



Ione moves closer to getting a sewer system upgrade

Central system will pump up Johnson Grade to large drain field on the hill

By David Sykes

The city of Ione is moving closer to an upgrade on its sewer system that will remove individual drain fields from homes and businesses and be replaced with effluent collected and then pumped up the hill to a large drain field above town, volunteer project manager Jerry Rietmann told the county commissioners.

Rietmann said recent good news from the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), giving the city a tentative go-ahead for planning on the new system, encouraged the council to hire engineers Anderson and Perry to start work on a design and permitting plan.

Under the plan, homes and businesses would still have individual septic holding tanks on their properties but would no longer require drain fields on each lot. Instead, the tanks would drain to a large tank at the end of town where effluent would then be pumped up Johnson Grade to one large drain field overlooking town. The entire system would be underground with no settling ponds or above ground treatment facilities, Rietmann explained in response to a question about smell. He emphasized there would be no smell.

Ione community leaders have been working for some time on a way to re-



Ione's proposed new sewer system to pump effluent up Johnson Grade to large drain field

place the individual septic systems now on each town lot, and Rietmann agreed to head up that effort. "We have homes in Ione where their only choice will be to put in a \$40,000 sand filter system if their septic fails," he said in explaining the need for the new method of waste disposal. The DEQ is trying to phase out septic drain fields on small city lots, and if the town is to grow or just maintain its existing housing base, the community knew it had to make a change. Rietmann said without a new centralized system there would be homeowners with failed

septic systems that could not afford the required expensive sand replacement systems "and that means they will abandon their homes and the last thing we need is abandoned homes," he told the county commissioners.

Rietmann estimated the cost of the entire project would be around \$5.2 million, and said the city still needs to find "from \$1.5 to \$2.5 million" to finish out the funding. He said so far ICABO (Ione Agri-Business Organization) has committed money to the project, as well as funding coming from the Columbia

River Enterprise Zone and financial commitment from the local school district.

Rietmann said the schools will soon be "in the middle of a \$24 million building project," and part of that construction will be sewer disposal. He said if the new system comes together the schools have agreed to tie in and participate with the city with a commitment of \$1 million. He said the new system will need to be permitted by the end of this calendar year or early 2023 to coincide with the new school's end-of-construction timeline of the summer of 2024.

Irrigon to have own police department again

Will end 18-year relationship with sheriff

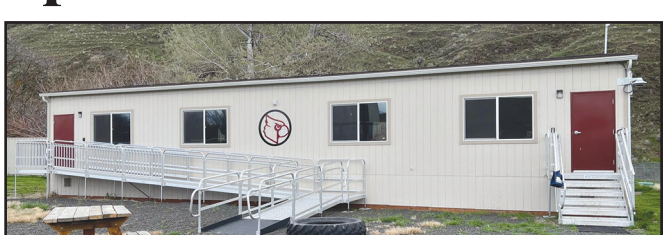
After 18 years of contracting police services the city of Irrigon has decided to part ways with the county sheriff office and once again establish its own police department, Mayor Margaret Anderson has announced.

The city council voted unanimously to make the break at its March 15 meeting, and in a news release put out last week they explained why it was making the move. "So why bring law enforcement back in-house? Basically, the dollars spent are equal to contracting but provides improved responsibility, response and authority," Anderson said of forming the one-officer department. Earlier the city also made a break from the county run Justice of The Peace, establishing its own municipal court.

Currently Irrigon is paying the sheriff's office around \$95,000 a year to

contract for police services. The city also purchases a car for the sheriff's office every three years, which the sheriff returns to the city after three years. The contract, which is similar to the deal Heppner has with the sheriff, will expire on July 1 of 2022. The city will now purchase a new car and renovate an office in city hall for the new department. Under the plan there

Ione fitness center to open soon



The Ione School District is one step closer to opening its new fitness center. -Contributed photo.

The Ione School District is one step closer to opening the fitness center to the community. In March, Alpine Alarm was able to complete installation of the security system, including security cameras, fiber connection, control panel installation and the card reader system.

The fitness center has received many donations and contributions for this entire project. Specifically for the security system, grants were received from The Wildhorse Foun-

dation, Morrow County Grain Growers, The Land O'Lakes Foundation and ICABO. The security system cost over \$30,000 and could not have been accomplished without support from the community and regional organizations that helped fund it.

Eventually procedures and protocols for community use of this facility will be created, staff training on the card system will be completed and an official ribbon cutting will be held.

but the city police are the primary in their city. If the city police are off duty and an emergency call is reported, they should be called out as the primary law enforcement in the city and may be assisted by county deputies. If a city doesn't have a police force then the sheriff or deputies will respond to person crimes and in progress crimes as resources allow," the statement, which was signed by Sheriff Kenneth Matlack and Undersheriff John Bowles, said.

Other points made by Irrigon Mayor Anderson were the new department would bring "local ownership and autonomy of an officer and improved follow through on calls and responses. This is not a fis-

cal cut-back but improved ownership and oversight by the city council; no new building is being built or was built; MC will still have an officer at the Irrigon Schools.

"The City of Irrigon continues to grow and ex-

Census data shows Heppner population down, Boardman up

Data from the 2020 census shows Heppner lost population over the past ten years while Boardman, Irrigon and Ione all gained. Remarkably Lexington remained exactly the same at 238 residents from 2010 to 2020.

Other facts from the census shows Boardman with the highest median household income of \$60,039 per year, and Lexington the lowest with

\$33,125. Boardman also held the top spot in total population with 3,828 residents.

For the county as a whole, the population over the past 10 years showed a nine percent increase with a jump of 1,1013 residents to a total of 12,186. Unincorporated population, or outside the cities, increase showed a 7.4 percent increase.

Census data by cities

Boardman	
Growth Rate:	17.25%
2010 Population:	3,220
2020 Population:	3,828
Median Household income:	\$ 60,039.00
Percent in Poverty:	16.20%
Heppner	
Growth Rate:	-8%
2010 Population:	1,291
2020 Population:	1,187
Median Household income:	\$48,571.00
Percent in Poverty:	8.20%
Ione	
Growth Rate:	0.97%
2010 Population:	329
2020 Population:	337
Median Household income:	\$53,846.00
Percent in Poverty:	20.70%
Irrigon	
Growth Rate:	9.60%
2010 Population:	1,826
2020 Population:	2,011
Median Household income:	\$ 52,054.00
Percent in Poverty:	16.10%
Lexington	
Growth Rate:	N/A
2010 Population:	238
2020 Population:	238
Median Household income:	\$33,125.00
Percent in Poverty:	8.90%

Source: 2020 US Census

Census data total county

Total Morrow County	
Total Population	12,186
Growth Rate:	9%
2010 Population:	11,173
2020 Population:	12,186
Median Household income:	\$54,269
Percent in Poverty:	14.50%
Unincorporated (outside cities)	
Growth Rate:	7.40%
2010 Population:	4,269
2020 Population:	4,585