



# the HEPPNER GAZETTE TIMES

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VOL. 143 NO. 14 10 Pages Wednesday, April 5, 2023 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

## Robbery/burglary interrupted in Irrigon

County law enforcement interrupted an attempted robbery in Irrigon on Saturday, and three suspects were arrested for their suspected roles in the attempted burglary.

Around 6:50 p.m. on Saturday, April 1, Morrow County Sheriff's Office Communication Center (dispatch) received a 911 call from an individual on Wagon Wheel Loop in Irrigon advising that they had a trespasser. The caller told dispatch that a man was trying to enter the house and that he had a gun. The caller then advised they had to go because the man was in the house. The call was disconnected.

MCSO Patrol Sgt. Gordon Adams was dispatched



Morrow County Sheriff Vehicle -Contributed photo

to the scene in Irrigon. Boardman Police Sgt. Jeremy Fye heard the radio traffic and also responded to assist. Oregon State Police (OSP) was called for additional backup. Later, Deputy Neubert and K-9 Telly were also called out to assist.

Adams, Fye and two OSP troopers worked together to take control of the situation and investigate the incident. Within about 30 minutes, three persons were safely detained without further incident.

Joel Ernesto Rodriguez, 37, of Irrigon was arrested

and charged with robbery I, burglary I, harassment (x2), unlawful use of a weapon (x3), trespass II, felon in possession of firearm and unlawful possession of a concealed weapon, as well as a parole and probation detainer. He was lodged at Umatilla County Jail with no bail.

Kaylee Lynn Mack, 25, of Irrigon was arrested and charged with robbery I, burglary I and trespass II. She was lodged at Umatilla County Jail with no bail.

Shavon Lee-Onne Erickson, 24, of Irrigon was arrested on an unrelated Umatilla County Warrant. Umatilla County advised to cite and release Erickson on the warrant.

## Board of commissioners gets refresher on SIP, EZ agreements

By Andrea Di Salvo

Morrow County Tax Assessor Mike Gorman appeared at a Morrow County Board of Commissioners work session last week to help give the board and other audience members a clearer picture of the differences between county tax exemption programs. Specifically, Gorman gave a presentation on the Strategic Investment Program (SIP) and Enterprise Zone (EZ) property tax exemptions the county can extend to businesses within the county.

Morrow County currently has properties in both SIP and EZ agreements; the EZ agreements in the county fall within the Columbia River Enterprise Zone, or CREZ. Gorman said these two property tax exemption

programs, while similar in some ways, are unique and substantially different from one another. SIP and EZ exemptions are not tied to a specific type of property, though Gorman said that enterprise zones pretty much rule out any type of commercial properties except for motels and hotels. Enterprise zones cover specific physical areas with detailed boundaries, while SIP agreements have no such restraints.

### What is an SIP?

The Strategic Investment Program has three statutory components—the taxable portion, the community service fee and the exempt portion, as well as a non-statutory component, which may consist of an additional payment amount negotiated between the

company and the county or city.

An SIP can be located anywhere in the county.

"If it's inside the city limits, then the city could negotiate. If it's outside the city limits, then the county has jurisdiction," Gorman told the board, adding that a city can negotiate an SIP, though the county does have final say, needing to ratify any SIP for it to take effect.

The dollar amount the county gets depends on the amount of the total investment.

"It kind of follows the assessed value of taxable property with its statutory three percent increase," said Gorman.

The taxable portion of an SIP will increase three percent per year during the

exemption period, and the exemption period can be up to 15 years. The enterprise zone does not have any taxable portion.

Gorman said there are three tiers relating to the taxable portion. An investment of \$25 million to \$500 million has a taxable portion of \$25 million. An investment of \$500,000,001 to \$1 billion has a taxable portion of \$50 million. An investment of more than \$1 billion has a taxable portion of \$100 million.

"That goes on the tax rolls, gets taxed normally, goes to all the affected districts," said Gorman.

The new Amazon data center on Bombing Range Road is currently being negotiated as an SIP. Amazon's intended investment

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## Health district approves agreement to take online payments

By Andrea Di Salvo

Morrow County Health District patients will soon be able to make online payments through their patient portals, the health district board of directors decided at its March 27 meeting in Ione.

The board approved an agreement with TruBridge for a 1-Pay service that will allow patients to pay bills through their online patient portals once the district switches to its new electronic health records (EHR) system.

The agreement with TruBridge includes access to a secure website via Evident's patient portal for processing patient payments, secure credit and debit card transaction processing, auto-posting of payments to the applicable patient account in Evident's Thrive System, tracking of all payment transaction activity and reporting of processing activity includ-

ing denials and exceptions.

The five-year contract will cost the health district a \$1,700 service setup fee with a \$550 monthly service fee. MCHD board member Aaron Palmquist asked if this system would incur fees to the patients or, if not, if the health district was increasing costs somewhere to cover the increased merchant fees for card processing. Health district CEO Emily Roberts told the board it will not raise patient fees.

"This should help us increase our collections, which should make it worth it, and it's a patient convenience," she said.

MCHD Interim Chief Financial Officer Nicole Mahoney pointed out that the district already pays fees for merchant services, but that right now they have to run the cards manually. This agreement was only for the processing software and would not change any other district practices or fees.

"It's just to collect payments through the portal," added Roberts. "Anything else would be a separate contract or discussion."

"I understand that, but I think everybody needs to be very clear what's there," said Palmquist, adding that he thought the board should look into a way to distribute the card processing costs to patients, because he knew those could add up.

"From a fiscal point, as a board member, that needs to go forward. That is bigger than this agreement," he added, "but I think it's still pertinent to have that understanding so staff can look at that down the road."

The board also approved part of a community benefit request from Irrigon Jr./Sr. High School. The request was for a total of \$9,224.99 to replace soccer goals and purchase a volleyball coaching box.

MCHD Board Chair Marie Shimer abstained from the conversation due to any perceived conflict from her employment with the Morrow County School District.

Roberts told the board that, while the request was one that could normally be funded through the Community Benefit Fund, the district did not have enough left budgeted in the fund to meet the request.

"We typically have not used those funds to fund this type of activity, and I do know we have two more AED (automated external defibrillator) requests coming in this fiscal year, and we likely have a food bank donation," said Roberts. She suggested the board approve the \$425 for the volleyball coaching box but not the entire amount.

Palmquist agreed.

"Our fund is a community benefit thing, and I know that it's needed, but I

think it's going to be locked up and it only benefits a certain...I mean, it's very limited," he said.

Palmquist said again that he knew the school needed new equipment but made a motion to approve only the \$425.

"Because we have other stuff that is true, proper, community benefit on behalf of who we are," he added.

"I would just say that, in the past, it's been a little more health-related that the health district has funded," added board member John Murray. "I'm certainly not against equipment for kids to play outdoor recreation away from electronics, but where we've always funded health-related issues, I'd kind of like to focus on

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## Willow Creek Terrace receives Remembrance Walk proceeds



Proceeds from this year's Remembrance Walk/5K Run went to Willow Creek Terrace assisted living, and members of the Friends Helping Friends committee went to the facility Tuesday to present a check to the staff and residents. Twelve of the 15 residents were able to be on hand for the presentation. WCT manager Leanne Lankford said the \$5,000 will be used for a range of things to make the residents' lives easier and more enjoyable, everything from Bingo prizes to new cushions for the patio chairs. Front (L-R): Bob Stevens, Floss Watkins, Randall Peterson, Rita Bowman, Alex Camarillo, Ginger O'Brien, Ray Harper, Joyce Ward. Back (L-R): Molly Turrell, Bev Sherman, Dorothy Green Warren, Jerry Green, David Azevado, Leanne Lankford, Kathi Dickenson, Janelle Ellis, Jacque Wilson, Jazmyn Cimmiyotti, Tiffany Akers. Not pictured: Residents Sandi Hanna, Virginia Peck and Rita Dezoete.

-Photo by Andrea Di Salvo

## Irrigon, Heppner fire departments among those to receive new engines

Engines part of State Fire Marshal's \$25 million engine program

Irrigon and Heppner fire departments are among those selected to receive new engines as part of the Oregon State Fire Marshal's \$25 million Engine Program, the OSFM announced this week.

Across Oregon, 76 local fire service agencies were selected to receive a new type 3, type 6 or water tender to boost firefighting capacity. Irrigon Rural Fire Protection District will receive a type 3 and Heppner Rural Fire Protection District will receive a water tender.

"This investment in the Oregon fire service is critical as the state mod-

ernizes equipment and increases firefighting capacity to respond to incidents in our communities," Oregon State Fire Marshal Mariana Ruiz-Temple said. "Over the last three decades, more communities have been impacted by wildfire. This investment is a major step forward in achieving our mission to protect people, property, and the environment from fire and hazardous materials."

The delivery timeline is not established because engine chassis are on back-order. In January 2023, contracts were awarded to Rosenbauer to build the

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## Easter sunrise service planned Sunday

Area churches offer Holy Week services

The South Morrow County Ministerial Association is sponsoring an Easter sunrise service this Sunday, April 9, at 7 a.m. in the stands at the Les Payne football field in Heppner. This is a community event, and everyone is invited.

Area churches are also offering other opportunities to celebrate Holy Week and Easter this week, as follows:

**Wednesday, April 5**  
Evening prayer at Hopeful Saints, 7 p.m.

**Thursday, April 6**  
Hopeful Saints—Maundy Thursday agape meal and stripping of the altar, 6 p.m.

St. Patrick's Catholic—Holy Thursday Mass, 6 p.m.

Trinity Lutheran

(Hermiston)—Maundy Thursday service, 7 p.m.

**Friday, April 7**  
St. Patrick's Catholic—Good Friday Mass, 6:30 p.m.

Trinity Lutheran (Hermiston)—Good Friday Service, 7 p.m.

**Resurrection/Easter Sunday, April 9**

Trinity Lutheran (Hermiston)—9 a.m.

Valby Lutheran—10 a.m.

Hopeful Saints—10 a.m.

Willow Creek Baptist—10 a.m.

Lexington Reformed Baptist—10:45 a.m.

Heppner Christian—10:45 a.m.

Ione Community Church—11 a.m.

St. Patrick's Catholic—11 a.m.

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