



# the HEPPNER GAZETTE TIMES

50¢

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## Gazette-Times changing ownership

### Next generation taking over



David and April Sykes (left) hand the keys to the Heppner Gazette-Times Newspaper over to the new owners Andrew, Christopher and Rachel Sykes. Christopher is holding son Waylon and Rachel is holding daughter Sophie.

The Heppner Gazette-Times newspaper will be changing hands soon, with Andrew and Christopher Sykes taking over operation of the business. They are the sons of current owners David and April Sykes, who have owned and operated the newspaper since 1980.

The business has expanded since David and April purchased it 42 years ago, with the Heppner location adding a printing business and then opening a second commercial printing business in Pendleton

in 1988.

Christopher has already assumed duties as the new publisher of the newspaper, and Andrew will continue to operate the Pendleton business, called Sykes Brothers Printing. Christopher and his wife Rachel along with their two children, son Waylon and daughter Sophie, previously lived in Pendleton, where he also worked at Sykes Brothers. However, they recently moved to Heppner, where the couple has bought a home. Andrew lives in Pendleton, where he



In this photo from the June 28, 1980 issue of the Gazette-Times, David and April Sykes are shown purchasing the newspaper and taking keys from previous owner Jerome Sheldon. David is holding son Christopher while April is holding their son Andrew, the new owners of the newspaper.

continues to manage Sykes Brothers Printing.

Both Andrew and Christopher grew up around the Gazette-Times, doing a variety of jobs while growing up. When young they both did odd jobs around the shop and then later learned all the other skills necessary to run a small business, such as sales, printing press operator, building maintenance, bookkeeping and money management.

The Gazette was founded in 1883 and in 1910

merged with the Heppner Times. The paper has been in continuous publication since then and is the 10<sup>th</sup> oldest newspaper in the State of Oregon.

Andrew and Christopher's ownership of the Gazette-Times will continue a long family tradition of newspaper proprietorship that dates back to their grandparents, Earl and Myrtle Sykes, who owned and published the Umpqua Courier in Reedsport, OR for many years. Earl and

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## County commission reaches tax agreement for solar project

By Andrea Di Salvo

The Morrow County Board of Commissioners has reached an agreement with Echo Solar for a new solar farm east of Bombing Range Road. The agreement is for a 17-year PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) agreement for a 1,250-megawatt alternating current (MWac) maximum capacity solar system. It would be located on 10,900 acres of mostly dry land wheat ground about 15 miles northeast of Lexington.

Jeff Fox of Gallatin Power, one of the partners in the project, was present at the Nov. 2 board of commissioners meeting as a follow-up to an earlier discussion in May of this year. At that time, he reminded the board, they had discussed how a tax abatement program would be "beneficial to the project" and that it would be helpful to set up that agreement before construction began. Echo Solar had then begun PILOT program negotiations with Morrow County.

"Hopefully we're at the end stages of that," he said. Though county commissioners have dealt with similar negotiations through such entities as the Columbia River Enterprise Zone (CREZ) and Strategic Investment Program (SIP), this is the first such PILOT program the board has ne-

gotiated. The law allows for a negotiated term up to 20 years and a negotiated rate of between \$5500 and \$7000 per MWac.

Fox told commissioners Echo Solar was interested in a 20-year PILOT agreement and that the project was willing to pay the maximum rate of \$7000 per MWac for the solar farm's maximum expected output. That would mean a payment of \$8,750,000 per year for the life of the PILOT program, after which normal tax payments would resume. Projected tax payments after the PILOT program ended were projected to be nearly \$20 million for the first several years.

Fox said the tax estimate assumed a cost buildup. He also said that Echo Solar would be billed at maximum capacity throughout the program but that they don't anticipate operating at capacity from the get-go.

"We would not, in all likelihood, be able to bring on that much capacity at a single time, so we anticipated coming on in phases," he said. He also said the project does not have set stages planned yet, though it could be around 400 MW at a time. "But that's aggressive."

"I really appreciate you coming in at the full \$7000," Lindsay said. "I think Morrow County is worth it. I think we have the demand, we have the lines, and we have the corporations ready and willing to buy," she said.

However, she added that she thought 20 years was too long a term. "I don't think our neighbors are going a full 20 years. I think purchase power agreements are strong, so I don't know why we have to give up that extra forty million for that five years,"

Lindsay said. "I agree with enticing, and I agree with helping these projects get off the ground, but I think 20 is too long for me."

Fox said the reduced tax benefit would be "meaningful" to the project. "The expectations are that energy storage is going to be pretty pricey in the time frame we're talking about building this project because of competition with electric vehicles and putting batteries in those electric vehicles, because that's basically the same technology we use.

"An additional five years of tax benefit is very helpful," he added.

Logan Stephens, Senior Director of Project Development at Pine Gate Renewables in Santa Fe, NM was present at the meeting via Zoom. He added that they were comfortable with \$7000 at the full 20 years but "if we want to look at some other alternatives, we'll need to do some additional modeling at our side to see what the impacts are to the economics on our side."

Morrow County commissioner Don Russell pointed out that the industry has changed since neighboring counties set up their renewable energy agreements.

"To compare the program today to what our neighbors in Gilliam and Sherman got a couple of years ago—it's not the same program," he said, adding that it used to take 10 acres to produce one megawatt, but now that's down to six acres. Gilliam and Sherman counties use Rural Renewable Energy Zones, which are similar to enterprise zone agreements.

Fox said they intended to begin moving dirt in 2024 and have some portion online by the first quarter of

## Nichols takes first at cross country state championship

### Three runners place in top 10; boys' team takes third



Trevor Nichols crosses the finish line in first place at the 2A/1A cross country championship in Eugene last week. -Contributed photo

Heppner's Trevor Nichols topped the podium for the men at the Oregon cross country 2A/1A state championship Nov. 5 in Eugene. Nichols took the top individual spot in the championship by running the 5,000-meter course in a time of 16:10.

Running a close second was Heppner teammate Grady Greenwood of

Condon, who was hot on Nichols's heels with a time of 16:12.9.

The boys' team as a whole placed third in the championship race with a score of 90 and an average time of 17:46.

Also running for the boys' teams were Jacob

Finch, who placed 21<sup>st</sup> with a time of 18:03; Carson

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## Heppner slays Dragons 26-0



Senior David Cribbs leads the charge in tackling a Monroe player during last week's playoff game in Heppner. -Photo by Kirsti Cason

The Heppner Mustang football team won their first-round OSAA 2A State Football Championship playoff game last Saturday. The Mustangs beat the Monroe Dragons 26-0 to advance in the playoffs. They will play a home

quarterfinal game at Les Payne Field this Saturday at 1 p.m. against the Regis Rams. The Rams are the second-place team from the Tri-River Conference and have an overall record of 9-1 for the season.

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## Recall ballots have been mailed out

### Election deadline November 29

Ballots for the recall of county commissioners Melissa Lindsay and Jim Doherty have been mailed out county-wide and are now awaiting the decision of voters.

Ballots are due by Tuesday, Nov. 29, in this special election, which is separate from the just concluded general election. Remember, ballots are not forwarded. Those who have not received ballots but believe they should have should contact the Morrow County Clerk's office as soon as possible at 541-676-5604.

All ballots are due by 8 p.m. Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 29. Ballots must be postmarked no later than Nov. 29 to be counted.

For voter convenience, 24-hour drop boxes are located throughout the county. Drop boxes close at 8 p.m. on Election Day. Locations are as follows:

**Heppner:** In the parking lot behind the Bartholomew Building (24 hours) or the Morrow County Clerk's Office, Room 102 inside the courthouse. Open 8 a.m. to noon and 1-5 p.m., M-F and Election Day (Nov. 29) from 7 a.m. until 8 p.m.

**Lexington:** 365 West Hwy 74 (Public Works Parking lot). Open 24 hours.

**Ione:** Spring St. (in front of the turn to 3<sup>rd</sup> Street). Open 24 hours.

**Boardman:** NW Boardman Ave. (24 hours).

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