

PORT OF MORROW Engineers proceed with Lexington water & sewer study

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A long-time expert and advocate for water usage in the area, Reeder laid out his qualifications in seeking a unified front to the problems. A wheat farmer in the Helix area he has spent most of his career working with irrigated agriculture ground in Morrow County. He is the vice president of Hale Companies which own and operate large, irrigated farms in the Buttercreek area, and has history in dealing with public problems and difficult issues. "I have been involved with unionization, several food recalls, leadership changes, controversial leadership changes on boards, consulting work with farmers in the area, and when it comes to public issues, I know what I am talking about," he explained. Reeder said there may be leadership changes that come out of the DEQ charges. "Will there need to be leadership changes? Probably. I am not saying who or what those leadership changes are, but that is usually what happens when there is a controversy like this."

As co-founder of the Northeast Oregon Water Association, Reeder has been part of a long-time effort to improve water usage and access in the area, and said he is voicing concerns by many who feel the DEQ charges against the port may set back those hard-fought battles. He pointed out that recent advances in water usage were made through cooperation of many entities in the area. "Through that process when we finally came together as a region in the last three years we built the first new pump station on the Columbia River, got the state's largest water right, and we put over \$100 million of infrastructure in the ground. I can tell you that the collaborative effort works," he said in urging the commissioners to work with the port.

Reeder asked the county to withhold comment about the alleged contamination violations and fines until more facts come out on what actually happened. "Nobody in this room has all the information to determine exactly as to what happened there. There is no possible way anyone could have that information. Only been out one day and there are two sides to each story," he said. Reeder also wants

discussions about the alleged contamination and fines, and what to do about it, to take place in private and not before the public. "We have a lot of heavy lifting to do. And we are not going to do it by pointing our fingers at each other in public forums and tearing each other down," he said. "There is a right and a wrong way to do it and public chiding or chastising before all the information is gathered especially when it is one of our own is not a constructive way to move the needle forward." He said discussion on what happened and what to do about the problem should be done "in appropriate forums". Reeder said the letter from businesses asking for county and port unity would be going out soon and be put into the "public record," however he did not say what that record would be.

"Those that are actively trying to move the needle and proven that we can move the needle are starting to get a little bit frustrated and we want to know if there is anything we can do to support unification of the county and the port and all the other resources and stakeholders that we have in the area," he said. Reeder said there are people in the region that want to "move the ball on the big picture items which are water quality, water quantity, economic development and protecting our way of life," he said.

Reeder was not on the county agenda for last Wednesday's meeting, and he spoke under a section reserved for public input and comments. Commission Chairman Jim Doherty pointed out because the alleged violations and their impact on the county are such an important topic, he had given Reeder 10 minutes to speak as opposed to the normal three allotment for public comment. Doherty also disagreed with Reeder on how debate on the subject should take place, saying discussion about the port's alleged violations, fines and friction with the county should be done in a public forum. "It's a huge topic and I would disagree that we need to work behind the scenes and out of the public view. That is kind of what has led us to where we are today," he said.

By David Sykes

Engineering firm Anderson Perry has made agreement with the Town of Lexington to move forward with a water and sewer system feasibility study, the council affirmed at its monthly meeting last week. President and Senior Engineer Brad Baird was at the meeting to give a rundown on how the study will proceed, what will be learned from it and the benefits to the community.

Baird said when completed the two studies will give the town a complete picture of its water and sewer systems and what could be needed in the future. Lexington has a

central water system with well, but each individual home and business is on its own septic system.

The study will start in March, and it should take around nine months to complete, Baird told the council. He said company representatives will meet with the council in two or three work sessions and talk about the current condition of the water system and what the town think it will be needed in the next 20 years. He said after they gather the information they will come back with a plan and its costs for the town to consider. Baird says he company understands Eastern Oregon

and the cost limitations of small towns. "Anderson will propose something that you can afford and that works," he said.

The studies cost \$40,000 each. The town has received a grant from Business Oregon for half that cost, and also received money from the Columbia River Enterprise Zone (CREZ) to pay for the rest. In 2020 Lexington received \$200,000 from CREZ that can be used for



Brad Baird, President/Senior Engineer

infrastructure studies and work.

In other business councilmember Katie Imes said she was checking into grants for putting in sidewalks along Main Street, which is Hwy 74, through town. She said the town's transportation system plan probably needed to be updated so it could be used to apply for the money that is available. It was discussed that with sidewalks along the highway it would be safer for people to walk around town especially up to the gas station mini mart where much of the activity in town is.

Council hears reports, makes appointments

The Heppner city council at its January 10 meeting made committee appointments for 2022, heard reports from various departments and approved leases and franchise agreements with several businesses.

In a unanimous vote the council agreed to renew a solid waste disposal service agreement with Miller and Sons Disposal of Heppner. The rates set in the agreement for residential customers for one can per month is \$22.50. Rates for one commercial dumpster is \$80 per month. Retrieval fees for garbage cans not brought to the curb by residential customers is \$5, and for each additional garbage bag, which does not fit into the garbage can and requires additional pickup the cost will also be \$5. The exclusive franchise agreement with Millers is

for 10 years and expires on December 31, 2031. The previous agreement expired on Dec. 31, 2021.

In other action the council approved a lease agreement with Tim Dickenson of Dickenson Chiropractic for office space in the city-owned building at 133 May St attached to city hall. The lease is a renewal of the exiting agreement and is for \$450 per month for the space. Dickenson in turn sub-leases part of the office to Licensed Massage Therapist Kaley Patterson for \$150 per month.

In other lease action the council approved renewal of a lease with Kim Cutsforth administrator of the Howard and Bryant Foundation for office space owned by the city and located next to city hall. The Lease is for one year and is \$450 per month.

The council review a

January 3 planning commission decision approving a minor property partition for John Murray on a tax lot located on Main Street. Murray was represented at the planning commission meeting by Real Estate Agent David Sykes who presented the request to divide off 91 feet of the lot. The city council did not oppose the planning commissions decision. The property will need a survey for final approval of the partition by the city.

In other action the council made numerous appointments to city committees. Personnel Committee: Jim Kindle, Dale Bates, John Bowles and Greg Sweek. Utilities Commission: Tom Wolff and Dale Bates. Police Commission: Carl Lauritsen, Merle Cowett, John Bowles and Adam Doherty.

Fire Dept. Advisory Committee: Andrew Jonson, Trevor Rhea, Adam Bergstrom, Doug Johnson and Mike Jones. Budget Committee: Ralph Walker, Joe Perry, Tom Wolff, Steve Rhea, Rick Worden and Al Scott. Planning Commission: Patti Allstott, Don Stroeber, Tripp Finch, Jeff Bailey, David Sykes, Dieter Waite and Dave Fowler.

In other reports the council heard that the city had completed a lot purchase on Chase Street from Jason Patterson, and was negotiating to purchase a lot on Riverside to be used as a dog park. Also heard from Fire Chief Steve Rhea last month the department responded to three calls to secure the life flight helicopter landing zone, a two-vehicle motor vehicle accident with injuries, one flue fire and one lift assist call from EMS.

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You are not forgotten. We are here for you.

We would like to thank any veteran who served in Afghanistan from the bottom of our hearts for your sacrifice to our country and dedication to preserve the freedoms that we cherish so deeply here at home.

We are proud and honored for your service in defending this great nation with courage and bravery that our military has been known for throughout history.

Words cannot express the gratitude that we have for you. However, we understand that words are not enough to adequately express the emotions that many of you are feeling. We veterans have our ways of dealing with our struggles. Some choose not to talk about it, but others just need to find the right person to listen to them.

You may not be ready to talk. You may still need time to understand your experience, or at least to try to understand. Please know that we are here for you with open ears, and our thoughts are with you.

Your support is a just phone call away. Here are some resources that you can reach out to for support and assistance.

- **Veterans Crisis Line, aka Lines for Life**
(all options 24/7) 1-800-273-8255, Press Option #1, or Text 838255, or Chat online at www.linesforlife.org
- **Veterans Federal Housing Assistance**
1-877-424-3838
www.va.gov/homeless/for_homeless_veterans.asp
- **Oregon Department of Veterans Administration**
800-692-9666 or 503-373-2085
www.oregon.gov/odva/Pages/default.aspx

Know that you are not alone. We will get through this together. You are now our mission.

Please contact the **Morrow County Veterans Service Office**
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