

Circuit court placement still top of mind

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Collins also said he had recently expanded his property with the intention of providing water and sewer hookups for mobile trailers, and he wondered if the county was willing to support those efforts.

"If this is truly the final place for the new courthouse, rather than being an opponent, we want to understand how we can be a positive partner with Morrow County to ensure that local landowners are considered, protected and involved throughout this process," said Collins.

Terri Gentry, also of Heppner, had been on hand to voice her concerns at a recent Heppner City Council meeting. As vice-president of the Oregon Trail Pro Rodeo Committee, she questioned whether the plans for the new courthouse building would threaten the rodeo's future.

"I recently was told by a local citizen that our contestant parking lot, that we fully utilize during the times that the arena is being used, is now going to be the site of the new Morrow County Circuit Court building," said Gentry.

"The rodeo committee does not want to impede the construction of this building in the Heppner area," Gentry said, but added that the rodeo committee had not been informed even after the decision was announced. "And we feel that the commissioners in the county have once again ignored the existence of our fair and rodeo and the rodeo committee as a meaningful part of this county."

She said the new circuit court site would eat up existing rodeo competitor parking and endanger the long-standing tradition.

"If the contestants can't park, they won't come, and there won't be a rodeo," she said. "And the Morrow County legacy event, the Oregon Trail Pro Rodeo and the MoCo Rodeo, will no longer exist after 2024."

"The open dialogue is going to happen," said Morrow County Board of Commissioner Chair David Sykes. "All the people that want to talk about it will be invited."

Later in the meeting, Morrow County Fair Secretary Sue Gibbs also addressed the commissioners about the fair board's concerns.

"We're at the top of this, and we want to work and talk with all of you as we go through this," Sykes told Gibbs. "And we want to know what your concerns are and what your thoughts are."

Morrow County Clerk Bobbi Childers spoke as a citizen when she said she has been involved in fair and rodeo, as well as working in the courthouse.

"I understand that we own this property, and I really wish that we could look somewhere else," she said. "I know that stuff has gone into this, but I think there are much better solutions than putting that in there and affecting so many things that our community needs."

Julie Baker of Lexington said she had concerns as an elementary school parent about the court being located so close to the elementary school, including where current student drop-off and pick-up are.

"I want to know what research has been done regarding the safety of our students and our youth," said Baker. "Why has an opportunity not been given to parents in the community for feedback? Is this a final

decision, or will our opinions be valued here?"

While most of the public comments were regarding the circuit court, Boardman man Raymond Akers addressed the commissioners about the water nitrate issues in North Morrow County, saying he was concerned because it didn't look like the county was doing anything and there was no open dialogue.

"Something's got to happen here," said Akers. "Our numbers are growing, and we're not going away."

"This is a very complex problem, as we've said before," replied Sykes. "We're addressing it on multiple fronts right now."

Also in the matter of the justice system, the board of commissioners approved renewal of a jail use agreement between Morrow and Umatilla counties for jail bed space for Morrow County Sheriff's Office prisoners at Umatilla County Jail. The total contract amount is \$876,000, to be paid in quarterly installments of \$219,000.

The contract includes guaranteed reservation of 20 daily beds for Morrow County prisoners. The county had been paying \$69 per bed, but the price this year jumped to \$120 per day. MCSO Undersheriff Brian Snyder told the commissioners the state average is \$159 per bed.

"That's a significant jump as it is," said Snyder, "but we were able to talk them down."

Snyder added that the contract is important because, without it, Morrow County prisoners would be the first to be released if the Umatilla County jail were overcrowded, but the contract guarantees Morrow County space for at least 20 prisoners.

The board of commissioners also approved appropriations of \$54,000 for emergency dispatch to purchase an additional phone. The funds from the 9-1-1 tax were already present in the contingency budget.

Morrow County Sheriff's Office Communications Lt. Kristen Bowles told the commissioners that the state had cut the county from five to three phones a couple of years ago. The MCSO Communications Center currently has four stations, but only three have working phones.

"With the county growing the way it is and the calls for service and the incoming calls picking up, we need to be able to answer the phone," said Bowles.

"There's been multiple times when all of our phones are lit up and we have one station that's absolutely useless," she added. "So we're not answering the phone in a timely manner."

Also at the meeting, the commissioners approved an ordinance adopting a new procurement and contracting policy. The commissioners also approved resolutions on policies for capital asset management, financial assistance management and cash handling.

The new policies were created to align with the Oregon Health Authority action plan; the county is required to have certain policies and procedures for capital assets documented, especially when it comes to Federal funds.

"Really there's not going to be much of a change in processes and current practices," said Morrow County Finance Director Kevin Ince of one of the policies. "This is more of a formal documentation of best practices which, gener-

ally speaking, we're already in alignment with."

In other action at the July 19 meeting, the board approved:

-a supplemental budget resolution to establish an election modernization fund;

-the appointment of Ann Jones to the Morrow County Fair Board to fill the remainder of Alita Nelson's term, which expires Dec. 31, 2024; Jones had been Morrow County Fair Secretary for about eight years before Sue Gibbs took over the role this summer;

-a contract with Andy

Ashbeck Trucking for public works equipment and trucking services, which will be provided at a variable hourly rate;

-a 10-year rock pit agreement for 50 cents per crushed ton of rock with 4C Ranches in Ione for an established quarry on Carlson Ln. The estimated cost is \$26,000 per year; and

-a sole-source award of ambient mix asphalt emulsion to Enviroad, LLC for approximately \$1,750,000 for summer capital improvement paving projects.

Music in the Parks wrapping up with two sizzling groups



Cruise Control



Estilo Diferente

Music in the Parks at Boardman and Irrigon marina parks will wrap up its summer concert series with two sizzling performances this month.

Estilo Diferente is back for an encore performance in Boardman on August 7. Estilo Diferente was founded in 2019 by three teenage friends. Their name translates as "different style" and is illustrated by the variety of musical styles they play, which include: norteño, sierrero, indie sierrero, corridos and romanticas.

The season wraps up with Cruise Control in Irrigon on August 14. Cruise Control is a 50s, 60s, 70s and 80s cover band that plays rock, pop, and country rock music. Together with their unique blend of voices, they play everything from the hard drivin' rock and roll to the softer melodies that bring back memories of special occasions and invite the listener to reminisce over experiences that used to be so clear. Feel

free to tap your toe, dance, or just sing along, whichever makes you happy.

From time to time the band provides an open mic for people in the audience to display their talents or fulfill their dream of singing with a rock band. The band is very versatile, and often will take requests from the eras they cover. So, if you have a favorite song you would like to hear, feel free to make your request and they will do their best to make it happen.

The concerts are free to the public and begin at 7 p.m. on Monday nights. Visitors are encouraged to bring chairs and blankets. The series is funded by the Morrow County Unified Recreation District and sponsored by the North Morrow Community Foundation. In the event of inclement weather, Boardman performances will be held at the SAGE Center and Irrigon performances will be held at the Irrigon Senior Center.

National forests on Phase B restrictions

Umatilla National Forest officials remind forest users that Malheur, Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman national forests increased to Phase B Public Use Restrictions recently due to high fire danger, the potential for human-caused fires and concern for public safety. The increased restrictions pertain to the use of campfires, smoking, chainsaws, internal combustion engines and generators.

Campfires are only allowed in designated campgrounds and recreation sites. Liquefied or bottled gas stoves and heaters are allowed for cooking and heating. A list of designated recreation sites is available on each of the forest's websites.

Operating an internal combustion engine, such as a chainsaw, is prohibited without a valid permit. Commercial and personal use firewood permits are regulated by the conditions of the permit and separate from restrictions under this public use restriction.

Generators will only be allowed in the center of an area at least 10 feet in diameter that is cleared of all flammable material; or when fully contained within a pickup truck bed that is devoid of all flammable material; or when factory installed in a recreational vehicle and the generator

exhaust discharge is located in the center of an area at least 10 feet in diameter that is cleared of all flammable material.

Smoking is only allowed within enclosed vehicles, buildings and developed recreation sites or when stopped in an area cleared of all flammable material.

No off-road vehicle travel is allowed. Possessing or using a motor vehicle off National Forest roads and motorized trails is prohibited, except for the purpose of parking in an area free of vegetation within 10 feet of the roadway. Motorized travel on roads closed by gates, barricades, berms, rocks or logs is prohibited.

Regulated closures may be in effect on state and private lands protected by Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) in northeast and central Oregon. Please check with your local ODF office for PURs on lands protected by ODF.

Please remember that it is everyone's responsibility to know what restrictions are in place when visiting public lands. Additional restrictions may apply on each individual Forest. For more information regarding restrictions on the Umatilla National Forests, please call toll-free at 877-958-9663 or visit <https://www.fs.usda.gov/umatilla>.

BUCKNUM'S TAVERN
146 N Main Street
Heppner
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Lunch & Dinner Menu

Specials 8/3 /8-9

Thursday - sweet n sour pork, fried rice, and egg roll \$9
4-9pm free dots pretzel's
Friday - chicken plus with fries \$9
Saturday - chef salad for \$10
Monday - 1/4 cheeseburger with cheddar cheese, bacon bits and a side of Mac n cheese \$9
Tuesday- shrimp fajitas and tortilla chips \$9
Tuesday - night \$2 hard shell tacos
Wednesday - taco burger and tortilla chips \$9

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Hopeful Saints Movie in the Parking Lot

Saturday August 5th & August 12th!

Corner of Gale & Church Street in Heppner

Movies will start at 8:30 weather permitting.

This is a free community event thanks to Morrow County Unified Recreation District.
Any questions contact Cody High 541-256-0847