

Hepner City Council Moves Forward with Security Cameras

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station, one on the Gilliam and Bisbee building, one at Thomson Square and one on city hall looking toward the courthouse.

Sharon Inskeep suggested one camera at city park be angled toward the Heritage Park, and Cody High said he thought it might be beneficial to have a camera out toward the fairgrounds, whether that meant adding another camera or moving one of the others.

“Because right now you basically have every angle of leaving our community covered except that one,” he said.

The city currently has cameras at the city park, but those would be replaced because they wouldn’t work with the Verkada system.

“The whole thing with the park is that you need to be able to use the access,” said Hepner Public Works Director Chad Doherty. “There’s a way to get on and see the data that’s there to help out the sheriff’s office or help us out.

“Those (old cameras), I can’t do that,” he added.

“One thing about it, it does provide a lot of security for our small town,” said Bates. “If someone comes in here to do vandalism or ripping us off, there’s a good chance they’re going to get in front of one of those things.”

“It will be really helpful during our larger events,” added Hepner city councilor JoAnna Lamb.

The council voted unanimously to accept the pricing proposal and move forward with eight cameras, with the understanding that their placement will be finalized later, and more might be added.

Other Business

Hepner City Manager Kraig Cutsforth said the city is “plugging along” with Anderson Perry on the sewer project. Doherty said he had spoken with Dane Maben, engineering technician with Anderson Perry, and had been told they should have “working plans and ready-to-go plans” by the end of the year.

Phase one of the sewer project includes a complete rehabilitation of the city’s existing treatment plant. Phase two is a storage pond to hold all the water all winter, while having enough land to irrigate it on in the summer.

“The rehabbing of the mechanical plan is in the best interests of the city,” said Doherty. “It should work really good once we get all that done.”

Doherty said the city is currently in compliance with the Dept. of Environmental Quality, though it struggles a little with ammonia issues.

Cutsforth said the city’s water management plan is still under review by the state. It has already been in the state’s hands for 90 days, he said, but it will probably be another 90

before it comes back to the city. Otherwise, he said, the city is waiting for Anderson Perry to finish with the sewer project plans so the firm can move on to the water system plans.

“Till we get our water master plan by the end of this year, you’re going to be kind of stuck,” he told the council.

Regarding the Hepner street project, Cutsforth reported that he had not closed out the project because the extension the city requested was already in the works at the state. He was still holding contracting firm Premier’s final payments because, with the extension of the project, the state said not to release the funds until the striping was completed.

The city received a year extension on the project, which the council approved.

In other business, Eric Chick gave the Hepner Fire Department and told the council the Oregon State Fire Marshal’s office is placing a tactical tender in Hepner.

“Which is going to be huge for us,” he said.

Chick also said the fire department sent four new firefighters to the Oregon Trail Training Association for hazmat training, as well as doing in-house academy training to get volunteers certified.

“COVID really kind of stunted our training abilities,” said Chick. “So we’re kind of catching up from

that.” High asked if all the city’s hydrants are accessible or if there were any the department needed help with. Chick replied that all but one were accessible, with one hydrant on South Main being an issue because of parked cars blocking the street, as well as a reported dog kennel.

“Because there’s not a lot of hydrants going out of town that way, so any of them that are there need to be accessible,” Chick said.

The decision was made to put the issue on the agenda for next month to give the city time to look into legalities and easements.

Chick also reported that the fire department responded to one chimney fire in Hepner and four controlled burns that got our of hand, among others.

The council also approved an animal permit for Alicia Brundidge for six hens. Brundidge had requested a permit for six hens and five ducks. Lamb said that, while she had no objection to chickens, she had kept ducks before, and ducks don’t go to sleep with the sun like chickens do.

“Ducks quack all night long, whenever they feel like it,” said Lamb. “And they’re really, really loud.”

The council voted to approve the permit for the hens, with possible approval of the ducks if the Brundidge’s neighbors are all right with the idea.

AWANA Club ends year with Grand Prix



AWANA Grand Prix winners (L-R): Speed winners Zethan Humphreys, third, Caleb Ensley, first, and Anna Jepsen, second, and design winners Sofia Di Salvo, third, Jaxson Nelson, second, and Laurelee Jepsen, first. -Photo by Andrea Di Salvo

Hepner AWANA Club concluded its 2022-23 club year with its traditional awards and pinewood derby Grand Prix for members and their families last Sunday in Hepner. Nineteen club members, along with leaders, family and friends, packed the house for the event at Hepner’s Christian Life Center.

Leaders John and Barb Collin handed out awards to the Sparks members, ages kindergarten through third grade. Adelaide Jepsen, Anna Jepsen, Ariana Matzick, Charlie Gully, Dillan Piper, Elliana Smith, Germaine Ramos, Ian Macias, Jaxson Nelson, Josiah Humphreys, Julius Bailey, Kleo Childers and Tyler Cimmiyotti all received recognition for attendance.

Receiving attendance awards for 90 percent attendance or better were Sparks Germaine Ramos, Kleo Childers and Ariana Matzick.

Anna Jepsen, Ariana Matzick, Germaine Ramos, Josiah Humphreys and Kleo Childers all received awards for completing the second book in the Sparks program, while Adelaide Jepsen received the Cubby book award.

Truth and Training leaders Dick and Karen Temple were unable to be at the awards ceremony, so awards for the fourth-through sixth-grade members were handed out by leader C.J. Johnson.

Aaron Humphreys, Abby Sumner, Abby Luttrell, Aidden Ramos, Bryson Bailey, Caleb Humphreys, Ellissa Yates, Frank Di Salvo, Hannah Sumner, Jayden Macias, Laurelee Jepsen, Matthew Bailey, Sofia Di Salvo, Sophia Serrano and Zethan Humphreys received recognition

for their participation.

In addition, Abby Sumner, Bryson Bailey, Frank Di Salvo, Matthew Bailey and Sofia Di Salvo all received awards for good attendance, and Abby Sumner, Bryson Bailey, Caleb Humphreys, Hannah Sumner, Jayden Macias, Sophia Serrano and Zethan Humphreys were recognized for verse memorization.

Receiving merit pins for verse memorization were Frank and Sofia Di Salvo.

Laurelee Jepsen received an alpha award for completing the Truth and Training book.

Hepner AWANA Club also recognized teen volunteers Brionna Serrano, Nelly Blakley, David Asbridge and Zion Ramos.

In the Grand Prix event, Caleb Ensley of Condon took an impressive first place in speed. Anna Jepsen placed second and Zethan Humphreys placed third.

Laurelee Jepsen placed first in car design with her horse trailer car. Jaxson Nelson placed second with his flag car and Sofia Di Salvo was third with her penguin-themed car.

The Hepner AWANA program is the combined effort of local churches to teach children what the Bible is all about. AWANA stands for “Approved Workmen Are Not Ashamed,” based on II Timothy 2:15. Games, songs and a Bible lesson are included during a typical club meeting.

For more information on the Hepner AWANA Club, contact AWANA Hepner secretary Andrea Di Salvo at awana.hepner@gmail.com, 757-285-5792, or via Facebook Messenger.

CBEC visits Salem



Pictured L-R: Frank Jaeger, CBEC board member from Fossil, Andy Fletcher, CBEC Chief Executive Officer, Gerry Arnson, CBEC Board President, and Greg Smith, Oregon District 57 State Representative. -Contributed photo



Pictured L-R: Frank Jaeger, CBEC board member from Fossil, Gerry Arnson, CBEC Board President, Bill Hansell, Oregon District 29 State Senator, and Andy Fletcher, CBEC Chief Executive Officer. -Contributed photo

Several members of Columbia Basin Electric Co-op made a quick trip to Salem earlier this month to discuss hot topics with members of the legislature. Always at the surface are electric transmission problems due to increased demand on the grid. Other topics on the visit’s agenda included wildfire mitigation and fiber to the home for all of Morrow County.

“These are some of the things we have to work on,” said CBEC Board President Gerry Arnson.

CBEC is one of 18 electric co-ops in the state. Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association sets up legislative days for co-ops to go down and meet their representatives, senators and other entities like the public utilities commission or the broadband office to discuss what’s happening in the regions they represent.

Previously, co-ops had to share days, but this year, each of the co-ops took a separate day to visit with legislators in Salem over items of concern to its members.

On this trip, Columbia Basin Electric was represented by Arnson, board member Frank Jaeger of Fossil and Chief Executive Officer Andy Fletcher. The three CBEC representatives met with Rep. Greg Smith, Sen. Bill Hansell and members of the Oregon Public Utilities Commission.

“Our specific purpose was to discuss some of the items out there that our office is currently facing,” said Fletcher.

One of those is broadband.

“It’s first and foremost in our area, since we’re really not connected in our most rural areas,” said Fletcher. “We have so many Morrow County residents that have no connectivity.”

Thanks to broadband funding coming down from the federal government, the state will soon be doling out grants, and CBEC wanted them to know that they would be supporting that in this area. They also wanted to thank Smith for supporting House Bill 4092A, sponsored by Sen. Pam Marsh, as well as ask Hansell for his support.

Fletcher and Arnson both said that the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for better internet connectivity in rural areas, especially for education and tele-health.

“We owe it to the children,” Arnson said. “They spent two years with them not being able to study

without high-speed internet.”

“This could help down the road, and we need to make it a priority,” added Fletcher.

The other big topic in the visit was wildfire mitigation and emergency response. The three co-op representatives spoke with people in Salem about what small cooperatives are facing throughout the state and in eastern Oregon, especially public safety power shut-off (PSPS). PSPS is where utilities take the initiative to shut off the power before major weather events.

“It was more talking about not punishing utilities that are doing the right thing,” said Fletcher. “CBEC, we pole check, we spray around our transmission lines, we’re doing all the little things that make sure it doesn’t happen, but electricity is still inherently dangerous.”

“Larger utilities are doing some great things. We use NOAA,” he added. “We don’t have millions of dollars to invest in weather stations and meteorologists.”

Fletcher also said the co-op would like to see better guidance from the state for smaller utilities, especially guidance that would utilize local emergency services like Morrow County Emergency Manager Paul Gray or Hepner Fire Chief Steve Rhea.

“We need to work with them when we’re making decisions about shutting down power,” said Fletcher.

As far as whether the visit made much progress, Arnson said they felt good about the trip, but Fletcher was cautiously optimistic.

“Realistically, something’s going to end up happening that is catastrophic, and then there’s going to be better protections for smaller utilities,” he said, adding that there is an understandable but real gap in understanding between rural and urban thinking. “To grasp the concept of what its like in rural eastern Oregon compared to the valley—it’s significantly different. It’s a lack of understanding. I don’t blame them at all.”

Despite those hesitations, Fletcher said he felt confident in being heard by local representatives.

“Everybody should take the opportunity to talk to our local representatives about what’s concerning them, because they do care, but it’s hard to hear it sometimes,” said Fletcher. “And they do care.”

Ione drama class visits Elgin Opera House



Some members of the Ione Drama Department attended the Peter Pan performance at the Elgin Opera House this past weekend. The trip was funded by ticket sales from their school performances. Pictured are (front row L-R) Khira Kreitzer, Noelia Ramirez, Gift Cross, Zamira Dotson, Rosa Aguilar, Hunter Scoggin and Julian Rodriguez-Shenna and (back row L-R) Marcus Radcliffe and Gage Heideman. The drama department is headed by Chelsea Geer. -Photo by Erin Heideman

Local laundromat may receive reprieve

By Andrea Di Salvo

Hepner’s only laundromat looked like it was on the point of closing, but it may not be shutting its doors quite yet.

At the Hepner City Council meeting last week in Hepner, city councilor Dale Bates said he had spoken with Jason Patterson, the owner of the laundromat on May St. The laundromat has been struggling for some time, and several of the machines didn’t work.

Bates said Patterson told him he would like to upgrade the facility but couldn’t make the numbers pencil out to justify the expense, and that the doors to the laundromat might be closing for good this month.

“We need to be aware of this. The City of Hepner doesn’t have any laundromat for anyone at all at this point (if it closes),” said Bates. “I do not know what we can do about that, but we need to be aware of that.”

“If there’s any funding or any way we can help it, if we know of somebody who could maybe come in and recreate one,” he added. “I don’t know what kind of discussion we could have about it or if it does us any good.”

Hepner city manager Kraig Cutsforth said Wil-

low Creek Valley Economic Development (WCVEDG) was the only funding source for development in Hepner currently, but they only finance capital repairs, not equipment.

“Those machines are extremely expensive, and it’s just not something you get funding for,” said Cutsforth. “The bank will give you a loan, but if they don’t pencil, they don’t pencil.”

“I think your idea’s a good one. Small cities do have laundromats,” put in Kuhn, “so somebody must make them pencil out.

“I think there should be a way of doing it if people actually research,” he added, noting that a laundromat is needed not only for people who don’t own their own machines, but also for when people’s machines break down.

It wasn’t all just talk at city hall. Earlier this week, Patterson told the Gazette-Times that the City of Hepner had reached out and wanted to hold meetings regarding solutions for keeping the laundromat doors open. He said he didn’t know yet what those solutions would be, but he was hopeful.

“It sounds promising,” he said.