

Boardman Council meeting

-Continued from PAGE ONE but you'll see it going out," added Barajas.

Also at the meeting, the council heard from Morrow County District Attorney Justin Nelson, who attended the meeting to introduce himself and answer questions.



Justin Nelson

"This is a town that's growing, evolving, and new faces coming in, so I just apologize first for not being here sooner and not being here on a regular basis," Nelson said.

Nelson told the council he wanted to be a resource for their questions.

"When you have questions about criminal law and about prosecutions that are or may not be happening, you know your law enforcement, you know the chief, you know the Boardman Police Department (BPD), you know they're doing good work," he said. "You might have questions. What happens after the arrest? Why do you see a person who got arrested now back on the streets? Those questions come to me."

"You represent the city. People look to you," he added. "I want you to have that information."

Nelson also shared his background with the council, saying he was raised on a fourth-generation wheat farm in Morrow County. He has a degree in Ag business with a minor in natural resources law, and started his law career in 2007 in the Umatilla County DA's office. He said he wants to see a unified county.

"Even when I was growing up, there were divides in my community, divides between the north and the south end. Divides as in we don't communicate sometimes," said Nelson. "That's one thing I would hope to do as district attorney, is to combine that again. This is Morrow County, not north and south end."

Pettigrew asked if Nelson had hired an assistant, since the district attorney's office lost the assistant DA several months ago. Nelson responded that it's very difficult to find prosecutors, but they had been fortunate to hire Zach Williams this summer. Williams previously worked in Umatilla County, which is the same judicial district.

"There's a lot of value to having an attorney who already worked with the same judges we work with," he said, and "He loves criminal law."

"He's a 10," agreed Boardman Chief of Police Rick Stokoe. "Obviously we have a lot going on and Justin's busy, so some of the cases that kind of got put on the back shelf are getting prosecuted now. He meets with the officers on a regular basis, asks questions, gets involved with them. He's been a great addition to Justin's team."

Nelson agreed. He said some of that backlog is from increased law enforcement presence from both BPD and Morrow County Sheriff's Office, which means more criminals are being caught, which leads to more cases. Williams

is helping the DA's office catch up with that backlog.

Also at the meeting, citizen Jonathan Tallman addressed the council with multiple concerns during the public comment period. First, Tallman spoke to the fact that his property remains under eminent domain.

"The frustration to me is that the city lied about a permit they needed to the PUC," Tallman said, adding that he had brought it up to the council several times. "It has caused great heartache to me and has actually devalued my property."

Tallman said he feels that procedures and protocols have not been followed, and it has been frustrating and disheartening getting information on why they had not been followed. He said his business has had complaints and investigations, and that he has been harassed by public officials, being told to leave meetings and having the police called on him.

"Being told that I need to leave meetings and having the cops called on me when I bring up legitimate concerns about illegal meetings," he said. "More ethics complaints will be filed on those, too."

Last year Tallman had filed a complaint with the Oregon Government Ethics Committee (OGEC) regarding Boardman Mayor Paul Keefer, saying Keefer had



Jonathan Tallman

not complied with Oregon public meeting laws, specifically concerning executive sessions the council held in March of 2022. OGEC found grounds for investigation, but Keefer chose to settle the case without investigation.

Tallman went on to cite "Bogus investigations with no evidence that are still open today," unfounded police reports, and alleged stonewalling in requests for public records.

"I've been a victim of crimes and have dropped all charges. I still welcome working together, being involved in the process. I know it's nitty gritty, I know it's conflicting, but we have to work together going forward," Tallman said.

"Things that have been said about me have been libelous and slanderous. I'm sorry my frustration is coming out toward you, but let's get these things resolved. Let's resolve these things together."

In other business, Stokoe said the BPD is staying busy. "Obviously weather is coming into play," he said.

He also told the council that the BPD had been looking to fill a position for about eight months and had finally hired a Riverside graduate named Jason Navarro, who Stokoe said was a "good young man." Navarro has already started, but they won't be able to send him to the police academy until at least June unless an opening comes available earlier.

"So, unfortunately, it will be about a year, almost two years, before he's really ready to go on his own, just because of staffing shortages at the academy and not having the funding," Stokoe said.

Meanwhile, Navarro has been studying the policy manual and going out



Rick Stokoe

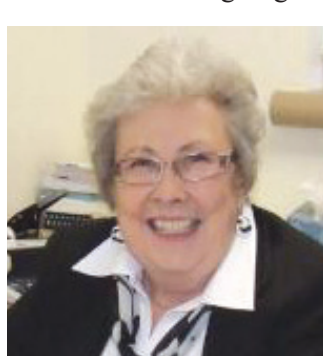
with officers as available.

Stokoe also said School Resource Officer George Shimer is getting to the point of retirement and that he thinks the department will lose the SRO in about a year. The BPD has been soliciting letters of interest in-house first. He said they would like the new SRO to be able to train with Shimer, and he's hoping to get Columbia River Enterprise Zone (CREZ) funds to cover it.

"It's a lot of work trying to find people. Really tough," he finished.

City manager Pettigrew addressed the population figures in her report to the council, saying the numbers the city got from Portland State University had gone down from last year.

"I was astounded when we got the new figures from PSU and we went down," she said. "We're going to



Karen Pettigrew

keep working on this, but it was really discouraging. When you're trying to site businesses here, it looks really poorly to have your census go down, when all of us who live here know that is not the case," she added.

She also told the council the city had volunteered to have the small cities meeting in Boardman and that she hopes to host it at the Boardman Senior Center.

In other business, the council:

- unanimously approved the city manager hiring standards;

- held an executive session to select city manager semifinalists and agreed on 12 candidates to move to the next step;

- unanimously passed a resolution to move \$20,000 out of contingency in the water reserve fund and move it to capital outlay to cover the cost of repairs;

- moved the January meeting date from January 3 to January 10 beginning with an executive session at 6 p.m.;

- heard that the building department is in the process of finding a building inspector

- heard that the estimate to replace the "Welcome to Boardman" sign hit by a driver was a little more than \$11,000. Stokoe said the driver that hit it was driving a rental car, and the city is trying to get the rental car company insurance to pay for it.

Morrow County receives funds for drinking water, emergency operations

Irrigon gets funds for business incubator

Morrow County and the city of Irrigon are among the recipients of funds for "essential community projects," Oregon's U.S. Senators Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden announced late last month. The funding package includes \$1.7 million for Morrow County and Umatilla County to address drinking water contamination of private wells, a hot topic in recent months.

"This federal funding will help our region move beyond the short term nitrate emergency and focus on a long-term solution for safe drinking water. Senator Merkley's support during the nitrate emergency has been so valuable. This new source of significant funding will allow Morrow and Umatilla Counties to develop and implement a standardized well testing program for domestic wells as well as develop a feasibility plan for permanent solutions such as public drinking water systems," said a joint statement from former Morrow County Commissioner Melissa Lindsay and Umatilla County Commissioner Dan Dorran. "The bi-county partnership will enhance other work within the Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area (LUBGWMA). We appreciate these joint County efforts and that of the Northeast Oregon Water Association and the Morrow and Umatilla County planning departments. We are very thankful that Senator Merkley and Senator Wyden supported this request and realized the critical need for this project."

Other Morrow County projects receiving funding were the Morrow County Primary Emergency Operations Center generator project, which received \$177,000, and the City of Irrigon business opportunity incubator at \$1 million.

"Irrigon is very excited about this funding. This grant brings opportunities for sustainable growth in our community and our region. The incubator development project will help entrepreneurs to take that first big step toward launching their own business," said Irrigon City Manager Aaron Palmquist of the funding. "The City of Irrigon is also grateful to the Port of Morrow for their generous financial and staff support for this project. The project fits hand and glove with the current business developments happening in our community."

Senators Merkley and Wyden, supported by several Oregon representatives, secured the funding in Congress's fiscal year 2023 omnibus appropriations package. A total of 145 community-initiated projects in Oregon were included in the package.

"Seeing the Emergency Operations Center Generator included in the list is exciting news for Morrow

County. Most of the resiliency projects that I have been involved in over the past few years will make Eastern Oregon stronger during any catastrophic event, and make all of Oregon more resilient," said H. Paul Gray, Morrow County Emergency Manager.



Aaron Palmquist

Both Senator Merkley and Senator Wyden hold a town hall in each Oregon county every year and say they work hard to ensure that local feedback informs every aspect of their work in Washington, D.C.

"No one knows the unique needs of communities across Oregon like the folks living and working in

them," said Merkley, who is the only Oregon member of Congress from either chamber to serve on the Appropriations Committee since Senator Mark Hatfield. "I joined the committee in 2013 to ensure Oregon has a strong voice in decisions about our nation's investments. Community-initiated projects are an incredible example of this, because these local and regional projects were generated at the ground level by folks who are working to make their communities better."

"These investments represent the best of the Oregon Way, namely that Oregonians in communities all across the state pulled together to determine their local quality-of-life solutions that will keep people safe and generate jobs that strengthen the economy," Wyden added.

The 145 Oregon community-initiated projects were spread out among bills produced by the Appropriations subcommittees, including 20 projects in the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittee, of which Senator Merkley is chair.

A View from the Hill

By Doris Brosnan

Residents and staff at Willow Creek Terrace view the quiet week between Christmas and New Year's Day as a time that enables reflection on the heartwarming activities of this season: the crafted apartment door decorations, the decked-out halls, the sounds of carols, the fellowship around the tree, the visit from Santa (bringing his and others' gifts for all), the prime rib dinner and ham dinner (compliments of local benefactors), the sharing of Christmas and New-Year memories. And now they greet the new year with more activities and hopes for a good year for all.

A New Year's Trivia game greeted 2023, with several residents earning some tasty prizes with their knowledge. The following day, Monday, everyone had an opportunity to guess the number of M&Ms in a large container. Both activities seemed good for putting those brain cells to work!

Soon, an opportunity to create Valentine's Day door decorations will be an activity led by volunteer Jackie Alleman. Jackie works at Home Health and Hospice and is a familiar volunteer at the craft table. Also dropping in on the second Sunday of each month, Jerry Conklin, the chaplain at Home Health and Hospice, entertains by singing familiar songs. Kathy Turner is another familiar face at the Terrace, as she brings her piano-playing talent for entertainment twice a month.

A new employee for the Terrace is Carl Lauretsen, who is now in charge of maintenance, part time. The need for additional staff, personnel and an administrator continues, so interested persons are encouraged to look at the Terrace's Facebook page, visit the Terrace, or call 541-676-0004 for information.

The month of January always seems especially quiet on the Hill, as the wait for springtime continues. Residents have the opportunity to relax in the warmth of their rooms as the weather outside changes from week to week or to pick and choose the activities they wish to participate in, which often make time seem to pass more quickly. Having control over those options is viewed by many as one benefit of life at the Terrace.

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Morrow County Veterans Services
 541-922-6420

Ione Community Church
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 Ione, Oregon
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Worship at 11:00 AM

"You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart."
 -Jeremiah 29:13
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