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Ione school a cut above in CTE training



Ione senior Calvin Rietmann works with the school's new augmented reality welder, which allows students to practice welding through a combination of real objects and virtual reality. -Photo by Andrea Di Salvo

By Andrea Di Salvo

On Monday afternoon, Ione Senior Calvin Rietmann set to work practicing his welding skills in the Ione High School shop. He secured the helmet on his head, picked up the torch and went to work on the t-joint in front of him. The torch had no flame,

though. The t-joint wasn't metal, and inside the helmet was a computer screen that showed Rietmann a different kind of reality.

That's because the Ione school's new welding program includes a piece of advanced technology that the young man's parents and grandparents would barely

have dreamed of in their school days—augmented reality, or AR.

Augmented reality is a cutting-edge artificial vision technology similar to virtual reality (VR). Unlike virtual reality, AR combines real objects with virtual, computer-generated images to create a kind of "mixed reality" in real time. In the case of the school's AR welder, it's used to help students learn and practice real welding skills without having to start out using dangerous and expensive materials.

The school's Miller AugmentedArc uses real welding implements so students become familiar with their look and feel. That helps them learn to master angle, distance and speed while grappling with hoses and electrical cables, all without the safety issues



Ione student Khira Kreitzer manipulates an image on the computer as she prepares to engrave a wood paddle board. Ione students have used the laser engraver for everything from leather earrings to granite coasters. -Photo by Andrea Di Salvo

of a real torch flame.

Students practice on a kind of "digital metal." Workpieces are imprinted with coded patterns, which are captured by stereoscopic cameras on the helmet. Stereoscopic simply means that the cameras take separate images

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Dinning resigns from Ione school district



Kevin Dinning

Kevin Dinning has announced his resignation from Ione School District. The Ione School District Board accepted his resignation at its March 2023 board meeting. Dinning is

the Ione superintendent, secondary principal, and athletic director.

The board unanimously approved Ione Elementary Principal Tracey Johnson to continue her leadership of the district from the seat of superintendent starting July 1 of this year.

"I am deeply grateful for the opportunity I was awarded to lead Ione School District," said Dinning. "This was a heavy decision for my family, and we will continue to have a place for Ione in our life."

Dinning said the family looks to remain members of the Ione Education Foundation. -Continued to PAGE NINE

Doherty announces run for state senate



Jim Doherty

Former Morrow County Commissioner Jim Doherty has announced he intends to file for the Oregon Senate seat currently held by Sen. Bill Hansell (R-Athena). Hansell has stated he will not seek reelection in 2024.

Hansell will have served 12 years in the state senate by the time he retires. He announced his retirement early in March, saying he wanted to announce it early to give interested individuals in Senate District 29 time to decide whether to seek the office.

District 29 is the second largest district in Oregon and includes Wallowa, Union, Umatilla, Morrow, Gilliam, Sherman and parts of Wasco counties.

Also throwing his hat in the ring for the Republican nomination for Senate District 29 is Wallowa County Commissioner Todd Nash. Doherty and Nash will face off in the May 2024 Republican primary.

Health district considers legal action against county, Boardman Fire

By Andrea Di Salvo

At a special meeting Monday, the Morrow County Health District voted unanimously to pursue legal action against Morrow County and Boardman Fire Rescue District.

Most of the discussion surrounding the decision occurred during an hour-long executive session via Zoom, but it comes in the wake of Morrow County Board of Commissioners decisions regarding the county's Ambulance Service Area (ASA) plan.

After seeking independent legal counsel on the issue and being told the 2021 ASA plan was not legally effective, the county

commissioners voted unanimously to proceed with drafting a new ASA plan for the county. In a split vote, the commissioners also agreed to draft a letter of support for Boardman Fire Rescue District (BFRD) to pursue ambulance licensing in Morrow County. (See 'County commissioners pursue new ambulance service area plan,' PAGE ONE for more details.)

After returning to open session and citing "imminent risk of harm to residents of Morrow County posed by the Morrow County Board of Commissioners' recent decision that the Ambulance Service Area (ASA) plan is not in effect,"

the MCHD board voted to authorize the district's legal counsel to pursue "all possible legal remedies" against BFRD and Morrow County to "protect public safety."

"On April 5, 2023, the Morrow County Board of Commissioners declared that the Oregon Health Authority approved Ambulance Service Area Plan is not in effect. Due to the imminent risk of irreparable harm to residents of Morrow County posed by this decision, the Morrow County Health District Board of Directors has voted to pursue legal remedies against Morrow County and Boardman Fire Rescue District," the health district

said in a statement.

"MCHD's decision was not made lightly, as the district has spent the past two years pursuing all possible avenues to collaborate and resolve this dispute in a manner agreeable to all parties," the statement continued. "Ultimately, MCHD has an obligation to protect public safety and preserve healthcare services for the entire county. Based on recent local decisions, a formal legal process is now needed to resolve the situation.

"MCHD will continue to provide ambulance service countywide until this dispute is legally resolved."

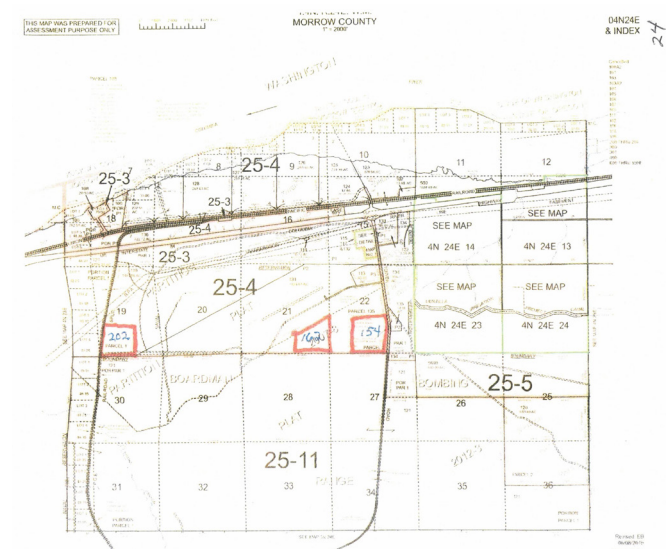
CREZ III approves five new Amazon data centers

By Andrea Di Salvo

The Columbia River Enterprise Zone (CREZ) III board approved agreements with Amazon for five new data centers in Morrow County at a meeting last Friday. Three of the proposed data centers will be west of Boardman, by Boardman Airport, while two will be east of Boardman in the area of Gar Swanson Dr.

The Amazon facility currently being built on Bombing Range Road is not in the enterprise zone but has negotiated a separate Strategic Investment Program (SIP) agreement with the county. (See 'County approves new SIP agreement with Amazon,' Page ??.)

CREZ III Manager Greg Sweek told the board that all five enterprise zone agreements were identical except for the property de-



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scriptions. In fact, Sweek added that, from what he saw of the financials from the county's SIP agreement with Amazon, it was also very similar to the enterprise zone agreements.

The exemptions are 15-year, long-term rural exemptions. The 15-year term will begin the first tax year in which the facility becomes operational. According to Amazon's enterprise zone application, each of the five properties will include a \$2.37 billion investment and plans to employ 120 full-time employees.

"Hopefully you've each seen us grow with you in partnership and come out of our shell," Amazon representative Hillary Lambert told the CREZ III board

at Friday's meeting, "and really make sure that our contributions are visible and that we're listening to the community far more than perhaps we have early in the days."

She said learning about the county and its needs had at times been challenging, but she hoped Amazon was doing better at listening and responding.

"We've without question always been clear that we don't know, like the community does, how any of these proceeds should be spent or shared," said Lambert. "Only you know what the right priorities are for you communities."

According to numbers provided by Morrow County Assessor Mike Gorman, the total exempt

tax for all 15 years of the agreement is an estimated \$285,833,0233.39. While the sites will be exempt from taxes, however, Amazon has agreed to pay some hefty sums in return.

Over the 15 years of the exemption, Amazon will pay an estimated \$63.8 million in annual improvement payments, \$7.2 million in additional annual fees, more than \$1 million each in public safety impact fees and student success fees. Also included is an up-front \$5 million community development contribution, which Amazon has agreed to pay within 60 days of starting construction.

Gorman estimated that

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County commissioners pursue new ambulance service area plan

Board turns down request to repeal previous ordinance but agrees to support Boardman Fire pursuit of ambulance licensing

By Andrea Di Salvo

In a split vote last week, the Morrow County Board of Commissioners agreed to draft a letter of support for Boardman Fire Rescue District (BFRD) to pursue ambulance licensing in Morrow County. The board also voted unanimously to proceed with drafting a new Ambulance Service Area (ASA) plan for the county.

The April 5 decisions come after a series of tense meetings in which both

BFRD and Morrow County Health District (MCHD) lobbied either for or against BFRD ambulance licensing, which BFRD says is needed but MCHD says will be detrimental to ambulance services throughout Morrow County.

The commissioners had previously tabled a request for the letter of support by BFRD Chief Michael Hughes, saying they wanted to seek independent legal

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Patton resigns from Neighborhood Center

Thrift store to have some changes until at least May

Neighborhood Center Program Coordinator Lisa Patton resigned from her position last week. She had been with the center since 2014.

Neighborhood Center board members say that will leave the center short-staffed, which will lead to

some changes until at least May. Through the month of April, the center will be closed on Mondays and will open at 10:30 a.m. rather than 9:30 a.m. on other days. The thrift store will also be unable to take donations from now through the end of April.

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