

# Boardman City Council

*-Continued from PAGE ONE*  
 the second reading and to consider passage of the ordinance.

Elaine Howard of Elaine Howard Consulting also spoke to the council about forming a new Urban Renewal District. Stokoe said the city has worked with her in the past and is now working with her to potentially form a new district on the north side of Boardman.

Boardman already has two URAs, the Central Boardman Urban Renewal District, established in 2008, and the West Boardman Urban Renewal District, established in 2013.

Howard told the council that URAs function off property tax revenues. It comes from a division of taxes already paid; it is not a new tax or a property tax increase. AURA's spending is capped by its maximum indebtedness, which is the total amount of money that can be spent on programs, projects and administration over the life of the district. Every URAs maximum indebtedness is different.

The state limits URAs to cities with populations less than 50,000, and the urban renewal area can be no more than 25 percent of the assessed value of the property in the city and 25 percent of the acreage in the city. The acreage of the proposed land is well below the 25 percent, and Howard said they were just beginning to assess the value.

Council members raised questions over how the taxing districts involved would be affected. Howard explained that the share of taxes received by those districts would be frozen for the life of the URA, and any increase in property taxes would go to the URA.

Once the life of the

area has ended, all the taxes revert back to the taxing districts, including any increased taxes due to development in the area. A local option levy or general obligation bond would not be included in the URA.

"And hopefully your urban renewal area has been able to create or cause new development that wouldn't have happened if you weren't able to do the projects within the area," said Howard.

"That is really how urban renewal works," she added, "where you put in infrastructure that provides incentives for development to happen."

Potential projects include extending Boardman Ave. to Olson, improving NE Front St. and developing city-owned lots on that street, encouraging the development of cemetery-owned property, a new traffic device at the intersection of North Main and Boardman Ave., encouraging the development of a new hotel and an economic development toolkit to provide incentives for development.

"These projects are an initial list," said Howard. "We will refine these once we complete this analysis."

She added that they hoped to finish the analysis within the next week. They plan to complete the process and have it ready for the council to adopt by August so it can go into effect before Oct. 1, when the county assessor certifies the new tax roll.

Prior to the regular city council meeting, the Boardman Urban Renewal Agency met and approved the Urban Renewal Agency budget in the amount of \$2,574,565. Of that, \$2,361,975 is for the Central district and \$212,590 is

for the West district.

Regarding hiring a new city manager, Stokoe reported that a background check had been completed on city manager candidate Brandon Hammond, and there were no concerns. Hammond's official start date as Boardman City Manager will be Aug. 1.

Boardman Chamber of Commerce Director Torrie Griggs told the council that new universal vehicle charging stations are being put in at the SAGE Center to extend the "electric highway" from Hood River to Boardman. Tesla stations will also continue to be available there.

In other city business, the council:

-Adopted the 2023-2024 budget in the amount of \$74,207,368.

-Approved a resolution accepting Columbia River Enterprise Zone II (CREZ II) funds for the Boardman Police Department. The resolution was necessary because the CREZ II grant was \$250,000, which was \$85,000 more than expected.

-Approved a liquor license for beer and wine for the Dollar General store located on Main St.

-Discussed a proposal by Boardman councilor Richard Rockwell regarding asking Amazon Web Services to consider painting their buildings, possibly with murals.

-Changed the July meeting date from July 4 to July 11 due to the Independence Day holiday. The meeting will be held at 7 p.m. at Boardman City Hall or via video conferencing. The meeting link is posted at the city's website, www.cityofboardman.com.

# Morrow County schools, EOU collaborate to improve early reading



Students at Windy River Elementary. -Contributed photo

The Morrow County School District (MCSD) and Eastern Oregon University (EOU) have partnered to address reading deficits and enhance reading proficiency in kindergarten through sixth-grade students. InterMountain ESD says this collaboration, established prior to recent Oregon Department of Education (ODE) recommendations, reflects the district's proactive approach to tackling reading skills for early learners.

At the end of May, ODE announced the establishment of the Early Literacy Educator Preparation Council to enhance educator training for the Early Literacy Framework to improve student outcomes.

"Shockingly, not all teachers that come out of teacher preparation programs have this background, and we want to be sure that our teachers are all equipped with the knowledge and skills to support our young readers in Morrow County," said Erin Stocker, MCSD Executive Director of Elementary Education and Human Resources.

According to a recent ODE press release, the science of reading refers to decades of cognitive and neuroscience research showing how the brain learns to read

and write, along with data about the most effective methods for facilitating literacy learning.

Based on previous successes, including the MCSD, EOU and Ignite Reading partnership, Stocker contacted Dr. Ronda Fritz, an Associate Professor of Education at EOU, to address early literacy learning strategies for educators. Fritz specializes in elementary education and early literacy instruction.

Under Stocker's leadership, MCSD's elementary leaders devised a professional development plan. The aim is to provide training to all MCSD kindergarten through sixth-grade teachers, leveraging the district's annual in-service schedule.

Training sessions will begin in August, followed by sessions held four times over nine months. During the 2023-24 school year, Fritz will also model teaching in classrooms, observe

teachers and provide feedback.

Deciding to train teachers through sixth grade was an outcome of MCSD data reviewed by Dr. Rachel Herron, the K-8 assessment and data coach for the school district.

"Our reading scores had become fairly stagnant over the past several years," said Herron. "Last year we adopted a reading program based on the science of reading. Our preliminary year-end data showed a 21 percent increase in yearly reading growth in grades K-6 compared to last year."

"We are optimistic that we will continue to see a steady increase in academic achievement for all our students," Herron added.

Fritz praised the district's efforts to improve instruction.

"It is refreshing to see MCSD's commitment to improving literacy instruction for their students," said Fritz. "Comprehensive professional development for educators results in better outcomes for kids."

The leadership team will meet in May 2024 to plan for sustaining ongoing literacy instruction for the 2024-2025 school year.

"It's going to be exciting to see the outcome of this coordinated effort a year from now and beyond," Fritz added.

## HUNTER EDUCATION CLASSES OFFERED

Classes start Tuesday, June 13th, & Thursday June 15th, 6-9 pm Field Day the 17th 8am to noon. Classes Tuesday the 20th and 22nd 6-9 pm. at the Lexington Gun Club. To sign up go to [myodfw.com](https://myodfw.com) **Must sign up on line.** <https://myodfw.com/articles/hunter-education-classes-field-days>.

Contact Instructor, Jim Marquardt at 541 969-4845. if questions.



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