



the HEPPNER GAZETTE TIMES



G-T closed for Thanksgiving

The Heppner Gazette-Times will be closed for the Thanksgiving holiday on Thursday and Friday, November 25 and 26. Normal business hours will resume Monday, November 29. The G-T wishes everyone a happy and safe Thanksgiving weekend.



Pictured are a couple of the large Amazon Web Services data centers at Boardman.

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Amazon still top county taxpayer

Data centers bring in \$11.4 million

Morrow County 2021 TOP 20 Tax Payors			
OWNER NAME	TAX AMOUNT	ASSESSED VALUE	REAL MARKET VALUE
AMAZON DATA SERVICES, INC	\$11,476,340.70	\$857,928,370	\$4,425,438,900
AVISTA CORPORATION	\$3,726,003.45	\$208,351,000	\$208,351,000
THREEMILE CANYON FARMS, LLC	\$2,857,266.26	\$224,326,566	\$271,611,248
LAMB WESTON, INC	\$2,153,723.36	\$120,402,530	\$120,449,370
PORTLAND GENERAL ELECTRIC CO	\$1,987,440.78	\$119,822,730	\$729,200,000
GAS TRANSMISSION NORTHWEST CORP	\$1,642,668.57	\$112,982,000	\$112,982,000
COLUMBIA RIVER PROCESSING, INC	\$692,871.89	\$51,565,300	\$51,631,740
PORT OF MORROW	\$480,828.22	\$32,161,542	\$37,797,791
PORT VIEW APARTMENTS, LLC	\$436,858.34	\$23,307,340	\$24,808,880
UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD CO	\$370,804.44	\$28,214,290	\$103,394,814
FARMLAND RESERVE, INC	\$352,562.91	\$26,678,765	\$48,450,647
ALTO COLUMBIA, LLC	\$339,348.84	\$25,420,530	\$25,420,530
RDO/CALBEE FOODS LLC	\$337,571.25	\$25,287,370	\$25,287,370
LUMEN TECHNOLOGIES INC	\$335,125.57	\$22,133,000	\$22,133,000
OREGON POTATO COMPANY	\$302,299.27	\$17,262,414	\$17,649,948
WILLOW CREEK ENERGY LLC	\$258,382.67	\$16,519,680	\$42,310,000
ORCHARD WIND PROJECT	\$250,282.28	\$20,255,300	\$61,710,100
PACIFICORP (PP&L)	\$206,567.24	\$15,855,000	\$15,855,000
EASTERDAY DAIRY, LLC	\$191,805.15	\$15,220,370	\$15,514,952
CLEAVER LAND, LLC	\$179,844.43	\$13,785,772	\$16,387,737

Table shows top 20 tax payors in the county for 2121.

By David Sykes

Amazon, with its four big data centers at Boardman, is still by far the number one taxpayer in Morrow County, Assessor Mike Gorman told the county commission recently. Even though the company gets generous property tax breaks, they still racked up over \$11.4 million in payments this year. Last year they were also number one, paying over \$9.3 million. A distant second is Avista Corporation, operator of a gas-fired power plant at the Port of Morrow, coming in at \$3.7 million.

Providing the commissioners with his annual state of taxation and assessment, Gorman gave a detailed report of where the county's valuation is centered, who gets the tax breaks, and which companies are paying the most money (see table).

He said total taxable property valuation in the county, which determines how much tax money can be collected, is "moving up" and got "very close" to three billion dollars this year. "We were just \$65 million short," he told the commissioners. This increase valuation produced a total \$43.7 million in collectible taxes, or \$2.12 million more than last year.

Comparing this to 16 years ago in 2005, there has been a 181 percent increase in taxable valuation, producing a 138 percent increase in property taxes collected in the county (See

table). Along with those biggest ever tax numbers, the county once again also handed out record amounts of tax exemptions. Between the two major tax break programs, SIP and EZ, over \$69.2 million in tax breaks were given out to 12 county businesses. Under the SIP, or Strategic Investment Program, the big green-energy and gas generating businesses in the county such as the new Wheatridge wind and solar project, and the older PGE gas fired electric generating facility, got over \$15.9 million in tax breaks, while Amazon and other business like some of the food processing plants, received the more familiar enterprise zone, EZ, tax breaks totaling \$53.3 million.

On the residential home front, Gorman said he was surprised by the amount of new construction in the county, mainly in the north end. "In the north end, Boardman and Irrigon area, there was over 100 new houses built last year," he said. "That was just astonishing to me." And while residential taxation is a small amount of taxes compared to overall county taxation, he pointed out how important these residential valuations are to those communities where the houses are built.

Gorman said with an average valuation of \$250,000 for each new home, it added approximately \$25 million in valuation to the county.

"While on a total county valuation of \$2.9 billion that isn't really a lot, it is still significant and means greater revenue for those communities," Gorman said. He added that "in the whole scheme of things in the county, the industrial developments and exemptions (which have attracted the new businesses) is what is contributing to our large increase in taxable value."

About the tax breaks Gorman pointed out that if you add the SIP and the EZ tax breaks together, Morrow County is now giving out more in tax breaks than it is collecting in tax money. "I'm not saying that is good or bad, I'm just saying that's what we are hearing," he said.

Gorman warned however, against taking a particular company and looking at its one year's worth of tax breaks and comparing that against other business breaks in the county. The structure of each company's tax deal can be different, and those deals can be complex. He urged instead doing an analysis of each business's total tax payments at the end of their exemption period to get a better picture of how the tax exemption program is working.

As an example of the complexity of the tax deals, businesses that are in the EZ will make their yearly large tax payments to the Columbia River Enterprise Zone, and then also pay, not only for existing bonded

debt in a certain tax district, but also any new bond levies enacted by voters in those districts. Gorman said one of the enterprise zone's bigger businesses, food processor Lamb Weston, was caught off guard by the bond payment requirement. He said Lamb Weston is in year eight of a 15-year (tax) exemption agreement, and subject to paying for bonding within

Morrow County Values and Taxes 2005-Current			
Year	RMV	AV	Certified Tax
2005	\$1,194,131,070	\$1,045,445,870	\$18,375,748.68
2006	\$1,191,675,810	\$1,052,738,820	\$18,410,608.39
2007	\$1,292,027,940	\$1,138,389,150	\$17,147,138.66
2008	\$1,403,128,150	\$1,139,826,720	\$17,424,826.43
2009	\$1,604,931,230	\$1,325,481,330	\$21,077,676.99
2010	\$1,680,530,420	\$1,332,613,790	\$22,149,930.94
2011	\$1,772,714,520	\$1,423,029,720	\$23,349,456.96
2012	\$2,137,135,852	\$1,572,094,739	\$25,656,346.54
2013	\$2,877,019,573	\$1,682,426,033	\$27,133,187.16
2014	\$3,089,994,545	\$1,774,504,324	\$27,839,804.90
2015	\$3,625,832,410	\$2,043,538,478	\$32,228,046.43
2016	\$4,078,799,116	\$2,256,129,368	\$32,711,386.09
2017	\$4,700,766,633	\$2,069,395,917	\$31,885,372.64
2018	\$5,114,350,191	\$2,248,142,683	\$35,192,765.05
2019	\$5,786,369,143	\$2,470,622,726	\$37,334,205.53
2020	\$6,414,500,000	\$2,752,050,000	\$39,558,815.40
2021	\$8,128,742,740	\$2,935,993,206	\$43,706,964.97
Percentage of Increase			
	581%	181%	138%

Table displays increases in valuation of properties in the county for the past 16 years.

Concrete almost complete



The red concrete stamping being done in Heppner should be completed this week. Although previously reported the work would not be done until spring, time and weather have allowed the workers to finish it sooner. According to Heppner's city manager, they did not want to leave the open spaces if it was not necessary, and it was better to get it done now rather than having to dig out the fill later. -Photo by Giselle Moses.

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