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<b>Heppner</b>	
<b>GAZETTE-TIMES</b>	
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Morrow County's Home-Owned Weekly Newspaper	
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## Administrator files \$750,000 lawsuit

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Green. (Darrell was then serving as not only the LPHA Director but as the county administrator.)

In her BOLI complaint Debra alleges that county Human Resource Director Lindsay Grogan issued a disciplinary action against her "claiming that I should not have sent the email to the LPHA because the director is my husband. Prior to my whistleblowing activities, respondent (Morrow County) had no problems with my communication with the LPHA and never informed me that I should not contact them".

She was then told not to contact the LPHGA "because of my family relationship," and to contact Rivera, and with the next step-up reporting to county counsel Justin Nelson. After becoming a whistleblower Debra says she never received a response to her reporting the alleged document falsifying incidents to the county.

Following the investigation and included in his termination letter Bischof said the inquiry showed "that not only is Deb continuing to engage in misconduct, but the Nepotism Compliance Agreement is not having the desired effect." He said the investigation showed that Darrell violated the nepotism agreement and that employees of the health department "who have been uncomfortable in the work environment due to concerns of real or perceived nepotism between the two of you and have a concern that if Deb doesn't like an employee, it could adversely affect that employee's career opportunities with the County," Bischof said.

The letter concluded that in accordance with county policy on relatives and family members working together the county is giving them both "30 days to decide which one of you will resign from employment. It has become evident that it is no longer feasible to have you both working for the County." Neither resigned and both were subsequently fired.

Bischof also said none of Debra's allegations about retaliation by the county for whistleblowing were substantiated by the investigation.

**Wrongful discharge**  
In the second claim of his lawsuit Darrell says

according to state law "an employee should not be discharged solely because of the employment of another family member so long as the employee is not in a position of exercising supervisory, appointment or grievance authority over the member of that employee's family." And Darrell says at no time after December of 2020 was he his wife's supervisor.

Darrell says he had a legal right to refuse the county's ultimatum to resign as demanded in Bischof's letter, and thus when the county fired him it was a wrongful discharge.

The complaint says Darrell has incurred and continues to incur loss of income from the county's actions, including \$25,000 to date and either reinstatement as county administrator or "in lieu of reinstatement" \$225,000 in "front pay" or an amount that will be "determined more fully at trial."

### Violation of open meetings law

In the third claim of his lawsuit Darrell Green charges that Morrow County violated state public meetings laws by "considering and deliberating about the investigative report" (outlined above) outside of a public meeting or executive session and determining in those illegal meetings that either Darrell or Debra should be terminated.

Darrell also claims the county did not provide him with notice of the meeting and an opportunity request an open meeting as required by Oregon law.

He says county officials held other meetings to talk over complaints against him outside of regular or executive sessions and without notifying him as is required by law, which would have allowed him to request an open meeting for those discussions also.

Judgements Green is seeking include \$25,000 in back pay and reinstatement as county administrator. In lieu of reinstatement he is seeking \$225,000 in front pay or payment to compensate an employee in a manner such that the violation never occurred, \$500,000 for mental stress, humiliation and inconvenience, and the county paying his attorney fees.

## ~ Letters to the Editor ~

The Heppner Gazette Times will print all letters to the Editor with the following criteria met: letters submitted to the newspaper will need to have the name of the sender along with a legible signature. We are also requesting that you provide your address and a phone number where you can be reached. The address and phone number will only be used for verification and will not be printed in the newspaper. Letters may not be libelous. The GT reserves the right to edit. The GT is not responsible for accuracy of statements made in letters. Any letters expressing thanks will be placed in the classifieds under "Card of Thanks" at a cost of \$10. Email to editor@rapidsolve.net or upload to Heppner.net.

## Why I Like Christine

Christine Drazon was introduced by Greg Smith at a recent meeting of Morrow County Republicans. I had barely heard of her till then but feel like I actually know her now. Why? Several reasons.

Greg Smith is a very well respected representative for our district and I trust his judgement. Greg was extremely well pleased with Christine's performance as a true conservative while serving as an elected representative in her district. In checking her voting record I found that it backs up Greg's assessment completely.

Also, she is a choice, not an echo to quote another conservative woman from years gone by. Clearly Christine is a choice for positive conservative leadership in Salem. Leadership which has been sorely lacking during the past decade. The echo in this race is clearly Betsy Johnson. I also checked Betsy's voting record. Betsy has been a democrat for years and years and has most always voted the party line in Salem. She now identifies as an Independent and says she will follow neither the Democrat or the Republican line. However just because someone identifies as one thing does not mean

that they are not the same old thing. In her case she is really a Democrat at heart and her future performance can rightfully be assumed to parallel her past performance. Don't be fooled by her current identification as an Independent. Another reason to like Christine is because she is tough when toughness is called for.

Remember the Republican walk out of the state a few years ago in order to avoid voting on a crippling carbon initiative. Christine was the Republican who had the guts to lead her caucus on that walk out. How great was that? Last but certainly not least, Christine is strongly pro-life and a strong supporter of family values. Besides all of the above Christine has a firm handshake all the while looking you in the eye.

She also exudes firmness and passion in her speech and compassion where compassion is due. Christine has won me over and I am sure the same applies to everyone who was present at the meeting. How about you? Won't you please vote for a great choice this time and not merely an echo? Please do so.

Jack Meligan  
Heppner

## Mediation could help end ambulance dispute

*Continued from page one*

sioner meeting Boardman Fire Chief Michael Hughes had asked for something similar, suggesting that a problem-solving group be formed to address the issue and look for a solution to the dispute.

Hughes asked Doherty to consider appointing a committee to work out solutions to the dispute. "You suggested a couple of times that the health district and the fire district get together and work on an ASA) plan together. I would like to take advantage of that by suggesting that you appoint Deputy District Attorney Zach Williams to oversee a committee so we can form a more up to date modern ASA," Hughes said. He said the current plan has been in place since 1991 and needs to be updated and suggested that a diverse group of community leaders be formed to look into it. Hughes said he would like to see two representatives each from both the health district and the fire district, representatives from the sheriff office, Boardman Police Department, and the

cities of Heppner, Lexington, Irrigon and Boardman on the committee. He also doesn't want either the health or fire district's attorneys there.

"We come together and put an ASA plan together that Mister Williams can bring back to the county commission for recommendation," Hughes proposed. "That way I believe we have balance and input from different cities because they are going to have different needs and wants depending on the size of the community," he explained. "I have come to you to ask if you would consider making this happen," he asked. "Certainly, I think when we have come together the last couple of years and the board has been supportive of the health care folks and yourself, trying to work things out," Doherty responded. "Ultimately, we are tasked with the best expected health care through the folks that do those kinds of things. Certainly we would consider that," Doherty told Hughes at the time.

## Red Barn Fun Run this Saturday Sept. 10

The Red Barn Fun Run is this Saturday Sept. 10. There will be a 5k, 2mile, 1 mile run/walk. Register is the morning of the run starting at 7:45 am. The race starts at 8:30 am at the LDS Church located at the

corner of Tom Street and Highway 74 in Lexington. The course is flat and paved and everyone is invited. Cost is \$15 to run/walk and tee shirts cost \$5 with the proceeds going to the Heppner Cross Country Team.

## Celebration of life for Bob Riddle

A celebration of life for Robert (Bob) Riddle will be held September 18 who died September 3, 2020. The celebration will also be for his sister Anna Marie (Winters) Buck who died September 17, 2020. Celebration will start at the Echo

Cemetery at 10:00 for Anna Marie and then gather at the Hermiston Cemetery for Bob Riddle at 11:00 with a old fashioned Winters/Riddle family picnic meal to follow at the Hermiston Senior Center 255 NE 2nd street at 12:00. Please join as for any of the gatherings or all of them. "We would love to have you join us for stories during the meal," said a family member.

## Time to deal with Amazon the elephant in county

To the Editor:

It is time for Morrow County to deal with the quandary of an elephant in the room, in these case in the county. The Oregonian Sunday front page article, "How leaders in a small Oregon town positioned themselves for an Amazon 'windfall,'" (Mike Rogoway, Oregonian, 9/4/22) is a must read for Morrow County tax payers. Morrow County officials encouraged "Amazon with tax breaks worth nearly 50 million a year, a bonanza for one of the world's wealthiest companies...and a bonanza for a few of the public officials, too, as it turns out." (op.cit. p. 1 Rogoway) The elephant, Amazon and the officials they enrich, "wants to condemn farmland to make way for Amazon's power lines... (and has received) generous tax breaks which means less revenue for local schools" (op.cit. p. 14 Rogoway) plus higher water and electric rates for county residents. In this case 12,000 Morrow County residents that must subsidize Amazon because "Amazon is benefitting mightily from the deals it cuts from local officials." (op.cit. p. 14 Rogoway) And it is going to get worse. "The projected Amazon expansion in Morrow County will further enrich some of those same public officials who helped arrange the land sales or negotiated the tax breaks." (op. cit. P. 14 Rogoway).

So the question that begs to be asked: Who has been negotiating tax breaks for Amazon while positioning themselves for a windfall? In 2016 Inland Development Corp. a nonprofit Morrow County fiber optic company, created a subsidiary- Windwave Communications- to serve private business, primarily for Amazon. Windwave revenues soared to 9.8 million in 2017. "All four owners of Windwave held position on Inland's nonprofit board before they created their own for profit fiber optic company...The Port Morrow approved land sales and tax breaks in 2017, even while Port commissioners Jerry Healy and Marv Padberg were negotiating to buy Windwave." (op. cit. p. 15 Rogoway) "Morrow County Commissioner Don Russell, Windwave's fourth buyer, voted to approve tax breaks in his role on the county commission and led the enterprise zone board that negotiated the incentives... After acquiring Windwave they stood to benefit personally from that growth as Amazon bought more fiber for it's new data centers." (op.cit. p. 15 Rogoway).

Amazon is currently negotiating new tax breaks for five additional data centers collectively worth \$12 billion dollars. They are negotiating tax breaks from the same port commissioners and county commissioner that own Windwave and stand to profit from pro Amazon tax subsidies.

The sale of Windwave to county and port officials raises serious questions according to University of Washington finance professor Jarrad Harford. (op.cit. p. 16 Rogoway). 1) "The sale agreement did include a requirement that neither party notify customers of the transaction and also required that they also not

disclose it publically or in a press release." (op.cit. p. 15 Rogoway). 2) According to the non profits bylaws the sale from Inland to Windwave was not legal as only two of the five member board voted "short of the quorum required." (op. cit. p. 15 Rogoway) 3) Inland loaned some of the purchase price "far below market borrowing cost." (op.cit. p. 15 Rogoway) 4) "Oregon law generally bars nonprofits from making loans to their board members." (op. cit. p. 16 Rogoway) 5) The nonprofit it sold the business without seeking any competition using an analysis with disputed assumptions and unusual features that reduced the purchase price." (op.cit. p. 14 Rogoway)

The sweetheart deals the Port and County made with Amazon from 2016-20 "saved Amazon \$161 million over the past five years including \$47 million last year." (op.cit. p. 16 Rogoway) The reason Jim Doherty is the subject of an attempted recall is his opposition to continued sweetheart deals for Amazon at the expense of Morrow County tax payers. Don Russell has led the charge to recall Doherty. He is president of the enterprise zone that negotiates with Amazon for its tax breaks and largely controls distribution of payments the company makes that partially offset these incentives.

It is imperative for Morrow County citizens to demand no more sweetheart deals for Amazon. The present politically controlled enterprise taxing zone system allows Amazon and those that profit from Amazon (the elephant in the county) to control who gets the tax bonanza. Amazon needs Morrow County not visa versa. They need our water, our electricity, our land, and favors from some of our elected officials. "Power from Morrow County's electric utility is 540% dirtier than it was before Amazon arrived." (op. cit. p. 14 Rogoway) It is time to end the Amazon enterprise zone tax scheme that is pitting city against city and leaves Morrow County taxpayers to foot the bill. The present enterprise zone taxing scheme will continue to cause division, resentment, and divide North against the South until no official of integrity will be able to stand.

No more tax deals for Amazon until the funds are distributed fairly (schools, health, roads, libraries, etc) and the Amazon tax rate is negotiated by elected officials with 1) no conflict of interest, 2) that represent taxpayers and 3) honor the heritage of integrity set by our forefathers.

Stuart Dick

## Morrow SWCD to meet

Morrow SWCD will meet Tuesday, September 13th beginning at 6pm at the Ag Service Center in Heppner. To join via Zoom or conference call, please contact the SWCD beforehand at 541-676-5452. Meetings of the Morrow SWCD are open to the public.

DEADLINE:  
MONDAYS  
AT 5PM

