



Old Gazette office will be new center for business and art



From investigations to artistry: The corner of the building that used to house the sheriff's office will become an art gallery full of light, with space to create in a variety of media. -Photo by Andrea Di Salvo



Visitors will hardly recognize the former Gazette-Times office. Gutted right now, it will become a cluster of offices and a center for business services and training. -Photo by Andrea Di Salvo

By Andrea Di Salvo
Many in Heppner know that the Heppner Gazette-Times has moved to Main Street, leaving its old building on Willow Street dark and empty. What they may not know is that big plans are in the works behind those blank windows and concrete walls.

The Heppner Community Foundation (HCF) and Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group (WCVEDG) are teaming up to give new life to the space, along with much-needed resources for South Morrow County.

Kim Cutsforth, executive director of the Howard and Beth Bryant Foundation, said the space will be an innovative hub with resources ranging from business startups to art. The new hub has no name yet. For now, it's still referred to as the Gazette building.

In some ways, the project is an extension of the process that created the Gilliam & Bisbee Event Center.

"When we started the Gilliam Bisbee project, we didn't really know what we needed. We knew we needed something," Cutsforth said. "We didn't even know how badly we needed it."

She recalls that the Gilliam & Bisbee center had to cancel 22 booked events when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and the building hadn't even opened yet. With that project behind them, the Heppner Community Foundation began looking at other needs in the community. The availability of the old Gazette building provided the perfect opportunity to create the kind of flex space Cutsforth thought Heppner needed. While some plans are set in stone, others are flexible.

"It'll evolve," says Cutsforth. "You don't know what needs are here until you start offering to do it." Engineering Northwest created the designs for the project, and Allstott Construction is doing the work. For now, the space is entirely gutted. Cutsforth said they had to do an asbestos abatement, and there's a lot more that needs to go into making the space usable. The cement walls and timbered rafters that form the bones of the building will remain, and Cutsforth said they intend to use the existing structure as much as possible.

One major difference will be the amount of light in the building. Original windows that have been boarded up will be reopened to their original height, and windows will be added to the front of the building. Even the windows facing the Phelps's building will be taken back to their full original size, only possible because the Phelps gave an easement for window access—the windows require a 10-foot setback.

The existing roll-up garage door in the back of the building will remain, in a fashion. Cutsforth said it will be replaced by a rolling door with glass. The ground in the alley, which is currently higher than the floor inside the building, will be lowered. The rolling glass door and another door will let out onto a patio surround by a retaining wall.

The entire facility will

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Commissioners seek applicants for vacant position

By Andrea Di Salvo
The Morrow County Board of Commissioners is actively seeking applicants for Commissioner Position 1. The position was left vacant upon the recall of former commissioner Jim Doherty, and it is up to the two current commissioners to appoint someone to fill that vacancy. The term is unexpired and will end Jan. 6, 2025.

The board of commissioners is the governing body for the county and is responsible for county administration, management

and policy. It prepares and adopts county and service district budgets and provides administrative services, support and liaison to other public and government bodies. It is also responsible for conducting public meetings and private and public land sales and exchanges, as well as enacting ordinances, contracts and other legal agreements.

The board had spoken about the vacancy previously but revisited the appointment process at its regular meeting last week.

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Boardman city council accepts city manager's resignation, swears in new council members

Stokoe appointed temporary city manager



Boardman Mayor Paul Keefer presents a plaque of appreciation to outgoing councilor Leslie Pierson. -Contributed photo

By Andrea Di Salvo
At its first meeting of the new year, the Boardman City Council accepted the resignation, effective immediately, of City Manager Karen Pettigrew. She was elected in November to serve on the city council and said she felt it was best for the city to resign at this time.

"I know this transition is going to take some time,"



Boardman Mayor Paul Keefer swears in new councilor Karen Pettigrew. -Contributed photo

said Boardman Mayor Paul Keefer, thanking her for her service to the city.

At a special meeting Jan. 12, the council selected Boardman Assistant City Manager/Police Chief Rick Stokoe as the temporary city manager until a replacement could be chosen.

Keefer swore in elected councilors Roy Drago, Jr., Karen Pettigrew and Isaac Williams. All three were elected in the November General Election. Councilor Drago has served the past

four years on the council and was re-elected. Councilor Pettigrew is new to the council, replacing outgoing councilor Leslie Pierson. Councilor Williams was appointed to a vacant council seat in 2020 and was re-elected.

"This is a pretty cool thing to do as a mayor, to swear in new councilors," Keefer remarked.

All three councilors will serve on the council for a term ending Dec. 31, 2026.

The council voted 4-3 to elect councilor Heather Baumgartner council president for 2023. Williams was the other nominee.

Keefer also presented outgoing councilor Leslie Pierson a certificate of appreciation for serving the past three years on the city council.

City manager vacancy
Keefer noted that the issue of the city manager vacancy was not on the agenda. The position was left vacant upon Pettigrew's retirement. The council is in the process of interviewing candidates and held an executive session to that end before Tuesday's meeting, but no replacement has been chosen.

Acting Boardman City Recorder Jackie McCauley asked whether the council wanted to think further on it or if the public needed to be notified ahead of time

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Interim county administrator resigns



Greg Sweek

Morrow County is on the hunt for a new Morrow County Administrator after the surprise resignation of interim administrator Greg Sweek last week.

In his Jan. 13 resignation letter, Sweek told the Board of Commissioners,

"I regret to inform you that I can no longer perform the duties of Interim County Administrator. The demands of the job require more time than I can devote to the position. I want to thank you for your confidence in my ability to do the job and am disappointed that I cannot complete the task."

The board had appointed Sweek as interim administrator on Jan. 4.

Morrow County Commissioner David Sykes says he and Morrow County Commissioner Jeff Wenzholz will begin the search for a replacement immediately.

Lexington council swears in returning members

Council discusses water lines, IT issues



Lexington Town Councilor Bobbi Gordon (right) is sworn in by town recorder Veronica Hess at the Jan. 10 town council meeting. -Contributed photo



Lexington Town Recorder Veronica Hess swears in returning Lexington Town Councilor Katie Imes (left) at last week's meeting. -Contributed photo

By Andrea Di Salvo
Lexington Town Recorder Veronica Hess swore in returning council members Katie Imes and Bobbi Gordon. Imes is serving a two-year term in council position #3, and Gordon is serving a four-year term in position #4.

In her report, Lexington Mayor Juli Kennedy said that the May Day committee had a second meeting Jan. 9 and that plans are moving along. The committee discussed costs and a budget. The town will try to get funding from the Morrow County Unified Recreation District, and a budget is required for that funding proposal. That meeting is coming up on Jan. 27.

"I'm pretty sure this is it. We've looked into all these options, these are actual numbers, and this is what we're going to propose that we request for the May Day celebration," said Veronica Hess.

Hess also said she had received a form for request for Armed Forces participation in public events from Carol Doherty. The form is to request an Armed Forces musical unit, personnel, color guard, guest speaker, equipment or other participation in public events.

"I got very excited when I was reading it, so I did fill it out and send it to her contact," she said, adding that the form is still in draft phrase for council approval but that she sent it in so they could help with proper terminology for what to request for the May Day celebration. The Oregon National Guard is showing interesting in attending May Day, and it would be free of charge.

Mayor Kennedy also reported that she registered for a couple of trainings with the League of Oregon Cities (LOC). One is not until April, but there is a mayoral training in January

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