

# County commission approves budget, expresses support for solar project

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 the county board of commissioners in two regards. "Once the Energy Facility Site Certificate is issued, throughout that process, there are three places in which you would be asked to provide input," she said, adding that the board of commissioners would also be appointed as a special advisory group for the project. "So, you are to be the objective, non-biased voice, if you will, on the ground for people."

At the same time, she said, the wording of the letter was also tied to land use, because with a project of this size, one of the standards needs to show an economic value. The letter had been worded, she said, to reflect that.

"So we've come full circle," Mabbott said. "Without saying you are giving full blessing to the project, this letter, with the language that's added to it, says you do appreciate and recognize the economic value of the project, notwithstanding your other duties as the board of commissioners and the special advisory group."

Sykes said he appreciated the clarification. "None of us like surprises as we go through a process," he said. "There's enough hangups and problems without throwing in self-inflicted wounds."

Also at the meeting, the board of commissioners gave the nod to Umatilla-Morrow Head Start to continue plans for more classroom space in Irrigon. UMHS CEO Aaron Treadwell and COO Dan Deltosa were on hand at the meeting to ask Morrow County to be the lead applicant on a Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) through Business Oregon.

It would be a \$1.5 million grant to add onto and update the current Irrigon facility next to A.C. Houghton Elementary. The current UMHS facility has been in use for about 30 years. Daltosa said it is getting run down and in need of repair, as well as having security issues.

Daltosa said they were in discussions with A.C. Houghton regarding a long-term lease, and he had already talked with Morrow County School District (MCSD) Superintendent Matt Combe and other staff about placement for the new classrooms.

"They enjoy us being on the school district campus, and we want to stay there," he said.

The idea is to keep the existing space but also expand through new classroom space. UMHS is currently looking at expanding through modular building, as Daltosa said that is the most cost-effective building they could get for the \$1.5 million. The Head Start program already uses modular classrooms at its Child Development Center in Hermiston.

Daltosa added that, if Head Start were able to secure additional funding, they would prefer stick-built because those buildings last longer.

"We're looking for a complete revamp of the building and just having a beautiful building here in the community of Irrigon," Daltosa said. "We're really excited to have something we can call permanent here. We'd just like your help and support."

Daltosa said UMHS would be the one working on the application in coordination with Morrow County Interim Administrator Roberta Vanderwall and would provide more detail throughout the process. Currently, they were asking for a consensus from the board of commissioners to move forward.

Vanderwall said the application is due in September.

"I think it's really going to be something that the county and the community of Irrigon can be proud of," said Daltosa. "We're open to other ideas. We just want to make sure we have your support moving forward."

In other business, the board of commissioners approved a contract with Bolen Construction, LLC in the amount of \$154,232.20 for a turn lane on Bombing Range Rd.

Morrow County and Amazon Data Service entered into a road use agreement in October 2022 for Amazon's development on Bombing Range Rd. As part of that agreement, Morrow County Public Works is facilitating the construction of a right turn lane onto the property. Amazon, in turn, has agreed to reimburse the county for the construction, administration and engineering costs.

The right turn lane is being added because of concern over visibility for drivers coming from the north. There are no plans for a left turn lane, since visibility is good coming from the south.

The board also approved a contract in the amount of \$898,334.30 with Silver Creek Contracting for the Lexington airport Taxiway D reconstruction project.

## 4-H to hold Cloverbud Rodeo

Morrow County 4-H will host a Cloverbud Rodeo at two separate locations later this month. All 4-H Cloverbuds and children ages five to eight are welcome to attend and participate in crafts, activities and more.

South Morrow will have its Cloverbud camp 2-4 p.m. on July 14 at the Morrow County Fairgrounds.

The North Morrow camp will be held 2-4 p.m. on July 21, with the location to be announced closer to the date.

Oregon's 4-H Cloverbud Program is an informal education program

designed for youth ages 5-8 as of Sept. 1 of the current 4-H year. It is designed to support young children's natural curiosity, enthusiasm for learning and high energy levels by giving them an opportunity for active learning.

Cloverbuds introduces youth to cooperative learning in areas such as healthy lifestyles, expressive arts, plants and animals, science and technology and personal development.

Families are invited to whichever date and location works best for them, but are asked to RSVP to grace.ogden@oregonstate.edu or call 541-676-9642.

The taxiway is one of the older pieces of the airport and needs to be reconstructed to meet current Federal Aviation Administration requirements. The bulk of the project will be funded through the FAA, with the county providing a 10 percent match.

Vanderwall said most of her time recently had been spent preparing to send the Morrow County Circuit Court building construction out for bid. The county has received \$12,745,000 in funding toward the new circuit court building.

"Our request was much less than that, and our construction costs came in higher, so we put in a request for more, and we got approved," said Sykes.

Morrow County Commissioner Roy Drago added that he wanted to clarify that the new circuit court building would be in Heppner, not Irrigon as had been rumored.

"There's a lot of questions about that, and a lot of concern," Drago said. "Heppner is our county seat and will always be our county seat."

Morrow County Commissioner Jeff Wenzel added that it is written into Oregon statute that the circuit court be in Heppner, and Morrow County Counsel Justin Nelson confirmed that the ORS states Heppner by name.

Vanderwall also said she is waiting on information from Flo Analytical before the county can move forward on the new Ambulance Service Area plan. Flo Analytical is doing the boundary assessment.

"We should be getting that, and then we can move forward," said Vanderwall.

# GOAL 9 analysis of South Morrow

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 posing a challenge to its economic competitiveness.

"Especially for the sizes for industry or business to come in," said Bowen. "They do need a certain parcel size, and with the limitations of that, it would require some development of expanding those."

Within all commercial and industrial districts across all three towns, there are only two parcels, both in Lexington, with gross buildable land exceeding 20 acres.

Points Consulting's conclusion on land demand suggests that Ione and Lexington may warrant a slight increase in commercial land supply, while Heppner's biggest need is large-tract industrial lands.

The consulting firm recommended the three cities develop industrial and commercial sites to boost private sector employment. Bowen said it would probably require talking with area landowners, as well as further discussion regarding Goal 14, which deals with urban growth boundaries.

Bowen also suggested the communities organize events to attract crowds and support local businesses.

"The communities already have a great number of places to go and hang out," said Bowen, mentioning the food truck court in Heppner and Broken Spoke in Lexington. "Creating events around these entities would be great to bring revenue in to support local businesses."

They also suggested enhancing the valley's tourism branding through improved marketing, focusing on tours, maps and eateries.

Finally, future zoning amendments should consider the demand from public employers for siting future facilities, which may lead to the expansion of urban growth boundaries to accommodate growing needs.

Bowen said that, to ensure a thorough understanding of the communities' needs, the team made it a point to engage with town representatives and community members. Visiting each community and engaging in conversations with the locals provided insights into the unique challenges and opportunities present in each area.

"Because, at the end of the day, what we recommend does impact each and every one of these areas," said Bowen.

"I just want to point out that this is a land use

planning exercise but Goal 9, economic development, is one of the statewide planning goals," said Mabbott. "The way we can understand employment lands is, we also have to do some analysis about population, where the market might trend, and that would then justify things on the city level, like updating our code."

"I think the small cities are in a good position, particularly with housing and economic development, to update their plans," Mabbott added.

Each of the communi-

ties will next need to adopt the final report as part of their Goal 9 plan.

Dawn Hert, the DLCD eastern regional representative, expressed her satisfaction with the progress of the project, praising the seamless collaboration between the three cities and the project team. Hert also mentioned that Lexington is currently working on a Transportation and Growth Management grant.

"It's like this momentum is moving for this part of Morrow County, and I like seeing where it's going," said Hert.

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 ALL NEWS AND ADVERTISEMENT DEADLINE:  
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Please join us as we celebrate the March 3rd, 2023, transfer of 9,511.37 acres of Army Depot property to the Columbia Development Authority (CDA). The CDA's new Industrial Site in Umatilla and Morrow Counties has been almost 30 years in the making!

Enjoy comments by CDA Chairman Kim Puzey and other CDA partners, a tribal blessing from CTUIR, a ribbon-cutting ceremony, a complimentary barbeque, and a tour of the CDA property.

Wednesday, July 12th, 2023  
 10 AM - 12 PM

The Raymond F. Rees Training Center  
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If you have any questions, please contact the CDA at 541-481-3693.

