

The Official Newspaper
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

SEARCH OLD COPIES OF THE HEPPNER GAZETTE-TIMES ON-LINE:
<http://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/>

Published weekly by Sykes Publishing and entered as periodical matter at the Post Office at Heppner, Oregon under the Act of March 3, 1879. Periodical postage paid at Heppner, Oregon. Office at 188 W. Willow Street. Telephone (541) 676-9228. Fax (541) 676-9211. E-mail: editor@rapidsolve.net or david@rapidsolve.net. Web site: www.heppner.net. Postmaster send address changes to the Heppner Gazette-Times, P.O. Box 337, Heppner, Oregon 97836. Subscriptions: \$31 in Morrow County; \$25 senior rate (in Morrow County only; 65 years or older); \$37 elsewhere; \$31 student subscriptions.

Chris Sykes.....Publisher
Andrea Di Salvo.....Editor

Advertising

All News and Advertising Deadline is Monday at 5 p.m.

For Advertising: advertising deadline is Monday at 5 p.m. Cost for a display ad is \$5.25 per column inch. Cost for classified ad is 50¢ per word. Cost for Card of Thanks is \$10 up to 100 words. Cost for a classified display ad is \$6.05 per column inch.

For Public/Legal Notices: public/legal notices deadline is Monday at 5 p.m. Dates for publication must be specified. Affidavits must be requested at the time of submission. Affidavits require three weeks to process after last date of publication (a sooner return date must be specified if required).

For Obituaries: Obituaries are published in the Heppner GT at no charge and are edited to meet news guidelines. Families wishing to include information not included in the guidelines or who wish to have the obituary written in a certain way must purchase advertising space for the obituary.

For Letters to the Editor: Letters to the Editor MUST be signed by the author. The Heppner GT will not publish unsigned letters. All letters MUST include the author's address and phone number for use by the GT office. The GT reserves the right to edit letters. 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.

Obituaries

Virginia Edith Clark Durfey

Virginia Edith Clark Durfey passed away on Dec. 22, 2022, at Summit Springs Village in Condon, OR at the age of 103. A remembrance was held at Summit Springs Village on Wednesday, Dec. 28. A graveside service will be held in Prairie City, OR on Dec. 29.

Virginia was the daughter of Sterling and Emma (Brosig) Clark. She was born in Baker City, OR on Nov. 26, 1919. She joined a sister, LaVonne. Later, a younger brother, Dalton, made the family complete. She was raised on Indian Creek outside of Prairie City. She graduated from Prairie City High School in 1938.

After graduating high school, she married Horace Durfey at Prairie City. She worked as a cook at the hot springs out of Prairie City. She and Horace settled on a ranch out of Unity. To this union four boys were born—Norman Gary, Gregory Joe, Larry Dale and Gerald Lee. She worked in the grocery store at Unity and also was a cook at the Burnt River School. She worked on the ranch and helped in the fields. She helped the boys maintain forest service trails and fence maintenance. She was a wonderful neighbor and friend. Virginia was always willing to help others in need.

Along with raising her four boys, she enjoyed gardening, embroidery and quilting. She was a won-

derful homemaker and was known for her cooking. Her Sunday dinners were enjoyed by many. When they moved to Pendleton, she fed many Blue Mountain rodeo students as well as the baseball team members. She was outspoken; you knew where you stood with Virginia. She had a great sense of humor and quick wit. She enjoyed following her boys in sports through the years. She was very competitive herself. She gave 100 percent and she expected others to do as well.

She was preceded in death by her parents, sister LaVonne, brother Dalton Clark, and son Greg Durfey.

She is survived by her sons Norm (Delene) of Condon, Larry (Leanne) of Salem, OR, and Gerry (Rene) of Condon, nine grandchildren, 19 great-grandchildren, and three great-great-grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be sent to Summit Springs Retirement Village, PO Box 687, Condon, OR 97823 or Pioneer Memorial Hospice, PO Box 9, Heppner, OR 97836.

Sweeney Mortuary of Condon was in charge of arrangements. You may sign the online condolence book at www.sweeneymortuary.com.

Death Notice

Rena M. Henry—Rena M. Henry, 78, of Heppner, died Monday, Dec. 26, 2022, at Pioneer Memorial Hospital in Heppner. She was born February 2, 1944, at Pinedale, NM. No services are planned at this time. Sweeney Mortuary of Heppner is in charge of arrangements.

County commissioners talk broadband

-Continued from PAGE ONE

for this infrastructure bill. According to the new map, Morrow County is shorted in projection, about \$183 million under what the county would have gotten with the previous map.

"So we're in a phase now where communities need to challenge the FCC map, because this map is just as flawed as the previous ones were, to get as much money back as possible not only for the state of Oregon, but also for our communities," he said, adding that for each home fixed on the map, the state gets about \$4,200 back in this funding equation.

Moss said he has been asking federal legislators to make that process more transparent and help the state find the best way to get money back to the state of Oregon. Wyden's webinar was with the FCC and others to talk about how to get more money back to the state and communities.

"We as community members and as a state, hopefully, can find a way to do this efficiently. Instead of having individual people submit challenges on their own, we're trying to find a way for the county to do it," Moss said, adding that the \$183 million shortfall for Morrow County, "may be the difference, in our community, between building infrastructure to most people and to all."

Moss then explained that there's a process to get access to FCC data as an official licensee, and if you get access to the FCC data, you can look at the building footprints, see where they say houses are and what service levels each has, and from there you can present challenges. He requested the board of commissioners assign an official licensee to sign a license agreement with FCC to obtain that data.

Because he is not actually a Morrow County employee, Moss cannot take on the role himself. Since it's a GIS (geographic information system) based program, he suggested Morrow County GIS Planning Tech Stephen Wreescics, with whom he has worked collaboratively before. He added that there is no cost, just the need for the board to approve the action, and that he is not asking anyone to take on extra work.

"Once we have that, I can help work through...the challenge process," he said. Once the contract comes through, it will likely need to be reviewed by counsel.

Morrow County Commissioner Don Russell suggested CBEC as licensee, but Moss said his understanding was that the licensee had to be with the municipality. He also said the electric co-op would only be eligible for funds for their service area and wouldn't be able to get the services to the entire county.

The board voted 2-1 to appoint Wreescics the licensee. Doherty voted against the move but without comment.

Also at the meeting, outgoing Morrow County Transit Manager Katie Imes presented the Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) Plan for fiscal years 2023-25.

The STIF Plan was created to provide a dedicated source of funding for providing, maintaining and expanding public transportation for all users. Every two years, the public transportation funding is made available to "support access to jobs, improve mobility, relieve congestion

and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Oregon."

Imes added that, new this year, the department has asked all the agencies to tack on 20 percent contingency, which she included in 5310 and 5311 programs as well.

Imes said STIF allocation estimates for Morrow County were \$409,526 for 2024, \$426,221 for 2025, \$449,795 for 2026 and \$466,682 for 2027. Russell asked whether the funding and matching funds shouldn't come before the funding committee. Imes clarified that these numbers are for the following two fiscal years starting July 1, 2023 and that even though the state funding comes in two year cycles, the county's budget is broken down yearly and has to come before the budget committee and be approved by the board.

Imes said the two-year plan includes funding for four projects—match for capital projects, capital reserve, operations projects, and operations reserve.

The match total for capital projects is \$121,000 and includes up to \$26,000 for local match on capital vehicles, up to \$50,000 for local match to develop and construction of a bus barn/transit facility, and up to \$45,000 for bus stop signage, shelters, and passenger amenities.

"That would be for once the fixed route service starts," Imes added. "Once that gets going, then you kind of determine where you want your bus stop signs to be."

The capital reserve total is \$60,000 and includes reserve funds for additional match, equipment or vehicle replacement/expansion. The project will assist with any unanticipated shortfall and will support the county's demand response program and fixed route program.

Operations projects funding delivers the operations and match for Morrow County Public Transit/The Loop program necessary to preserve and expand existing services.

"This is the big one," Imes said. "This is what keeps everything moving along."

Tasks listed under this project included supporting of the ongoing expenses of delivering public transit services in Morrow County, providing the match for 5310, 5311 and STIF Discretionary grant programs, marketing and outreach, driver professional development program/CDL assistance, and contracting services with Good Shepherd Medical System Care-Van Transportation, which provides residents living in Boardman and Irrigon free transit to Good Shepherd Medical Facilities.

"This is new this year," said Imes, referring to the CDL assistance program. "The CDL requirements have changed at the federal level, so it's a lot more challenging for people to get their CDL nowadays. It's a lot more money and a lot more time."

"This is the start of a program that the committee thought would be very useful in recruitment," she added.

The total estimated cost of operations projects is \$3,071,405.

Operations reserve includes carryover for any other emerging opportunities that might come before the board and advisory committee, including demand response program operations, the Boardman/Port of Morrow circular,

Heppner to Boardman connector, Hermiston to Boardman connector and other emerging opportunities.

The board voted unanimously to approve the plan.

In other business, the Morrow County Board of Commissioners:

-Voted unanimously to increase wages for temporary flaggers and temporary park help from \$14.72 an hour to \$18 per hour. County Human Resources Director Lindsay Grogan told the board the wages for those positions were increased to \$14.72 in July of 2015. That increase was nearly eight years ago, and the positions have not received another increase since then. In 2015, the board had increased the wage on the basis that the positions fell around range six of the AFSCME General Scale, which is now \$18.10 per hour. Grogan also pointed out that transfer station attendees' wages were increased by public work to \$18 per hour in 2021. Based on all that, she asked that the wage be increased to \$18 per hour. The increase would affect four park positions and three flagger positions. Public Works Director Eric Imes and Parks General Manager Greg Close said their budgets could cover the increase.

Morrow County Commissioner Melissa Lindsay said she wanted it noted that although there were not benefits, there were additional things given to the park employees that weren't given to other county employees, like free camping spots and propane.

"I'm still all for the increase, by all means, but I do think it's important to note that," she said.

Commission Chair Jim Doherty said that wasn't his understanding and asked Imes to address that. Imes clarified that increased wages are for temporary park help, not park hosts.

"Park hosts are contracted, so that's a whole different ball game," added Close. The park employees in question don't live at the park; they travel back and forth.

Lindsay questioned who got the additional spots, since there were spots reserved for more than just the hosts. Close replied that once was his and that MCSO also had spots provided by the county.

-Heard from Morrow County Planning Director Tamra Mabbott, who requested the board make appointments for three open planning commission positions. The Morrow County Planning Commission is a nine-position commission with representation from all regions of the county. Three positions from Ione, Irrigon and Heppner have become vacant, one from early resignation and two from expiring terms.

Position #4, Ione, was held by Rod Taylor, who resigned before the end of his term, which expires Dec. 31, 2025. Position #5, Irrigon, was held by Jeff Wenholz. It expires Dec. 31 of this year and Wenholz, who is a Morrow County Commissioner-elect, did not request reappointment.

Position #6, Heppner, was held by Greg Sweek and also expires Dec. 31, 2022. Sweek did request reappointment.

Elizabeth Peters of the Ione area submitted a letter of interest, as did Stephen

Henthorn and Charlene Cooley of Irrigon and John Kilkenny of Heppner.

"It's really nice that we had some new faces and some continuing and experienced folks interested in the planning commission," said Mabbott. "It sometimes takes a lot of work and not everyone is interested in putting that in. Sometimes things are controversial, and not everyone wants to step up to that."

"I appreciate everybody that steps up," Doherty agreed. "We've always in the past opened these positions up, and I think it's good. They're not life-long appointments. They're opportunities, and you come in and you do your fiscal service and maybe you move on to other things, and maybe you remain. It all depends." Doherty then moved to appoint Kilkenny to the position held by Sweek.

Russell disagreed with the move. "It's unusual for this board to no reappoint somebody, though it's not unheard of," he said.

The commissioners voted unanimously to appoint Elizabeth Peterson to the Ione position and Charlene Cooley to the Irrigon position. The board voted 2-1 to appoint John Kilkenny to the Heppner position, with Russell a nay vote.

-Heard the planning department monthly report from Mabbott. She said the county has a variety of energy projects and applications in various stages and that the department continues to work on interpretive signs for the Heritage Trail. The county received a \$10,000 Amazon Web Services grant for the signs. Russell brought up the potential need for more power lines, adding that it was a controversial issue and that he would like to see revenue for those whose lands were crossed by the lines.

-Heard the monthly treasurer's report from Morrow County Treasurer Jaylene Papineau. Total October interest less fees was \$63,239.09. Total paid out to taxing districts in October was \$2,013,026.11.

-Heard from Russell, who brought up the issue of what would happen after Dec. 20, which was the original certification deadline for the Nov. 29 recall election regarding Doherty and Lindsay. He said he realized the issue was sensitive but that he had spoken with both State Senator Bill Hansell and State Representative Greg Smith, who told him Governor Kate Brown intended to appoint commissioner-elect David Sykes to fill his position early if the election results were certified. If that were to happen, Russell said, the board would have a quorum and it would be his intention to schedule a meeting for Dec. 21. If the election were not certified and the governor did not make the appointment, there would be no quorum and no meeting.

"First and foremost, I think it's a little bit inappropriate to be talking about an election that has not yet been certified," said Doherty. "I'm not sure at this point that you have the power or the authority to schedule a meeting on the 21st. If things come to fruition on the 20th, then the 21st brings what the 21st brings, and you can certainly move forward from there."

Print & Mailing Services

* Design * Print * Mail

Sykes Publishing 541-676-9228