



# the HEPPNER GAZETTE TIMES

50¢  
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## Mayor, paramedic seek Boardman ambulance licensing

### However, EMS board pursues end to 911 dispatching

An ongoing disagreement between the Morrow County Health District and Boardman Fire Rescue over ambulance service in north county was the topic of discussion at Monday's Emergency Medical Services (EMS) advisory board meeting.

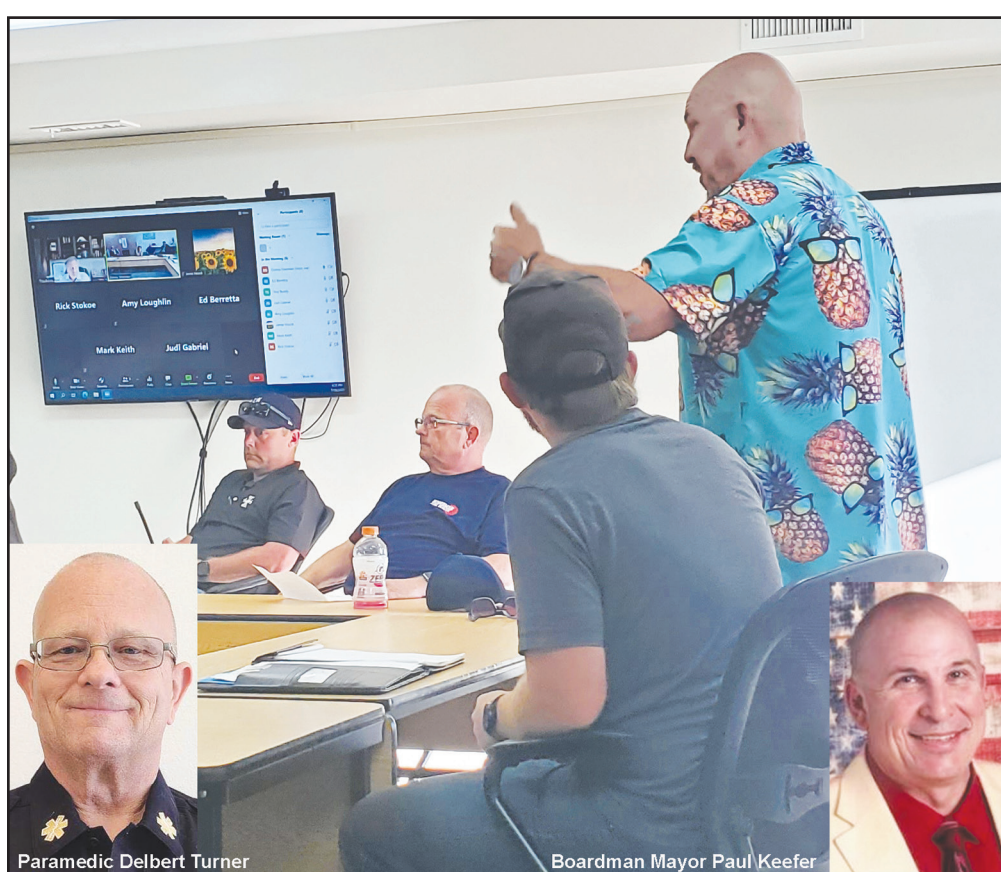
After hearing pleas from both the mayor and a longtime county paramedic, however, the board voted unanimously to request that the sheriff no longer dispatch most 911 calls to the Boardman Ambulance.

Both Boardman Mayor Paul Keefer and paramedic Del Turner attended the meeting urging board members to work together with Boardman to end the dispute, which has blocked Boardman Fire ambulances from obtaining a county license and transporting patients. "I don't get the conflict," Keefer told the board during public comment section at the beginning of the meeting. "We have an opportunity here to increase EMS in the city of Boardman and I do not get the conflict."

Both Boardman Fire and the health district have ambulances stationed in the city, and 911 has been dispatching both on emergency calls. The EMS board's letter to the sheriff's office will request Boardman Fire no longer receive those 911 calls.

In a plea to end the dispute, Mayor Keefer asked the board to set aside politics and do what he says is best for the citizens of Boardman. "I think we are forgetting about them. We have the opportunity to provide ultimate and better care and I don't get why we are being stubborn, and our entities are not providing a better service. What is the problem we can't make our ambulance service and our EMS service the best possible?" he asked.

Keefer said since Boardman is growing there is a need for more ambulance service. "Boardman is growing. Boardman is getting bigger. Boardman wants better service and who cares who is in charge. Get over it and lets figure out how we are going to make the service the best service possible," Keefer urged. "There are five ambulances in Boardman, and we can only use two. I am hoping that whoever is making the decisions start thinking about having to



Boardman Mayor Paul Keefer (standing) and longtime paramedic Del Turner (seated right) speak at recent EMS meeting about on-going ambulance standoff with the Morrow County Health District.

make sure that Boardman and the other areas have the best service possible." He said it wasn't necessary that all ambulance services in all the communities of the county be exactly the same. "If one service in a community gets better service because of the situation they are in, so be it. Doesn't have to be equal all over the county because we are not equal in our communities," Keefer stressed.

Also, in attendance and speaking during the public comment period at the beginning of the meeting, was long time paramedic Delbert Turner, who originally worked for the health district and now works for Boardman Fire. He was recently removed from the EMS board. "I don't understand why I am being removed from this committee just because I changed employment?" Turner asked.

Turner read a statement which included his long experience as a first responder in Morrow County. "I have lived in Morrow County most of my life. I lived in Heppner 28 years, Boardman 29 years, and I have served as a first responder for over 30 years including law enforcement, fire and EMS," Turner stated, adding that he has "a unique perspective on the needs and politics of both communities, north and south of our county."

He too urged Boardman Fire be allowed to operate ambulances, saying if they are denied there could be consequences for the health district. "If the Morrow County Health District continues on its current path it will be devastating at the ballot box," Turner warned. "Simply put any agency trying to stop a highly respected fire department from serving its community will embolden and polarize the voters to a degree of anger that will simply not be a good

outcome for the Morrow County Health District." Turner said the only solution for the situation is for all involved to "forget the attorneys, build a partnership between both parties, reduce costs and share and provide an EMS system for a growing community and help both agencies to serve these communities."

He asked that the EMS board reverse its July 8 decision to remove him and allow him to keep his seat on the board. "I would like to retain my seat on this committee and keep a more sensible perspective to serve the communities we are charged with to create the best possible EMS system for our communities. "Why does a 14-year medic with the Morrow County Health District all of sudden decide to leave and go to work for the Boardman Fire Department?" Turner asked. "I have decades of service to this county and this community; I have a unique perspective that should be recognized and be on this committee. It has gotten to a point where it does not make sense." Turner had recently, at the March meeting, been reappointed to the board, which is charged with advising on emergency medical services in the county, but then later removed when he quit the medical district's Boardman ambulance crew and joined the Boardman Fire staff.

It is the county commissioner who is ultimately responsible for issuing an ambulance operating license in the county, and Boardman Fire and Rescue Chief Michael Hughes has attended several commissioner meetings requesting that action. So far commissioners have not complied and now both sides have hired lawyers for the dispute.

The disagreement has also spilled over into the current recall effort going

on against county commissioners Melissa Lindsay and Jim Doherty. Both have refused to move forward and grant Boardman a license with the third Commissioner, Don Russell, being in favor.

Hughes went as far as to attend an initial public recall meeting held last week in Heppner, where he spoke to the crowd about his disagreements with the commissioners. Although his reasons are not stated on the recall petitions, he and members of the fire district were at the meeting picking up signature petitions to take back to Boardman.

At Monday's EMS meeting, in addition to voting unanimously to send a letter to the sheriff's office requesting an end to dispatching Boardman Ambulances on most emergency calls, the board also voted to appoint Jamie Houck, director of nursing service from Pioneer Memorial Hospital to the EMS board. At last month's meeting, the board appointed Richard Hernandez, an EMT with the district ambulance team in Boardman, to fill a vacant spot on the advisory board.

According to the EMS advisory board rules board members will be included from this group:

1. The supervising physician for the ambulance

## Fire departments receive grant



Pictured (L-R): Josie Miles, Eastern Oregon Operations Manager NFCS/Lexington volunteer firefighter; Chief Charlie Sumner, Lexington Fire Department; Chief Steve Rhea, Heppner Fire Department; Chief Virgil Morgan, Lone RFPD and Eric Orem, Local Advisor NFCS/Heppner RFPD board member/lone fire fighter. -Contributed photo.

The Heppner, Lone and Lexington Fire Departments received a Joint Grant from Northwest Farm Credit Services for three thermal imaging cameras and 50 pagers totaling \$37,000. Northwest Farm Credit offers grants through their Stewardship Giving Program to non-profit organizations for a variety of projects. These projects are for the benefit of the

communities the non-profit organizations serve.

The generosity of NFCS is deeply appreciated by all three departments. "The thermal imaging cameras provide an important tool to detect fire and heat on the fire ground and the pagers are replacing current ones that are over 20 years old," advises Heppner Fire Department Chief Steve Rhea.

## Lexington receives \$4,000 technology grant

The town of Lexington was recently notified it had been awarded a grant for \$4,025 to be used for "Technology Enhancements for Town Hall." The money will be used to purchase a system designed to share meeting materials, agendas and other public documents and information with the public. Town Recorder Veronica Hess, who worked on the grant, said the system would also allow town hall meetings to be attended virtually and for a town web site.

also installed a street sign for E. East and A street and moved the street sign from the side of C to the adjacent corner of C and West Street where it was originally. This allows for better visibility after it was knocked over.

The council heard a report from councilmember Katie Imes who is applying for a Transportation Growth Management grant. The grant would be used to develop a downtown improvement plan and transportation system planning. Imes said these studies will help the town for future development and grant writing for other projects.

Hess said he removed dead trees and branches that were obstructing power lines, and also killed Hemlock along the water way on B street by the bridge, by the FEMA park water way, and under Arcade Street bridge. He said he also caught up on the mowing of all easements, alleyways and empty lots except for a few areas.

Imes also said it was time to apply for Small City Allotment grant if it wanted to. This is a state grant and has been upped to \$250,000 for those cities who are awarded.

Hess said the town could use a field and brush mower in order to handle the areas with tall grass and heavy brush. He talked to equipment manufacturer DR's sales representatives and got a recommendation for the model which would best fulfill the town's needs and at what price. He is going to look at the budget and see if there are funds available and then report back to the council at a later date. There are also attachments for the equipment that would be of use to the town.

The council heard a report from maintenance man Keith Hess who said he installed new meters at 290 and 285 A street. He

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service provider, which is Dr. Ed Berretta from Morrow County Health District.

2. An EMT from each ambulance service provider location. One each from Boardman, Heppner, Lone and Irrigon.

3. Director of nursing service or designee, one from Pioneer Memorial

Hospital in Heppner and one from Good Shepherd Hospital in Hermiston.

4. One fire department representative

5. One 911 representative

6. One Quick Response Team representative from Lexington

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