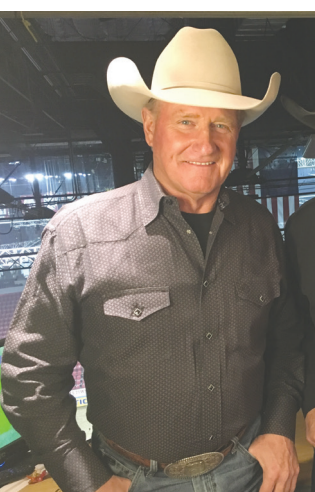




Knowles inducted into pro rodeo hall of fame



Heppner cowboy Butch Knowles will be inducted into the Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame next week in Colorado. -Contributed photo

By Andrea Di Salvo

"I've never ever thought my place would be in the Hall of Fame, I'm just that type of guy. I've enjoyed the ride that I've had," says Butch Knowles. "I look up to all those guys in the Hall of Fame and I think they've made incredible marks in the sport of rodeo in their lives."

There's a saying that a good cowboy doesn't have to tell anyone he's good, because his horse already knows. That seems to be the philosophy of Heppner cowboy Brian "Butch" Knowles. Knowles, 68, does a lot of talking in his line of work, but little of it is about himself. He's pretty famous in the rodeo world, but he takes his fame in stride.

That includes his most recent accomplishment, his induction in the ProRodeo Hall of Fame and Museum of the American Cowboy in Colorado Springs, CO later this month.

When it comes to his

induction into the hall of fame as a rodeo notable, it's difficult to pin down one reason Knowles is receiving the honor. Rather, it's a lifetime of work and accomplishment that puts him where he is today.

Knowles has made a name for himself as a TV commentator, including countless broadcasts from the National Final Rodeo (NFR). He doesn't just talk about rodeo, though. Knowles also qualified for the NFR in saddle bronc riding in 1981, 1983 and 1986-87. He won the NFR average in 1987. Add to that his time spent volunteering and coaching, and one can see why he might be considered "notable."

His story began May 11, 1955, in Klamath Falls, OR. He grew up in Redmond, involved in the ranching life from an early age. He didn't answer the call of the rodeo until about 1968, when he and his brother decided to enter a Western States Junior Rodeo Association rodeo in the area.

"My brother entered in bareback riding, and I entered in the calf riding," he recalls. "That was my first splash in the pond."

He was about 13 years old.

"It hooked me right off the bat. That's all I thought about from that point forward," says Knowles. "I couldn't wait to do it."

He says he had always been drawn to the mystique of the cowboy life, and the adrenaline rush of the rodeo clinched it. Even though there were only about five junior rodeos around Ore-



Knowles with his trophy for All-Around Cowboy at the St. Paul Rodeo 1979. -Contributed photo

gon at the time, he dove in with both feet.

"I started roping and working a lot of events after that junior rodeo in Redmond," he says. In fact, he competed in every event in every rodeo he could throughout high school. The same year he graduated from Redmond High School, 1973, Knowles also won the National High School Rodeo all-around cowboy.

Walla Walla Community College (WWCC) rodeo coach Tim Corfield saw his potential and offered him a rodeo scholarship to WWCC.

"It meant a lot that Tim believed in me before anyone else really knew who I was," says Knowles, adding that he and Corfield went on

to become fast friends. "I really respect that."

Knowles continued to compete heavily at the college level, initially making his mark as a bull rider, as well as a saddle bronc rider.

"I liked all the rough stock events," he says. Though he became best known as a saddle bronc rider, he loved bull riding, and continued to compete in every event he could. He says it was that broad knowledge of events that gave him an advantage in his later role as commentator.

"It really helped later, being an analyst and in broadcasting. I had experience in all of those events, and that really helped me,"

-Continued to PAGE SEVEN

County commission approves budget, expresses support for solar project

By Andrea Di Salvo

The Morrow County Board of Commissioners unanimously approved the budget for the fiscal year 2023-24 at its meeting in Irrigon June 21. Of the \$91,454,508 budget, \$29,196,690 was appropriated for the general fund.

Other big-ticket funds included road and road equipment reserve funds (\$10,934,905 combined), the airport fund (\$1,662,097), Finley Buttes license fund (\$2,290,449), special transportation fund (1,597,652), capital improvement fund (\$4,303,341), fair improvement fund (\$1,050,000), park fund (\$1,225,257), Shepherds Flat fees fund (\$1,501,500), community

corrections (\$1,055,355), PGE Carty fund (\$2,277,053), Wheatridge Wind fund (\$2,440,000), and the resiliency fund (\$5,609,228), among others, for total appropriations of 72,109,625. Unappropriated and reserve funds totaled \$19,344,883.

The budget had passed out of the budget committee with unanimous approval.

The board of commissioners also approved the property tax rate for the county at \$4.1347 per \$1,000 of assessed value for the 2023-24 tax year.

Before discussing the budget for the upcoming fiscal year, the commissioners addressed a proposed supplemental budget for the fiscal year 2022-23. Morrow County Finance Director Kevin Ince explained the budget for the fiscal year just ending had both shortfalls and unanticipated income that needed to be dealt with.

"Largely these changes are driven by changes in personnel services," said Ince of the shortfalls. "Expenditures that were not included in or anticipated in the current fiscal year."

Primary changes were additional positions and a five percent pay incentive that the board approved

several months ago.

Ince also pointed out a large increase in appropriations of about \$811,000. Of that, \$685,377 was an increase in Wheatridge Wind fees.

"We had a larger beginning balance than was anticipated and had more revenues than were budgeted for," Ince said.

He proposed the county use the surplus funds to make an additional contribution payment toward the county's defined benefit pension plan.

The board unanimously approved the supplemental budget and the proposed payment to the pension plan.

The board held public hearings on both budgets, but there was no public comment.

After some discussion, the board of commissioners also agreed to sign a letter of support for Sunstone Solar, the large solar project that Pine Gate Renewables hopes to build in Morrow County. The letter was to support Sunstone Solar's preliminary application for site certificate with the Oregon Energy Facility Siting Council.

Morrow County Board of Commissioners Chair David Sykes asked for in-

put from Morrow County Planner Tamra Mabbott. He said he was concerned in case there was any conflict between the county's recognition of the economic benefits of the project and the county's possible role in approving zoning for the solar facility.

"I want to make sure we're not tainting our decision-making process," said Sykes.

Mabbott said she had shared Sykes's concerns since the solar facility was just beginning the permitting process. Even though the state is the lead agency, she said, there is a role for

-Continued to PAGE SIX

Land selected for new circuit court building

By Andrea Di Salvo
A site in Heppner has been selected for the new Morrow County Circuit Court building, Heppner Mayor Corey Sweeney announced last week. The new courthouse will be located on land the county already owns, near the Morrow County Fairgrounds in Heppner.

"We've been in full support of it, and we are going to be working with

neighbors and citizens with this project," Sweeney said. "We're very excited about this."

The decision regarding the courthouse site has been months in the making. Sweeney told the Gazette-Times that the City of Heppner has been working extensively with the county to find a suitable parcel on which to build the new circuit court. Several possible

-Continued to PAGE EIGHT

Columbia 10U shuts out Baker for district title

11U baseball and Juniors softball take second place



The Columbia 10U baseball team won the Oregon District 3 Little League Championship and is headed to the state championship tournament in La Grande later this month. -Contributed photo

It was a packed schedule of baseball and softball games at the Oregon District 3 Little League All Star Tournament in Hermiston this past week. Morrow County was well represented with players and coaches participating on teams in all divisions.

The Columbia River

Little League 11-and-under All Stars, coached by Brad Adams, took second place at the tournament, beating Pendleton twice, 8-2 and 10-0, then falling to Hermiston in the championship game. Local players on the 11U team were Carter Adams, Peyton Matheny, Co-

-Continued to PAGE EIGHT

Heppner coach, athletes honored by Army National Guard



Heppner football coach Greg Grant (right) with SFC Joseph Sullivan of the Oregon Army National Guard. -Photo courtesy of the OSAA

A Heppner High School coach and two athletes were honored with special recognition from the Oregon Army National Guard last month. The Oregon Army National Guard partners with the Oregon School Activities Association (OSAA) and the Oregon Athletic Coaches Association (OACA) to present awards to coaches and athletes who show exceptional leadership and team spirit.

Greg Grant is the head teacher and athletic director at Heppner Jr./Sr.

High School, as well as its long-time football coach. He was one of only two coaches in the state who received the Oregon Army National Guard Coach of the Year award, according to the OSAA, because of his "exceptional leadership and a deep commitment" to his student athletes.

"Through their efforts, they're shaping more than just skilled athletes. They are building character, instilling discipline, and cultivating our future leaders."

-Continued to PAGE SEVEN

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