issues from perceived secrecy at the Port, to better cooperation and communication with the public.

The forum was sponsored by the Heppner Chamber of Commerce and was broadcast live over facebook. Five of the seven candidates for open Port positions participated in the forum. Running for position one are Jonathan Tallman, Rick Stokoe and John Kilkenny; for position two is Joe Taylor who is unopposed and did not attend the forum; and position three are Rick Weiss,

Jerry Healy and Chandler Schaak. Schaak also did not attend the forum.

Local attorney Bill Kuhn moderated the forum and read a series of questions which the candidates answered. Following are the questions and the candidate answers:

Question: What was the primary reason you are running for port commissioner and if elected what will be your first priority?

John Kilkenny: I like the growth and diversification at the port area, but the port could do a better job with the other government agencies." The county and cities must work together. Sometimes I think the port does things among themselves and doesn't involve the other people. I have an

issue about Army Depot and CDA (Columbia Development Authority) decision to turn the land over to the Port. They made the decision so quickly without involving the other people at all. That is not how I like to see things done.

Rick Stokoe: I am running again.(he is an incumbent) to give public service and get outside the law enforcement community (he is the Boardman Chief of Police). I want to give back in other ways. There is a lot to learn with infrastructure and transportation.

Jonathan Tallman: There is conflict of interest on the Port. This has to be exposed and addressed. There is also a housing shortage in Boardman. There needs

to be affordable housing not \$300 to \$400 thousand homes. There was a water bond passed (by the city

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