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Celebrate the holidays with photos



Residents are asked to submit photos of their homes that are lit up and decorated for the holidays. Please include the city where the home is located and the street it is on if you choose. The Heppner Gazette-Times will be publishing the photos in the

December 22 issue. Photos may be emailed to editor@rapidserve.net, uploaded to Heppner.net or texted to 541-980-6674 and must be received by 5 p.m. on Monday, December 20 to be included. For additional information, contact the G-T at 541-676-9228.

Think Big Space grand opening held at Sage Center



Port of Morrow Chair Rick Stokoe cuts the ribbon to open the new Think Big Space.

Last Thursday the Port of Morrow, Morrow County School District and Amazon Web Services (AWS) hosted the grand opening of the AWS Think Big Space at the Port of Morrow's Sustainable Agriculture and Energy (SAGE) Center in Boardman.

The new AWS Think Big Space is a dedicated space for students, educators and communities to explore innovative and imaginative ideas through interactive hands-on technical education and cloud computing training. This new educational space, funded by AWS and the Port of Morrow, is intended to inspire students to ex-



Think Big Space Classroom. -Photos by Erika Lasater

plore and cultivate STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) related interests with labs that utilize cloud computing and various AWS technologies.

Many local officials attended the opening, including Morrow County Commissioners Don Rus-

sell, Melissa Lindsay and Jim Doherty, Port Commissioners Rick Stokoe, Jerry Healy and Joe Taylor, Erin Stocker and Marie Shimer from the Morrow County School District and Ryan Neal, CEO of Port of Morrow. Also in attendance were State Representative



Students interact with technology in Think Big Space.

Greg Smith and State Senator Bill Hansell.

Grand opening activities included a ribbon cutting ceremony, a private tour of the space led by Don Walker, lead instructor of the AWS Think Big Space and a showcase of student programmed robots and Computer-Aided Design (CAD) drawings designed by students from Ione, Irigon and Windy River Elementary Schools.

At the event, Commissioner Stokoe shared, "This initiative wouldn't be possible without the partnerships and shared vision for our

youth. STEM education plays a vital role in preparing students for their future. We know the Think Big Space will cultivate these learning opportunities that inspire innovation".

AWS selected SAGE Center as the first location in Oregon to receive an AWS Think Big Space. Its curriculum will be overseen by the Morrow County School District and programming will be supported by a robust set of regional collaborators that include early childhood education and post-secondary

schools.

"AWS is committed to making a positive impact in the communities where our employees live and work," said Cornelia Robinson, global leader of AWS in communities. "We were incredibly impressed by the vision of the AWS Think Big Space at the SAGE Center. We're thrilled to have the opportunity to invest in the students and residents of Morrow County and provide the tools and connections they need to build, imagine and innovate their best future."

Shepherds Flat wind blades to be recycled into cement

Will be trucked to Missouri for processing

By David Sykes

Over 1,000 fiberglass windmill blades soon to be coming off the Shepherds Flat wind farm in Morrow and Gilliam counties, are headed to a Missouri recycling center where they will be ground up and used to manufacture cement, Morrow County commissioners were told last week.

Concerned that the used blades removed during an up-coming repowering project might be buried somewhere in the county, Commissioner Melissa Lindsay asked Jared Cooley, a representative of Shepherds Flat owner Brookfield Renewable, point blank what the company planned on doing with all those used blades. She said rumors circulating in Ione had the blades ending up in a landfill somewhere in the county. Cooley assured her that was not going to happen.

"The blades will be cut into eight-foot sections, stacked on trucks and hauled to Missouri and used in a concrete cement kiln

operation," Cooley said. He explained that under the process, the fiberglass composite blades would be ground up and used as alternative fuel in an old coal-fired plant used to run a cement making operation. Waste from the burned blades would then be taken from the furnaces and incorporated into the portland cement product, he added.

Brookfield Renewable had been granted a license by the Oregon Energy Facility Siting Council (EFSC) to put bigger, longer blades on the 338 turbines at the wind farm, resulting in higher energy output. But it also means 1014 used blades are needing disposal. The EFSC license does not specify how the blades would be disposed of, which along with the burial rumors, concerned Lindsay.

Cooley was actually before the commissioners on another matter, seeking approval of a road agreement between Brookfield Renewable and the county to facilitate road access to 85 wind towers located in Morrow County, when Lindsay brought up the disposal plans. "This is our only opportunity to know what is going to happen to these blades," Lindsay said in questioning Cooley

at the meeting. She added there had been an "uproar" in the Ione area with people thinking the used blades were going to a local landfill. "The question has been asked numerous times what is being done with these blades? And the answer was, we don't know yet," she told Cooley. She added even EFSC wasn't clear when issuing the permit how the blades would be disposed of. "I need a clear answer," she told Cooley.

Cooley said his company has contracted for blade disposal with General Electric, who plan on hauling them to a recycling plant owned by a company named Veolia North America located 70 miles northwest of St. Louis. The blades, mainly composed of fiberglass, will be shredded and the resulting material then used in the kilns to replace the coal, sand and clay needed to make cement. More than 90 percent of the blades will be reused with 65 percent as raw material in the cement plants, and 28 percent transformed into energy required for the chemical reaction in the kiln.

According to GE's website, a single wind turbine blade that weighs sev-

en tons recycled through this process enables the cement kiln to avoid consuming nearly five tons of coal, 2.7 tons of silica, 1.9 tons of limestone, and nearly a ton of additional mineral-based raw materials.

Cooley was asked if the company's recycling plans might change. "I commend you for your disposal but is your intent to recycle going to change?" Lindsay asked. She was concerned after hearing land was already purchased for the burial. Cooley said nothing would change during the repower project. "This is a method that we have confirmed with General Electric, and they have been contracted to dispose of the blades," he reiterated. Commissioner Don Russell said it would be difficult to bury the blades anywhere besides a licensed landfill.



Jared Cooley, Director of Construction at Brookfield Renewable



Blades like this one coming off Shepherds Flat wind farm will not be buried in a landfill.

"If they were going to bury them, they would have to go to a licensed land fill. Just picking a spot and digging a hole and burying them wouldn't work in the state of Oregon," Russell said.

Before selling out to Brookfield in February of this year, Caithness Energy had built the Shepherds Flat windfarm in Morrow and Gilliam counties in 2012 and at that time it was the largest windmill project in the world. When completed Caithness had signed a 20-year power purchase

agreement with Southern California Edison for all the electricity generated there. The power was so important at that time to southern California's green energy goals, that the mayor of Long Beach California attended the wind farm dedication ceremony in Morrow County. The current repowering project, including blade replacement, is the result of advancements in wind blade design and is expected to be completed in 2022.

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