



the HEPPNER GAZETTE TIMES

50¢
VOL. 143 NO. 21 10 Pages Wednesday, May 24, 2023 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

County responds to ambulance lawsuit

By Andrea Di Salvo

Last week, Morrow County issued a response to the lawsuit Morrow County Health District filed against the county on May 11. The health district is seeking an injunction against the new Ambulance Service Area (ASA) plan the county is trying to develop, as well as monetary claims totaling at least \$4,372,350. In addition, MCHD is asking that the matter be settled by a jury trial.

Boardman Fire Rescue and Boardman Fire Chief Michael Hughes were also named in the health district's lawsuit.

In its response, the county claims that MCHD is trying to stop the county from "engaging in its legal obligation to develop, update and replace the current 1998 Ambulance Service Area (ASA) Plan."

"The complaints and allegations are baseless



and inflammatory, misrepresent the process and actions to the public, and seek to prevent the Board of Commissioners (BOC) from exercising its obligations," says the county's statement. "Morrow County will not be deterred in its legal obligation to develop an ASA Plan that provides the best ambulance services available to everyone in the County."

In its lawsuit, the health district asserts that "Mor-

row County adopted its Ambulance Service Area Plans (ASA Plans) in 1998 and 2021 through appropriate process" and that "Both ASA plans assigned all ambulance services to MCHD and the whole of Morrow County...."

The county's response claims that MCHD wrote and unilaterally implemented the 2021 ASA Plan but that the legal process was not followed, the proposed ASA Plan was not approved

by the county as required by law, and the ASA Plan included the unlawful transfer of all authority from the county to MCHD.

The health district claims complete authority over ambulance service in Morrow County, citing a July 1, 1995, intergovernmental agreement (IGA) that states "That it is the intention of the people of Morrow County to transfer all fiscal and performance responsibility for the Exhibit A services from Morrow County to District..." Exhibit A services included Morrow County Emergency Medical Services.

In response, the county says the 1995 IGA between Morrow County and MCHD transferred ambulances and related equipment to the health district so MCHD could provide ambulance services throughout the county, but that it was

-Continued to PAGE EIGHT

Morrow County school staff honored at Crystal Apple Awards



Four Morrow County School District Staff from various schools received awards at this year's Crystal Apple Awards. L-R: Winner Dave Fowler, MCSO Superintendent Matt Combe, winner Yadira Gomez, winner Maggie Scanlan and winner Debbie White. -Contributed photo

Four Morrow County School District and two Ione School District staff were honored at this year's Crystal Apple "Excellence in Education" Awards in Pendleton. InterMountain Education Service District (IMESD) and its component school districts in Morrow and Umatilla counties presented the 2023 Crystal Apple Awards in a ceremony on Tuesday, May 16, at the Pendleton Convention Center.

Ione School District winners were instructional aide Ann Clabaugh and special education teacher Suzie Skirvin.

Ann Clabaugh has worked for four years for the district. She is described as a "strong, compassionate leader who works tirelessly to improve the educational experience for all students," as well as a mentor for at-risk students, who gets to know students and make sure the whole student is cared for.

One teacher said, "Ann is one of the reasons that I love coming to school. Her wisdom, levity and compassion are things that I admire about her."

Suzie Skirvin is the K-12 special ed teacher. She has worked in the district for two years. Covering all grades means she often has to unexpectedly change the direction of her interventions and schedule, which can be especially difficult for some students, but other staff say she finds ways to successfully navigate it. She is described as "Always patient and kind," and as doing an excellent job of "discovering and building on students' strengths while encouraging them to work hard in needed areas."

Winners from Morrow County School District are Heppner Jr./Sr. High School Technology Education teacher Dave Fowler, Sam Boardman Elementary CARE coordinator Yadira Gomez, Windy River Elementary sixth-grade teacher Maggie Scanlan and Irrigon Elementary Title 1 education assistant Debbie White.

Dave Fowler has worked for the Morrow County School District for 33 years. Described as a consummate professional, Dave brings patience, skill and energy to his classroom. He has served as the state director for Oregon



Two Ione School District staff were honored at this year's Crystal Apple Awards. L-R: Winner Suzie Skirvin, ISD Superintendent Kevin Dinning and winner Ann Clabaugh. -Contributed photo

Technology Student Association for the past five years and the advisor for the school's outdoor club for 20 years. "His connection to students and building positive, caring relationships that create a deeper level of student connection is a model for what we hope all educators would be able to do," says one nomination.

Maggie Scanlan has worked for the Morrow County School District for one year. Scanlan is described as demonstrating "an amazing ability to connect with students not only in her own classroom, but others in the school as well." She runs the school's student council program and has coordinated a building-wide recycling program. A new teacher, "she has her whole life and career ahead of her to continue making positive impacts on people every single day."

Yadira Gomez has worked for MCSO for five years. She takes the time to get to know the families in the school and has coordinated dozens of students be seen for medical, vision and dental needs—some of these imperative to the academic performance of those students. Between helping staff make phone calls, doing home visits or helping complete pa-

perwork, Gomez works to maintain healthy relationships with community members and connect them with resources they need.

Debbie White has worked for Morrow County School District for three years. She is described as an exceptional assistant in the Title 1 room, always demonstrating competence with a friendly attitude and pleasant demeanor to both students and staff. She is said to be self-motivated and independent, successfully interacting with students during lessons, and "100 percent for the kids of Irrigon Elementary!"

A total of 33 Crystal Apples were presented at the event, in addition to 14 Crystal Apple Awards pre-

-Continued to PAGE NINE

G-T closed Memorial Day News, ad deadline Friday at 5 p.m.

The Heppner Gazette-Times will be closed Monday, May 29, for the Memorial Day holiday.

The deadline for all news and ads for the May 31 edition will be Friday,

May 26, at 5 p.m. Normal business hours will resume Tuesday, May 30.

The G-T wishes everyone a safe and happy Memorial Day.

Murray, Doherty take Port positions

Munkers elected to health district board

In a four-way race for Port of Morrow Commissioner, Position 5, current commissioner John Murray defeated all challengers by a sizable margin. While challenger Doug Boor won the north end of the county, blow-out wins in South Morrow assured Murray the win with 45.03 percent of the vote to Boor's 35.63 percent. Wes Killion trailed with 10.66 percent and Jonathan Tallman had 8.43 percent.

Kelly Doherty defeated sitting Port of Morrow commissioner Marvin Padberg for Position 4, though with slightly narrower margins in the two-person race, with 53.16 percent of the vote compared to Padberg's

45.79 percent. Voting in that race was also split along north-south lines, with Doherty winning impressively in South Morrow while Padberg took both Irrigon and Boardman.

The only other contested race in the county was for Morrow County Health District Director Position 5. Stephen Munkers beat out Ana Pineyro with 53.14 percent of the vote, winning every precinct except Boardman.

Voter turnout in the special election was low—only 28.83 percent, though still higher than the statewide average of 26.47 percent. Out of 7,041 registered voters in the county, only 2,030 cast ballots.

County commission hears from Greater Idaho as movement wins Wallowa County



Mike McCarter submits a petition in Heppner, Oregon, May 26, 2022. -Contributed photo

By Andrea Di Salvo

After last week's election, the Greater Idaho movement has now won a hearing in 12 of the proposed 15 counties involved in redrawing the state line between Oregon and Idaho.

The ballot measure in Wallowa County won by narrow margins, only 50.3 percent, which the Greater Idaho group attributes to an unusually large percentage of Willamette Valley transplants

in the county, as well as an aggressive and allegedly unethical ad campaign by Western Oregon Democrats.

Since the movement began appearing on ballots six election cycles ago, it has won every county, with an average of 62 percent in favor.

Like the other counties that have voted on Greater Idaho, the Wallowa County ballot measure isn't actually a vote to move the border. Rather, it re-

-Continued to PAGE NINE

Boardman man arrested on shots-fired incident in Irrigon

A Boardman man is still in custody after shots were fired in an Irrigon incident May 1. Jose Carlos Gonzalez, 37, of Boardman is facing multiple charges that include kidnapping II and attempted assault.

Morrow County Sheriff's Office reports that about 8:15 p.m. on Monday, May 1, dispatch received calls reporting shots fired in the west parking lot near the Irrigon Shell Station. Callers reported that

a Hispanic male, later identified as Gonzalez, fired shots toward another man and a red jeep.

During the investigation it was learned that Jose had followed a female victim to the Irrigon Shell station, driving erratically on Highway 730 and attempting to stop her vehicle. A man, known to the female victim, arrived in a red jeep to assist her.

At that time, Jose pulled a

-Continued to PAGE NINE

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