



the HEPPNER GAZETTE TIMES

50¢

VOL. 140 NO. 48 8 Pages Wednesday, December 1, 2021 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

Heppner dominates all-conference team



Above: Brock Hisler (32), Jace Coe (20), Kason Cimmiyotti (18) and Conor Brosnan (56) were chosen for first-team on both sides of the ball.

Below: Blane Mahoney (45) and Toby Nation (72) were also chosen for first-team. -Photos by Damon Brosnan.

Heppner, the Blue Mountain Conference champion, had six players chosen to the all-conference first team. The Mustangs dominated the team, with 12 players chosen by the conference coaches. Four of those players earned first-team honors on both sides of the ball.

Brock Hisler, a Mustang linebacker/running back, was a first-team selection on both sides of the ball along with Jace Coe, defensive back/receiver, Kason Cimmiyotti, defensive



back/receiver, and Conor Brosnan, linebacker/offensive line. Blane Mahoney was a first-team defensive



linebacker and Toby Nation was offensive lineman.

Second team selections from Heppner included quarterback, Landon Mitchell; offensive line, Tucker Ashbeck and Jake Lentz; running back, Caden George; kicker, Conor Brosnan; defensive back, Derrick Smith; linebacker, Caden George; and defensive lineman, Toby Nation.

Honorable mention for defensive lineman went to Tucker Ashbeck and offensive line to Kegan Steagall.

Financial help available for low-income Internet connections

Free and reduced lunch families immediately qualified

By David Sykes

If your family is on the free and reduced lunch program at school you are eligible to receive substantial help in paying for an internet connection, Morrow County Broadband team leader Aaron Moss explained at a recent internet connection meeting.

"Right now, there are only 58 families in the county enrolled in the program and we know the need is significantly higher," Moss said. In encouraging people to get connected he said families on free and reduced lunch at schools are "immediately qualified" for financial assistance to help pay for internet service.

Called the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, federal grants will pay up to \$50 per month in internet service fees for qualified households. It is designed to help low-income households stay connected during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For an example of the program, Joseph Franell, president of high-speed internet provider gorge.net, was at the meeting and explained how his company is setting up to help low-income people get connected. "We are going to make this as easy as possible,"



Broadband Team leader Aaron Moss gives presentation on getting Morrow County connected

Franell explained. "Unlike the big providers that hide the program, we want to make it easy for people to get signed up," Franell said of helping families get the subsidy. He said all Heppner and Ione resident families need do is call gorge.net (541-436-0223), which is now in the process of installing high-speed internet to homes in Ione and Heppner, give their name and his company will get them signed up. "People don't have to provide data (to prove their low-income eligibility)," he said. Because there is a national data base, "We can verify through the schools that people are eligible. If you are a low-income family struggling right now you will be able to get that 300



gorge.net president Joseph Franell

megabit service for \$9.95 a month, which is transformative for families, and really, really helpful," Franell said. The company has been currently advertising 300

Mbps high speed internet for \$59.95 a month. Gorge.net service is only available in the city limits of Ione and

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Wenholz to run for position as county commissioner

Jeff Wenholz, a self-employed man from Irregon, has thrown his hat into the ring for Morrow County Commissioner, Position 2. Wenholz is the first candidate to file for one of the two positions currently open for the May 2022 primary election. Position 2 is currently held by Don Russell, whose term will expire in January 2023. Commissioner Melissa Lindsay currently holds position 3, which also ends January 2023.



Jeff Wenholz

According to Morrow County Clerk Bobbi Childers, Wenholz is the only candidate who has filed at this time. Neither Russell nor Lindsay have submitted candidate applications for re-election, although the March 8, 2022 deadline for filing is still several months off.

Wenholz listed prior

governmental experience on his application as Morrow County planning commission, solid waste advisory committee and budget committee as well as the Umatilla Chemical Depot advisory commission.

The primary election will be held May 17, 2022 and the general election November 8, 2022. If elected, Wenholz will take over the position January 2, 2023.

If county must COVID test: Who pays and on whose time?

By David Sykes

If federal vaccine mandates are enacted requiring all county employees to either get vaccinated or get tested, county commissioners last week discussed who would pay, and on whose time the tests would be done. Forty percent of county employees are not vaccinated.

As of last Wednesday's meeting, commissioners were still not sure if a federal mandate would come down requiring all county employees to either be vaccinated or get weekly testing. But in preparation, commissioners did talk about the cost of the tests, and whether they would be administered on county time or the employees' time?

County Emergency Management head Paul Gray said he had researched the test's costs and if they do become mandatory the county may end up buying 1,200 to 1,800 kits at a cost of around \$15,000. The type of test used is still unclear, but if a home test is approved the price is currently at \$8.50 each. If a lab test is required, the cost was unknown. "It's a moving target," Gray said of preparing for mandates that may or may not come down, and for which the rules are unknown. Gray said he did not want the county to go out and buy a bunch of home tests for instance, only to find out later they would not be accepted. Gray also said if federal mandates are enacted there would mostly be a run on tests, which could both drive up the price and make the test scarce.

"If the mandates are enacted they apparently would say if you don't get vaccinated then you can take a test once a week. If you test positive you would go home. If you test negative, you can go to work," Commission Chair Don Russell explained. Gray said if the county ends up using the home test it takes 15 minutes "then you go to work." He said if you use the other testing then a sample is taken and sent to a lab. "Take the test Friday, maybe next Wednesday, maybe get results," Gray explained.

One thing made clear by the commissioners, however, any mandates enforced would not be of their making. "I have talked to employees who aren't vaccinated and don't plan on being vaccinated, and they are angry," Russell said. "But I tell them don't be angry at your county government because we were never consulted. We just know we have these mandates in front of us and the penalties are too large to ignore, and we are going to have to follow it. My goal is to not lose any employees over this," he emphasized. "Be mad at the federal government, be mad at Governor Brown, but don't be mad at the three of us. Your efforts at Morrow County are valued," he said of the employees. Commissioner Melissa Lindsay echoed Russell's message. "This is a federal mandate and we have had zero input," she said. "This mandate has zero to do with apprecia-

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