



the HEPPNER GAZETTE TIMES

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Recalls launched against Commissioners Lindsay and Doherty

Will need 564 signatures for a recall election

A meeting called to discuss the recent firing of county administrator Darrell Green, and at the same time launch a recall effort against Commissioners Melissa Lindsay and Jim Doherty, was held in Heppner Monday night.

The 30 people attending heard from recall petitioners Corol Mitchell and Annetta Spicer, both of Heppner, on reasons for initiating the recall effort. The crowd later also heard from Boardman Rural Fire Chief Michael Hughes, whose organization is not sponsoring either recall petition, but for different reasons is joining in on the effort.

Reading from her petition, filed with the county clerk last Friday, Mitchell said Lindsay has violated the public trust of the people who elected her. "Commissioner Lindsay has violated that trust in many ways, one being by intimidating county employees, resulting in either their firing or leaving their jobs under duress. Commissioner Lindsay has repeatedly exhibited unprofessional behavior in her role as a public official. Commissioner Lindsay's actions have created county wide disapproval with other government and charitable organizations refusing to listen to them," Mitchell said. "The action of the firing of the Morrow County Administrator, with no transparency, refusing to let the public speak, or answer the administrators' questions about why he was sitting there, made it clear that in the remaining time of her tenure, this behavior would continue and could cause added financial burdens to our county. To prevent irreversible damage, an immediate recall is the only answer," Mitchell's statement concluded. Although not in attendance Lindsay was contacted by the Gazette-Times for a statement which is printed in its entirety below.

Annetta Spicer next read her statement on the recall petition she had filed against Commissioner Jim Doherty Monday. "Commissioner Doherty's decisions are not in the best interest of the Morrow County citizens. He is not open and transparent in his actions as commissioner, making decisions in secret and outside of public purview and without the inclusion of the third county commissioner," Spicer told the crowd. "Commission meetings



Volunteers pick up signatures sheets to begin gathering the necessary 564 to force a recall election. -Photo by David Sykes.

are not held in accordance with public open meeting law requirements. Doherty does not cooperate with other public and private agencies to the detriment of Morrow County citizens. His decisions regarding Morrow County employees have demoralized county employees and has been detrimental to a functional county government. Decisions are not made in the best interest of county taxpayers resulting in fiscal detriment to the county," Spicer concluded. Contacted by the Gazette-Times Doherty said he had no comment.

Members of the public, including Lindsay supporters, were allowed to speak and at times the discussion got heated, with Spicer repeatedly asking participants to be brief, allow others to speak and not interrupt. Also, some people from Boardman and Irrigon attended the meeting. At one point a member of the crowd did call for a sheriff deputy to come to the meeting, however he did not arrive until the meeting was almost over and there were no physical confrontations at the gathering which was held at the local pizza shop across the street from the courthouse in Heppner.

Also speaking at the gathering was Boardman Rural Fire District Chief Michael Hughes, whose organization has a separate complaint against the two commissioners. Hughes' organization is in a dispute with both the county commission and the Morrow County Medical District about ambulance service in the Boardman area.

Hughes says he wants his organization to be able to provide ambulance service in north Morrow County, however the county has so far not granted him that license. The issue has become involved over discussions of authority and state regulations with both

the fire and health districts hiring lawyers over the dispute. Hughes has been to several county commission meetings asking for the license, with both Doherty and Lindsay so far not granting it. Some members of the audience at Monday's meeting did question Hughes' motivations in seeking the license.

The refusal has caused Hughes and the Fire District to become involved in the recall effort. And although their reasons are not stated on the filed petitions, he and members of the district were at the meeting picking up signature petitions to get the recall on the ballot.

According to County Clerk Bobbi Childers, the petitioners will have 90 days in which to gather 564 valid signatures of registered county voters and return them to her office. The clerk then has 30 days to validate the signatures and make sure they are legitimate. The clerk will then inform the recalled commissioner of the validated petition and the commissioner then has five days in which they can resign, or a county-wide recall election must be held within 35 days. Petition gatherers have indicated they are shooting to gather 700 signatures to ensure they meet the validation threshold.

According to records not only has a county commissioner never been recalled in the 137-year-old history of Morrow County, but a recall effort has also not even been successfully initiated against a commissioner. Morrow County was created in 1885 from the western portion of Umatilla County and a small portion of eastern Wasco County. It was named after Jackson Lee Morrow, an early settler in the area and member of the Legislative Assembly when the county was created.

If the recall election is

successful against Lindsay she would be removed from office and the remaining two board members would choose a successor to fill out the remainder of her term, which expires in January 2023. Heppner resident David Sykes was recently elected in the primary to position number three, Lindsay's current spot. Lindsay had not run for election in position three but chose instead to run in the recent election for position number two. She lost by 27 votes to Irrigon resident Jeff Wenholz. Current position two commissioner Don Russell chose not to seek re-election.

If a recall is successful against Jim Doherty, he would be removed from office position number one, and the remaining two commissioners would then choose his successor. That person would then serve out the remainder of Doherty's two years he has left of a four-year term.

If both Lindsay and Doherty are recalled leaving only one commissioner, then it appears Oregon law says the governor will pick one person to fill one of the spots, and the then those two commissioners would choose someone to fill the empty third seat. "If vacancies exist at the same time in all but one of such offices, the Governor shall appoint one qualified person who, with the incumbent serving in office,

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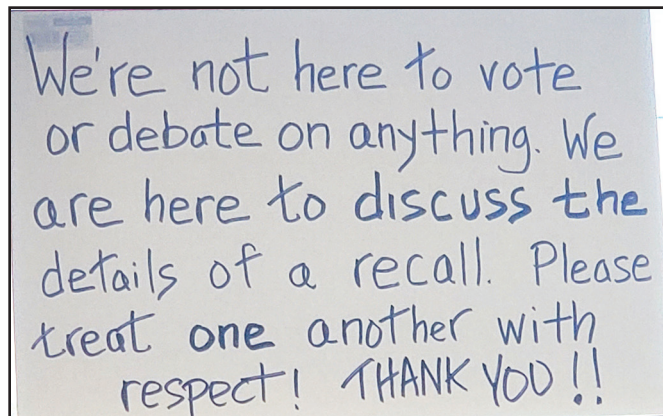
Welcome to the Morrow County Fair & Oregon Trail Pro Rodeo
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The special fair insert to be included in the August 10 issue of the Heppner Gazette-Times is seeking your stories related to 4-H, fair, rodeo, etc. Businesses are also invited to submit their ads for this special publication.

The deadline for articles and ads is Tuesday, August 2 at 5 p.m. Ads may be submitted via email to graphics@rapidsolve.net and stories to editor@rapidsolve.net. For additional information contact the G-T at 541-676-9228.



Sign at the meeting

shall appoint another, each to perform the duties of the offices until the vacancies are filled." (ORS 236.225) At Monday's meeting copies of both the Doherty and Lindsay signature petitions were made available for petition gatherers to take with them. The meeting lasted about 45 minutes, however people remained later discussing county issues.

Lindsay Statement
"I have read the petitioners charges against my service and would like to address the primary complaint, my vote in the recent action to dismiss county administrator. I respect petitioners desire to support their friend and family and can empathize that the lack of available information and access to facts is hard to understand and frustrating. I am writing to explain that it is my duty as an elected official to follow legal advisors and heed public meeting protocol, all of which left a lot of questions about the personnel decisions.

"County commissioners are duty bound to not to disclose any details of the legal work around personnel, outside of the public record. Personnel decisions follow the protocol that county has had in place

for many years; whereby county brings in third-party professionals to investigate or to provide counsel in circumstances when employees desire to disclose sensitive information without fear of reprisal or political misdirection. Third party legal and personnel services are common in both private and public sector businesses as a way to create safe environments for employees and to ensure an unbiased and confidential process.

"In the recent matters, commissioners relied upon the advice of five professional and licensed attorneys including those specialized in labor law. Additionally, commissioners, as part of normal process, rely upon county counsel, Justin Nelson for legal advice on public meeting laws. The county's labor pre-loss company serves as labor counsel for 98 percent of cities in Oregon and 78 percent of counties. Review was provided confidentially to all three commissioners. The parties were provided with policy and facts under policies.

"What added to the

-See RECALL/PAGE SIX

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