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McElligott marks 50 years in coaching



Maureen McElligott

By Andrea Di Salvo

Maureen McElligott has reached a milestone few coaches ever see. In fact, 50 years is an impressive record for just about any endeavor, but the Ione tennis coach is still going strong with no signs of slowing down.

McElligott, 72, was raised with her 10 siblings on the McElligott homestead out of Ione. Her father, Don, raised wheat and cattle, as well as serving as Morrow County Judge for several years. Her mother, Eunice, was a nurse. McElligott attended school in Ione, graduating with the class of '68.

She always liked sports, and says her favorite sports to play were basketball, tennis and baseball. She recalls her early years in basketball, when there were six girls to a team, only three could cross the center line and they could only dribble

three times before passing.

"They didn't want us to sweat," she says dryly.

After high school, she attended the University of Portland, graduating with her bachelor's degree in history in 1972. Right out of college, she returned to Morrow County, where she spent a year substitute teaching at both Riverside and Ione high schools—mostly at Riverside, due to the loss of a teacher and football coach that year.

McElligott left Morrow County for Lake County when she was hired to teach social studies at Paisley High School. It was a unique situation, since the school averaged 90 students from as much as 75 miles away. While there, she was also hired to coach girls' volleyball, basketball and track.

"I always liked sports," she says of this foray into coaching. "I like kids. They needed someone."

In fact, McElligott says coaching was simply part of the deal for teachers back then.

"They were looking for someone to fill those within the faculty," she says. "You were kind of expected to as a teacher."

She admits that she dislikes volleyball—one of the few sports she does dislike—which is part of what prompted her to start

a cross-country program at Paisley, eventually getting rid of volleyball. At the same time, she took the Paisley girls' basketball team to state and brought home two second-place state trophies during her six years there.

After Paisley, she returned to the University of Portland and obtained her master's degree in education in 1979. That same year, Riverside High School Principal Dan Daltoso called her and asked her to return to Boardman to teach social studies. Included in the deal were coaching duties for girls' volleyball and basketball, as well as girls' and boys' tennis.

It was a continuation of what would become a 50-year coaching career, and the beginning of 44 years of coaching tennis in Morrow County.

She spent 24 years teaching social studies in Boardman, mostly to high school seniors. She also continued to coach at Riverside that entire time, and for one more year after she retired from teaching.

Among her favorite sports to coach were cross-country and tennis. In tennis, "All the coaching is basically done in practice," she says, adding that she might have a minute at most to answer questions or give tips when players switch

sides during a match.

She recalls one year in Boardman when she had 42 teens turn out for tennis. With so many players, she says, they rotated practicing in the tennis courts, gym and back parking lot.

It was around the time of her retirement from teaching that McElligott moved back to the family home to take care of her aging parents. It didn't take long for the Ione school to come calling in search of a tennis coach of its own. She says she hesitated at first, but then decided she needed something to get her out of the house.

"I'm really a person who's more on the go," she says.

Nineteen years later, she's living on her own in one of several family homes jokingly referred to as "McElligottville," but tennis is still getting her out of the house.

"I like kids. I like sports. I like to see kids succeed and have fun," she says of her continued coaching.

McElligott says she still likes to play tennis, or "hit things with a racquet," but adds that she can no longer run around the court like she used to. That she leaves to assistant coach Susan Kendrick. Kendrick, who played tennis competitively

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Heppner retains interim city manager



Kraig Cutsforth

Heppner Mayor Corey Sweeney announced Tuesday that the City of Heppner has retained an interim city manager to serve for the next few months. Current city manager Kraig Cutsforth is on an extended medical leave.

Thomas Wolff, CPA (retired) has been hired to oversee the city's business and community affairs. Wolff comes out of retirement for this assignment, having spent a large part of his career with Columbia Basin Electric Cooperative,



Thomas Wolff

concluding as CEO and general manager.

Wolff served seven years as a Heppner City Councilor during the mid-2000s and so is familiar with the city's procedures and processes.

"I am excited and eager to serve the city, taking care of day-to-day issues and concerns, and meeting the needs of the city council," says Wolff.

Citizens are encouraged to stop by city hall and say hello.

Heppner approves new city budget

Water, sewer rates to go up five percent

By Andrea Di Salvo

The Heppner City Council approved the budget for the upcoming fiscal year with some changes at its meeting June 12 at Heppner City Hall. The city budget for fiscal year 2023-2024 is \$6,481,231, with a tax rate of \$10.6209 per \$1,000 of assessed value for property inside city limits.

The \$10.6209 per \$1,000 tax rate is the same as it has been in previous years. While the rate is higher than the five percent allowed for most municipalities, Heppner City Manager Kraig Cutsforth told the council that the Heppner tax rate has not changed for several decades.

Meanwhile, the city is raising water and sewer rates by five percent to keep pace with the current West region consumer price index.

During budget discussions, Heppner City

Councilor Cody High suggested the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for city employees be raised by another 2.5 percent to better reflect current inflation. That would bring the COLA to five percent for city employees.

Cutsforth cautioned against it, saying another increase would be on top of an automatic step increase and would bring the actual wage increase to 7.5 percent.

"You are going against the grain. You do not have a sustainable product," said Cutsforth.

"The way I see it is, the step increase is a reward for years of service," said High. "The cost of living is tied to the cost of living, or inflation increase. So if we combine reward and cost of living to just match the cost of living...there are no actual advances."

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Lexington considers broadband franchise agreement with CBEC



Map of the proposed broadband fiber CBEC will install in Lexington. Red lines are the "backbone" cables, while the orange and aqua lines are the laterals that will carry internet throughout the town and out to some rural areas. -Courtesy of CBEC

By Andrea Di Salvo

The Lexington Town Council tentatively approved a proposed franchise agreement with Columbia Basin Electric Cooperative for fiber internet service pending some changes at its June 13 meeting in Lexington.

The proposed 10-year

franchise agreement will allow CBEC to construct and maintain the cables and other technical facilities needed to provide fiber optic data transport services—i.e., high speed internet—in the area.

The franchise agreement would not be exclusive, so the town could grant the same right to another provider at any time.

At the meeting, Columbia Basin CEO Andy Fletcher told the town council that Columbia Basin will hang the fiber strand throughout the community, basically following existing power lines. CBEC will be partnering with internet service provider (ISP) Blue Mountain Networks, who will actually provide the internet service.

"So basically, what going to end up happening, is it's going to be a pass-through on their side of it," said Fletcher. "There's not going to be a charge for hookup right now. If people want it, we're going to hook everybody up."

The covered area will include Lexington, Clark's Canyon, Blackhorse and Meadowbrook. Fletcher said he thought it was important to understand that it wasn't a money-making project for anyone.

"The city's not going to make any money off it, (nor) Columbia Basin," he said, adding that they would probably end up with about a five-dollar charge on it, which would be used for maintenance rather than revenue.

"I think that this is a good thing. I think this is a very important thing for Lexington," said town

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Sweek investigated for ethics violation

By Andrea Di Salvo

Former Morrow County Planning Commissioner Greg Sweek has agreed to settle without an investigation regarding claims that he committed an ethics violation during his time in the planning department.

The conflict arose because Sweek's time as planning commissioner overlapped with his time as manager for the Columbia River Enterprise Zone (CREZ). Sweek currently serves as the manager for both CREZ II and CREZ III.

During Sweek's time as planning commissioner, he was required to file a State-

ment of Economic Interest (SEI) annually. Included on the SEI is a place to list sources of income received during a year if the income makes up 10 percent or more of the annual household income. While Sweek did file those SEIs in 2019-2022, he never listed any CREZ income—which was true for three of those years.

However, a preliminary investigation by the Oregon Government Ethics Commission (OGEC) found that Sweek was required to disclose his CREZ income for 2020 on his 2021 SEI. While Sweek amended his 2021 SEI on April 10 of

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