



the HEPPNER GAZETTE TIMES

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Morrow County plans new tourism promotion effort

Umatilla coordinator Karie Walchli would head up project

By David Sykes

Morrow County could soon have a new tourism person, after commissioners voted last week to seek a contract with Karie Walchli to head up the new project. Walchli has been the Umatilla County Tourism Coordinator for the past 13 years and would, under the proposed Morrow County agreement, create an overall plan for the county's tourism promotion, develop social media and other advertising and marketing material and work with the local chambers of commerce promoting tourism. If an agreement is reached Walchli will not be an employee of the county, but an independent contractor with a budget expected to be in the \$50,000 per year range.

In a proposal letter Walchli said her tourism experience in Umatilla County would help her "contribute to the development and growth of tourism in the Morrow County area." She said during her 13 years in a similar position in Umatilla County, she has developed skills and "worked to assist communities, events, attractions and producers in promoting and developing tourism, and contributing to the economic impact of the area." Walchli said her being a "long-time eastern Oregon resident" is a plus for the job. She said tourism can have a great impact on the economy of local communities.

Hiring Walchli also came with strong recommendations from those who know her. "Hiring Karie for Morrow County tourism development will allow you to have someone literally hit the ground running. Because of her experience with Umatilla County, doing similar work

for Morrow County makes sense," said Susan Bower, president of Eastern Oregon Business Source. "Tourism is a regional effort and having one person with a multi-county focus is an excellent idea that will undoubtedly yield positive results," Bower added. Walchli also received praise from Janet Dodson, an agritourism specialist from North Powder.

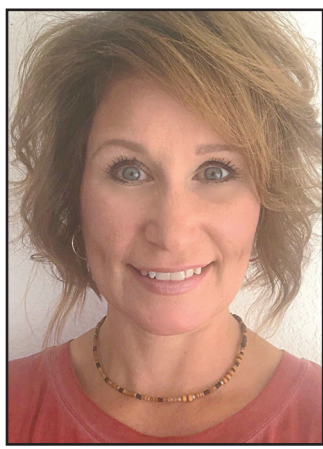
The commissioner's action last week was only "an intent to award" and a finalized contract with Walchli, who lives in Stanfield, has yet to be signed. She told the Gazette-Times Tuesday she was looking forward to helping Morrow County with its tourism projects and moving forward with community insights.

Youth elk hunt

In other business at their October 20 meeting the commissioners voted to award youth spike elk hunts to seven young people. The hunt is an annual event held at the county-owned Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) park during the second season in the mountains south of Heppner.

This year's recipients of the hunt are Preslie Bowles of Irrigon, Riley Gregg of John Day, Radley Griggs of Boardman, Jacob and Ryan Haugen of Heppner and Katie Spivey and Jasper Hardy of Ione. The hunt is reserved for Morrow and Grant County youth as the OHV park straddles the two counties.

In other action the commissioners voted to purchase a Bobcat mini excavator for use at the parks at a price of \$48,423. Money for the purchase came from a \$60,000 grant from Oregon state parks, so there was no cost to the



Karie Walchli Tourism expert

county.

Compensation board appointments

The commission voted to appoint two people to the county compensation board. The compensation board is made up of volunteers from around the county who make recommendations yearly to the budget committee and commissioners on pay and salary rates for county employees and elected officials.

Two people applied for the vacant positions. Eileen Hendricks submitted interest in serving for another four-year term. She is currently the chief financial officer for the Port of Morrow and has been for almost 24 years. She is also a licensed certified public accountant and municipal auditor with 12 years in public practice. Hendricks stated she wanted to continue to serve on the compensation board because "she has an interest in helping to maintain fair and equitable pay in Morrow County." Also applying was Kalie Davis. Davis is the director of Workforce Development at the Port of Morrow. She also serves as the board treasurer for Umatilla Morrow County Head Start and is a member of the Eastern Oregon Workforce Board Grant Committee. Davis

said she would like to serve on the compensation board to help "ensure Morrow County elected officials are compensated fairly for the work that they do." The commissioners voted unanimously to appoint both people.

Vaccine mandates and exemptions

In other business the commissioners heard a report from County Emergency Manager Paul Gray who said the discussion the past week has mostly been around vaccine mandates and how the county will deal with them.

One area of concern discussed was the possible use of the religious exemption that can be used by employees to not get the mandated COVID-19 vaccination and still keep their employment with the county. Commissioner Don Russell said he wanted to see a defined set of rules about the religious exemption be used instead of opinions from county officials. "It needs to be an independent team and can't be left to opinion on who gets the exemption," Russell said. His concern was to insulate the county from possible legal action from people claiming the exemption and then being denied and fired from their job. "We need to insulate Morrow County, because there will be lawsuits," Russell said, and didn't want the commissioners or the county department heads making the call on the exemption. He pointed to the recent firing of the Washington State head football coach and four of his staff who claimed religious exemptions but were denied, and then fired

-See COUNTY TOURISM/PAGE SIX

Petal it forward event held



The Heppner High School Ag leadership group (pictured left to right): Beth Dickenson, Daralynn Teeman, Caden George and Hailey Cunningham passed out the flowers to people on the street. -Contributed photos.

The Country Rose flower shop in Heppner participated in an event called Petal it Forward last week. The nationwide event was started six years ago by the Society of American Florists and has since become an annual event to show others joy and love and bring smiles to their faces. Cynthia Wenberg, florist for the Country Rose, organized the event by putting together over 200

bundles of flowers. "The idea is to give a person two bundles and they keep one for themselves and share the other one with someone else. They are then asked to share online with the hashtag #petalitiforward," she told the Gazette.

Beth Dickenson's leadership group, Murray's staff and other community members volunteered to share the flowers on the streets of Heppner.



Country Rose and volunteers participated in the Petal it Forward event last week. -Contributed photos.

Deer and cat get acquainted



This photo of a deer and cat visiting each other was submitted by one of our readers. Photos may be submitted to the Gazette by emailing to editor@rapidsolve.net or uploading to the website Heppner.net. -Contributed photo.

Broadband town hall scheduled

The Morrow County broadband action team will host their second of three broadband community town halls at the Gilliam Bisbee Building on November 10 at the Gilliam and Bisbee Building in Heppner from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

The meeting will include a brief presentation from Aaron Moss, an American Connection Project fellow serving in the county to support the Broadband Action Team, and information about internet service providers and their work in

the area. There will also be a question and answer period to address community concerns and comments about internet and the work of the Broadband Action Team. Everyone is welcome to attend and participate in the discussion and a diversity of backgrounds, viewpoints and perspectives are encouraged.

"While having internet access can be a double-edged sword, it is increasingly important that people are equipped with the tools they need to be successful in the modern world. Resources that may assist community members will be made available,

including information on existing programs to help pay for internet, improve online security, access telehealth services, pursue virtual education and build professional skills," Moss reported.

Morrow County's Broadband Action Team is composed of internet

service providers, community stakeholders and local government officials. The main purposes of the group include expanding internet infrastructure to those who are unserved or underserved throughout the county, connecting community members with existing financial resources to help

with the cost of internet service, improving digital skills among citizens and helping provide the digital tools that Morrow County residents need to be successful in a modern world.

For additional information, contact Aaron Moss at 541-676-5664 or amoss@co.morrow.or.us.

~ 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@rapidsolve.net, upload to Heppner.net or text to 541-980-6674.



Morgan Cutsforth shot this buck at 40 yards.



Paisley Cutsforth, 9, took this buck with her first shot.

Parents of both girls are Stanley and Pamela Cutsforth, and grandparents are Curtis and Kathy Cutsforth.

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