

The Official Newspaper
of the City of Heppner and the County of Morrow

Heppner

GAZETTE-TIMES

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Morrow County's Home-Owned Weekly Newspaper

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All News and Advertising Deadline is Monday at 5 p.m.

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For Public/Legal Notices: public/legal notices deadline is Monday at 5 p.m. Dates for publication must be specified. Affidavits must be requested at the time of submission. Affidavits require three weeks to process after last date of publication (a sooner return date must be specified if required).

For Obituaries: Obituaries are published in the Heppner GT at no charge and are edited to meet news guidelines. Families wishing to include information not included in the guidelines or who wish to have the obituary written in a certain way must purchase advertising space for the obituary.

For Letters to the Editor: Letters to the Editor MUST be signed by the author. The Heppner GT will not publish unsigned letters. All letters MUST include the author's address and phone number for use by the GT office. The GT reserves the right to edit letters. The GT is not responsible for accuracy of statements made in letters. Any letters expressing thanks will be placed in the classifieds under "Card of Thanks" at a cost of \$10.

Traffic stop ends in tragedy

The Pilot Rock Police Department contacted the Morrow County Sheriff's Office on December 2 at 8:45 a.m. asking for assistance in locating and doing a welfare check on a 28-year-old male, Charles Ervin Fowler, III, when his phone location indicated he was in the Irrigon area.

MCSO deputies began searching the area and located the vehicle Fowler was driving speeding south-

bound on Paterson Ferry Rd near Highway 730. A deputy conducted a traffic stop and when the deputies approached the vehicle they heard a gunshot from inside the vehicle. Tragically, an investigation indicated that Fowler, the single occupant of the vehicle, had shot himself. The Irrigon ambulance responded and confirmed Fowler was deceased.

Morrow County declares another COVID state of emergency

In response to what is called an increasing number of positive COVID-19 cases, limited local capacity of hospitalization of county citizens and mask restrictions from the governor, Morrow County Commissioners last week voted to declare a state of emergency once again across the county.

The new declaration is similar to the last one enacted which expired Dec. 10, and it in turn gives government broad authority over purchasing services and supplies, handling county personnel and money, and sharing resources with surrounding counties. The declaration also gives the county authority to receive state and federal pandemic grant funds.

County Emergency Manager Paul Gray cautioned, however, that the emergency declaration doesn't mean the county is in deep trouble. "This emergency declaration doesn't necessarily mean we are in the middle of a catastrophic event," he told commissioners. He said the declaration does give the county board of commissioners, emergency manager and the administration access

to mutual aid agreements, authority to extend funds, deploy personnel and put supplies in stockpiles. "We are currently doing this with other counties, and this gives us emergency procurement for goods and services," he said of the declaration.

Commissioner Jim Doherty was not so quick to sign on, however. "Let's just make it perpetual," Doherty said of the renewed emergency declaration. "Let's just make it that Morrow County is perpetually in a state of emergency that allows us to do these things." Doherty said he doesn't see an emergency here, was opposed to the declaration last time, and is still opposed to it. "These things have to mean something and at this point I fail to see the necessity. So, I'm a no vote," he said. He said since the county just keeps authorizing emergencies, he would talk to county counsel Justin Nelson about just making the emergency declaration ongoing.

Commissioner Melissa Lindsay, who voted in favor of the declaration both times, said she was not in favor of making it ongoing. "I don't wish to make it perpetual, but I don't know

how we leave money on the table should there be new dollars come available." Lindsay said more state and federal funding related to the pandemic might become available and she didn't want the county to lose out on it if it did not have the emergency declaration in place. "I hesitate to leave dollars on the table for a small county," she said.

Gray said neither did he want to see the emergency declaration become permanent. "I don't want perpetual, but there is money on the table and a new variant is coming," he said. Gray said the new Omicron variant is reportedly mild in its symptoms and he's hoping it's not going to be that bad in the United States. "But that doesn't mean it's not going to change and then we are going to be back to square one with another pandemic of a variant that is going to start killing a lot more people," he said. Doherty said he understood but did not want county government to incur an emergency on speculation. "We don't want to get out ahead ringing an alarm bell until there is an alarm," he said.

On where the county stands on enforcing vaccine mandates on its employees,

Gray reported that only 65 of the 135 county employees had turned in their vaccination cards, but so far the county, like everyone else, is "at a standstill" until the legality of the mandates are sorted out in the courts. But Gray said he still wanted the county to be ready in case the vaccination mandates are imposed. Commissioner Don Russell, who voted in favor of the emergency declaration, said the issue of state and federal vaccine mandates will probably be decided in the court system. "It is a court decision that will ultimately be decided by the Supreme Court," he speculated.

In other business at the December 1 meeting, the commissioners voted to declare one day per year as Employee Appreciation Day for nonunion county workers. The day would be a paid day off and can be

Obituaries

Phyllis Marie Piper

Phyllis Marie Piper, 81, of Lexington, died Friday, November 26, 2021, at Good Shepherd Hospital in Hermiston. A celebration of life will be held Saturday, December 11, 2021, at 1 p.m. at the Heppner First Christian Church.

She was born April 8, 1940, at Heppner, the daughter of Roy and Melba Hughes Quackenbush. "Phylly," as she was affectionately known by many, was raised and attended school in Heppner, graduating from Heppner High School in 1958.

On March 22, 1959, Phyllis married Del Piper at Heppner. The couple co-owned Del's Market in Lexington for 28 years (1968-1996). They lived on Main Street from the beginning of their marriage until her passing. She also worked at the Bank of Eastern Oregon and as a postal clerk.

She was well known for her hand made Raggedy Ann Dolls and enjoyed sewing, quilting, painting and needlework (stockings, baby quilts, tree skirts, and dish towels). Other interests and hobbies through the years included going to the beach, looking for agates, concerts, ceramics, playing bingo, bowling, stamp collecting, trips to their mountain cabin, picking mushrooms and snowmobiling, horseback riding and the Pendleton Round-Up. Phylly enjoyed events at the Heppner Senior Center and the St. Patrick's Celebration. Her favorite music

was by George Strait, Adele and Elton John. According to her family, "Most of all, Phyllis loved her family." She traveled to watch her grandkids and great grandkids in dance, sports and Christmas plays, attending every event she possibly could.



Phyllis Marie Piper

Phyllis was a member of Rainbow Girls and Wrangler Club and she taught 4-H tole painting. Phyllis and Del hosted 4-H/LABO exchange students, and their daughters, Sheri and Janette went to Japan through this group. She found great enjoyment as a chaperone traveling to Europe with Sheri and her classmates.

Survivors include her husband, Del of Lexington; a son, Mark Piper and his wife Cindy; daughters, Janette Skow and her husband Tom and Sheri Peck and her husband Josh; seven grandchildren and six great grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her parents Roy and Melba Quackenbush.

Memorial contributions may be made to Pioneer Memorial Hospital, PO Box 9, Heppner, OR 97836 or to Heppner First Christian Church, PO Box 158, Heppner, OR 97836.

Sweeney Mortuary of Heppner is in care of arrangements. The online condolence book is available at www.sweeney-mortuary.com.

used between the day after Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve. "This holiday was meant to show the county's appreciation to the employees during the holiday season," county commissioners said. During the 2021 unionized employee contract negotiations an Employee Appreciation Holiday was approved for the two collective bargaining groups, so the commission's action just extends this benefit to the nonunion employees. It was estimated that granting both groups the appreciation day would cost the county approximately \$15,800 per year.

Pastors invited to submit Christmas messages

The Heppner Gazette-Times will publish Christmas messages from area pastors on Wednesday, December 22. The deadline to submit messages will be Monday, December 20, at 5 p.m.

Those planning to submit Christmas messages may email them to editor@rapidsolve.net, upload to

Heppner.net, send via mail to Heppner Gazette-Times, PO Box 337, Heppner, OR 97836 or drop them by the office at 188 West Willow, Heppner, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Pastors are also invited to submit separate news articles for Christmas church services or activities.

WEEKLY SHOPPER

December 10th
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