



the HEPPNER GAZETTE TIMES

50¢
VOL. 140 NO. 30 8 Pages Wednesday, July 28, 2021 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

Heppner seniors chosen to play in East West Shrine game



Jackson Lehman



Blake Wolters



Pictured (L-R): Jackson Lehman, Coach Greg Grant, Blake Wolters and Jayden Wilson. -Contributed photos.



Jayden Wilson

in the East-West Shrine All-Star football game to be held in Baker City on August 7. The three Heppner High School seniors were honored by the Shriners at a recent event.

Jayden Wilson will be sporting the #13 during the game. Jackson Lehman will be #15 and Blake Wolters #26. All of the boys will be playing for the East team. The game features senior football players from the

1A to 4A high schools in the state. Coaches chosen are Vic Lease, Mazama; Josh Gary, Sutherlin; Jake Cochran, Coquille and Mike Baleztena, Pilot Rock.

The 69th edition of the All-Star game will begin with pre-game pageantry

at 6 p.m. and the game kick-off following at 7 p.m. on August 7 at the Baker Bulldog Stadium in Baker City. Though the West won the last game 43-10 in 2019, the East leads the series 33-31-3.

Wheat yields well below county average



A combine is busy harvesting the wheat in Morrow County.

By Bobbi Gordon

Winter wheat yields were well-below the county average due to unusually dry conditions during the previous two years, according to Larry Lutchter from the OSU Extension Service. "Yields ranged from 10 to 23 bushels per acre, depending on location and were 10 to 15 bushels per acre in many fields," Lutchter told the Gazette.

"Spring wheat yields were ridiculously low," he continued. "Grain test weights were 'all over the board.' Weights tended to be low in most areas, and some varieties of wheat 'weighed-up' at less than 57 pounds per bushel. Grain protein content varied from 12.5 to 13.5 percent."

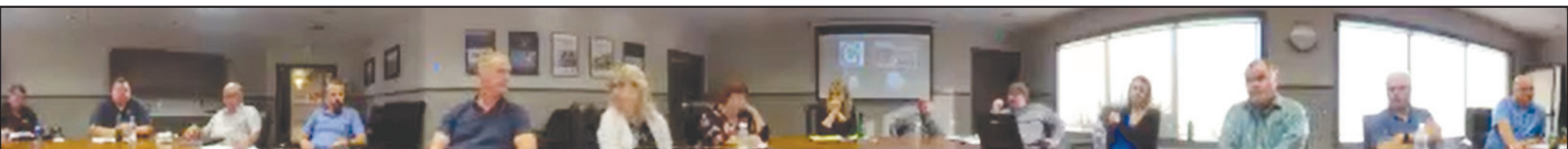
Kevin Gray, general manager for Morrow County Grain Growers, told the Gazette that they are estimating harvest at about 75 percent complete right now. He reported, "With the extended drought this year, dryland wheat yields are down considerably from previous years and are showing some large variability, but 20-30 BPA seems to be catching a lot of it. Test weights have been

better than expected. As expected in a drought year soft white wheat proteins are also higher than normal. This year is a testament to our great farmers that we're producing a crop of this size and quality, considering how little moisture Mother Nature provided us this year."

"It's an exceptionally dry year," continued Lutchter, adding, "It is too late for most of the wheat in Morrow County." He indicated the crop-year precipitation in Morrow County ranges from roughly four to six inches this year, which is about half of the region's long-term average.

According to a press release from the USDA, combined winter wheat production for Idaho, Oregon and Washington is down 26 percent from 2020. Oregon winter wheat production is forecast at 33.4 million bushels, down 5 percent from last month and down 28 percent from last year. Harvested area, at 695,000 acres, is down 30,000 acres from 2020. Yield is expected to be 48 bushels per acre, down 16 bushels from the previous year.

Control of 1,872 acres new industrial land topic of joint port-county meeting



Members of the Port and the County Commission along with their staff, gathered for a joint meeting last week to discuss the future of economic development in Morrow County.

Army depot could finally change hands

By David Sykes

After 30 years of discussion and negotiations, the federal government may finally give up ownership of the former Umatilla Army Depot located along the Columbia River at the Morrow-Umatilla County line.

In preparation for the change, the Port of Morrow and Morrow County held a two-hour joint meeting last week discussing the future of the 1,872-acre parcel, and more importantly who will own and control this valuable piece of industrial land.

There has been friction between the port and county over the parcel, which may change hands as early as January. The Port of Morrow had been working for many years under the assumption, based on a verbal agreement with past county commissioners, that it would own and control the land. However, two of the three county commissioners say ownership was never officially decided, and they should have a say in future use of the property.

"We are getting close to the transfer of this property and there has been a lot of history on this whole

thing," Port Manager Ryan Neal said in addressing the group at the opening of the meeting. "We want to make sure we are all on the same page developing this into the future." Neal said the Port has already invested close to \$3.5 million in preparation of taking ownership and developing the property and that the port "just needs to have some assurances we have a similar vision (as the county) moving forward on development to make sure we are spending these dollars wisely." Neal added that property access and future infrastructure development to prepare the property for industrial development was the main reason for the meeting, and he welcomed the opportunity to open the conversation and have these discussions. "It's a great asset for Morrow County," Neal said of the industrial land. In making the case for Port ownership and development of the property Port Commissioner Jerry Healy also pointed out that the port has spent \$2.5 to \$3 million of "hard cash" to date on the depot industrial land prior to the port taking ownership.

Some on the county commission, however, were not ready to let the Port have total say on future property usage. "This world looks a lot different now than it did 30 years ago," said Commissioner Jim Doherty, who said 30 years ago there was just sage brush and nothing else on other now developed port property. He repeated a recent theme saying the port may have brought in

too much business and now Morrow County has "outrun our workforce." He said, as an example, the port currently has a company wanting to locate here that needs 150 employees, and the county doesn't have housing available for them. "A notion that this is always the way it was headed (with the port owning and developing the property), I have to look for what I see as best for all the constituents in the county," Doherty said. He said the port has the largest amount of industrial land now in Oregon and wondered if more was needed.

The port has attracted a number of Amazon server farms to the area, and Doherty questioned if more of them were needed in Morrow County. "Is there a value that we need to partner with you to make sure what we get out of it?" he asked. "Maybe the value is to just hand it over for development. Maybe the value is a 100 more widget factories or a dozen widget factories. We have already outgrown the widget workers. Maybe there is a better use. I have not dug my heels in and said you guys aren't the best ones to develop it, because you have the resources. We need to have discussions," Doherty said.

Port commissioner Marv Padberg wanted to know if the county wanted input as to what businesses the port sites on the new industrial land. "You think the county wants a say on what industry we site out there?" Padberg asked. "I don't want to say you can site whatever. I think siting something here and



Morrow County could soon gain over 1,800 acres of new industrial zoned property from the former Umatilla Army Depot.

giving them an 85 percent tax break when we can't fill those jobs, maybe we need to pump the brakes a little bit. I have no interest in telling you what to site," Doherty said in mentioning the tax breaks given to Amazon by the Columbia River Enterprise Zone for building new server farms here. "People are assuming that the port is going to develop it, and this is not settled," Doherty said. "And to hear that is a little bit grating. I am willing to sit down and

have these discussions, but it has to be something that is fair for everybody and makes sense for everybody. I'm wanting to do what is best but in 30 years the port has had their vision headed that way and a bit of tunnel vision and maybe we should think outside the box and do something different."

Padberg said he didn't agree. "I disagree with your thought process on jobs. You build it and they will come. It works. With 500

homes that have been built here lots of folks coming here to work," Padberg pointed out of the port's success in creating jobs. "Once you take the \$300 a week payment away (unemployment) you are going to find a lot more employees wanting to come back to work. It is not doom and gloom as you put it," he told Doherty.

Port member Joe Taylor said the job shortage is

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