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of the City of Heppner and the County of Morrow

Heppner
GAZETTE-TIMES
U.S.P.S. 240-420

Morrow County's Home-Owned Weekly Newspaper

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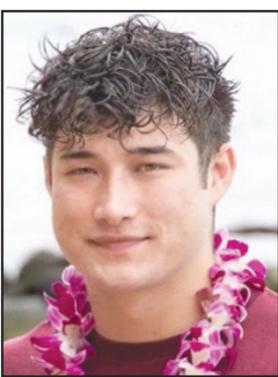
A View from the Green

Over the Tee Cup

WCCC Ladies Tuesday players met at 9 a.m., May 17 finally enjoying a warm, sunny day and a slight breeze. There were 12 women who turned out to enjoy the warm weather and the course looked great. Low gross of the field award went to Virginia Grant and low net of the field to Pat Dougherty. Least putts holder was Karen Smith-Griffith. Virginia Grant also had a chip-in on #11 and a birdie on #15.

Low gross winner for Flight A was Karen Thompson and low net was Tiffany Clement. Low gross for Flight B was Shirley Martin and low net was Sharon Harrison. Low gross for Flight C was Betty Carter and low net winner was Kathy Martin. Least Putts holder was Kim Carlson and closest to the pin was Kathy Martin. A coming event on June 14th is the Women's Invitational Tournament.

Tristan Schultz awarded Fulbright scholarship



Tristan Schultz

Tristan Schultz, grandson of the local Koerner family, will graduate with honors on June 12 from Seattle University with a bachelor's degree in International Studies with an emphasis in Economics. He is being awarded the Fulbright Fellow Scholarship. Tristan will begin his Fulbright Fellow studies in South Korea in January 2023.

Hunter education class coming up

A Hunter Education class is coming up in June at the Lexington Gun Club. Classes will be held June 14, 16, 21 and 23 from 6-9 p.m. and June 18 from 8 a.m. to noon. In order to attend the class, students must register online at <https://myodfw.com/articles/hunter-education-classes-field-days>. Contact Jim Marquardt for additional information at 541 969-4845.

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Health District - Boardman Fire hire attorneys in ambulance dispute

County Commissioners hear arguments in coverage disagreement

Both the Morrow County Health and Boardman Fire and Rescue districts have now hired attorneys to represent them in their on-going dispute over ambulance coverage in the north end of the county. Last week the two sides brought their disagreements and lawyers to the county commission meeting, presenting arguments in a public hearing-type setting. At issue is whether the fire district will be allowed to operate an ambulance in Morrow County, a service now through county licensing is only reserved for the health district.

The health district's emergency medical services include six ambulance vehicles located at four separate dispatch sites. Two vehicles are located in Heppner, two in Boardman, and one each in Irrigon and Ione. The fire district has a paid fire department facility in Boardman, and it received a surplus ambulance from Portland General Electric when it closed its nearby coal generating facility.

The fire district wants a license from the county to operate the ambulance and transport patients, but the health district contends an additional ambulance service is not needed and is also concerned the service will cut into its revenue.

The fire district says money is also the major reason it wants to operate an ambulance but says doing so will not cut into the health district's revenue but come from other sources. "The primary reason we are seeking the transport license is to bring in outside revenue," Fire Chief Mike Hughes said in a letter to the county commissioners which would issue the license. Hughes says, if licensed, the ambulance could also be used to provide transport for inter-hospital transportation from Hermiston's Good Shepherd Hospital to other locations, for which they

would be paid. He would also like to provide medical coverage to the Navy, which operates the nearby bombing range, and the Oregon Military Defense, both who have asked for it.

Hughes says another benefit to having an additional ambulance available in Boardman would be to back up the health district ambulance service when they are on other calls and unavailable. He said the total number of medical calls in Boardman per year are around 500 and the need to back up would not be very often.

In response to the license request health district attorney Troy Bundy said the decision on whether to issue a license did not rest with the county commissioners, but rather should be guided by the Ambulance Service Area (ASA) plan which is administered by the Emergency Medical Services Advisory Committee. Hughes says it is the committee which reviews the plan to determine if there is a need for additional ambulance service, and not the commissioners. He added that any ambulance operating in the county would have to comply with all the rules spelled out in the service plan. The 30-page plan is a detailed description of operating ambulance services in the county and had earlier been approved by the Board of Commissioners and, as required by the Oregon Health Authority.

A request by Hughes was made in March of this year to amend the ASA plan and allow the Boardman Fire District to "attend all emergency calls within Boardman Fire District regardless of subject matter of the calls." At that time the ASA advisory committee considered the request, and it was denied. The nine-member advisory committee is made up of a physician from the ambulance provider, EMTs from Heppner, Irrigon and

Ione, a 911 representative, directors of nursing from both Pioneer Memorial and Good Shepherd Hospitals and a Heppner Rural Fire Department representative.

Commissioner Don Russell said he did not understand why the county resisted issuing the license. "They want to have a license for an ambulance, so they contract with Umatilla Fire District that handles the majority of ambulance calls in Umatilla County when they are overbooked and need to transport patients out of Good Shepherd Hospital who need a different level of care," Russell said. "That is the primary reason they have the request. It just allows Boardman Fire to get additional revenue by transporting patients from Good Shepherd to other area hospitals. Boardman fire has an IGA (intergovernmental agreement) with the Oregon Military Authority and Navy to provide EMS service during live fire and they will pay for an ambulance out there," he explained. "They could also be used as a resource during a mass-casualty event. They could be used as a resource. It seems very simple. I don't get it," Russell said.

"It boils down to do you need another ambulance service?" attorney Bundy said. "The EMA answers

that question. They look at the plan and make determination if you need another one or not. You can change that (the plan) but that is the way it is. If you talk about an ambulance you have to talk about the ambulance service plan," He argued. "You need to use the plan. Those questions need to be answered by the EMS advisory committee. You appointed them; you need to abide by the ASA service plan. The fire district wants you to answer questions you are not equipped to do," Bundy told the commissioners.

The commissioners decided they did not have enough information to make a decision at their May 18 meeting and decided to put off a determination on issuing a license to Boardman Rural Fire until "no later than June 8." The commission also wanted to wait and see what happens when Umatilla County was later considering a request from Boardman Rural Fire for an operating license in that county.

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