

Health district agrees to proposed Amazon SIP distribution

By Andrea Di Salvo

Morrow County moved one step closer to a county-wide agreement on SIP disbursements Monday night when Morrow County Health District approved a proposed intergovernmental agreement with the county regarding Amazon's new facility on Bombing Range Rd.

Morrow County entered a Strategic Investment Program (SIP) agreement with Amazon Web Services earlier this year. In exchange for the 15-year tax abatement, Amazon will make an annual community service fee (CSF) payment to the county equal to 25 percent of the property tax savings, up to a maximum of \$2.5 million per year. The Amazon project is expected to max out that payment through most of the life of the contract.

The county will then distribute that CSF payment among the special taxing districts impacted by the tax abatement. Morrow County's initial proposal included itself among the taxing districts receiving the distributions.

Morrow County is by far the largest taxing district involved in the SIP, with a lion's share of 51.9 percent of tax revenue. By contrast, the second-largest, Boardman Fire, receives just over nine percent, with the health district at 7.5 percent.

Conflict arose at a special meeting with the Morrow County Board of Commissioners July 19, when representatives of some special districts, including MCHD, questioned whether the county was getting too big a piece of the pie.

The county's agreement with Amazon also included an annual contribution payment equal to \$850,000 and an up-front community development contribution of \$5 million in addition to the annual community service fees. Several people at the special district meeting felt those sums were enough for the county, and that the county should be excluded from the CSF distributions.

"The general consensus of the special districts that attended...was to request that the county step back from the community ser-

vice fee," MCHD CEO Emily Roberts told the board. "However, that was met with resistance, and the group at large has seemed to step away from that request."

The intergovernmental agreement (IGA) the health district approved Monday night represents a compromise between the county and other special districts, in which the county will receive 20 percent, to a maximum of \$500,000, from the yearly CSF payment. The remaining \$2 million will be divided on a pro rata basis, meaning each district will receive the same percentage of the CSF as it would have gotten if receiving taxes from the property. With the county excluded, BFRD's share jumps to 19.4 percent, and the health district's to 15.7 percent, not including special district bonds.

"Special districts need to make the decision to either sign and go forward with this IGA, or not," Roberts said.

Aside from Morrow County, the nine other affected districts include MCHD, Umatilla-Morrow Radio and Data District, Port of Morrow, Morrow County Unified Recreational District, Boardman Fire Protection District, Oregon Trial Library District, Vector Control, Boardman Park and Boardman Cemetery.

MCHD's approval doesn't necessarily mean the agreement is a done deal. Seventy-five percent of the districts must approve the IGA in order to adopt it. If they don't, the IGA is forwarded to Business Oregon for a final determination.

Roberts said her sense was that most of the special districts planned to approve the IGA.

Members of the MCHD board of directors didn't seem thrilled with the compromise but approved it anyway, citing uncertainty on whether a Business Oregon decision would leave special districts with even less of a payout.

"Based on the guidance that Business Oregon has put out about distribution of community service fees, I would anticipate that they would do it proportionate to everybody's taxing percentage, and I think that they

would include the county in that," Roberts told the MCHD board, "which would give them more than \$500,000 of that per year."

The board voted unanimously to approve the agreement.

Also at its July 31 meeting, the MCHD board approved a contract with Dynamic Computer Consulting for an upgrade to a Voice over Internet (VoIP) phone system for the district.

Roberts told the board members the current phone system is complicated and "end of life" and would be expensive to replace. She said VoIP would provide greater flexibility, including a remote app so employees can use their office phone on a mobile device. DCC is also attractive because it is already the district's IT provider and because of its nearby location in Pendleton.

"There's a remarkable amount of overlap between IT and phones, and it causes a lot of problems that we don't have the same vendor," said Roberts.

The upfront cost of \$68,253 was higher than the other bids received, but both Roberts and MCHD Chief Financial Officer Nicole Mahoney said the lower annual cost of \$24,175.68 would make it the most cost-effective choice in the long run.

The health district currently pays \$92,500 annu-

ally for its phone system.

The board also approved a new contract with emergency medicine physician Jeffrey Westin.

Westin is currently a locum provider for the district but is contracted through recruiting firm CompHealth. The new contract is with Westin directly.

MCHD will have to buy out the CompHealth contract at a cost of \$16,500, but Roberts and Mahoney said the move is still more beneficial for both the physician and the health district, since they will be cutting out the cost of the recruiting firm. In exchange, Westin has agreed to work at least 25 shifts over the next three years.

MCHD is contracting Westin at \$135 per hour for emergency room and hospital call coverage and hours worked.

The board also approved medical staff privileges for several providers. New appointments included roster appointments for OHSU telemedicine providers; CORA radiologists Stephen Weldon, Steven Plimpton, Alyssa McNamara and Stephen Carroll; physical therapist Taylor Turner; and licensed dietitians Theresa Fenn and Rachel Tate. Re-appointments were emergency medicine providers Jeffrey Westin and Peter Viavant, and clinic CSWA Jamie Reed.

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Miller Rd. area. One was hit by a vehicle west of the Irrigon Shell on Hwy. 730.

-MCSO received report of a suspicious white vehicle that sounded like flashes and popping noises were coming from it. Deputy was unable to locate.

-A female in Heppner advised she was at the northwestern Motel and did not have her house key with her. She thought that a male had a spare house key. She was locked out of her house and requesting assistance.

-MCSO arrested Stephanie Burrows for improper use of an emergency communications system. Subject was lodged at Umatilla County Jail with no bail.

-A male in Irrigon reported his son as missing. Law enforcement found the child and dropped him off at a friend's house with parent approval.

-MCSO arrested Deborah R. Cameron a parole and probation detainee. Subject was lodged at UCJ with no bail.

-A caller in Boardman stated there was someone on his porch. The caller stated he was unable to get a description, only a silhouette of the individual, who was last seen heading south on

Miller Rd.

-A male in Irrigon stated that his aunt was telling his father that she was going to call the police because he was refusing to leave the house, which was in his name. The caller stated that it was not aggressive or physical, so the caller was available for phone contact.

-Pasco PD arrested Todd Michael Wright on a Morrow County Circuit Court warrant for failure to appear on felon in possession of a firearm; criminal trespass while in possession of a firearm; and taking, angling, hunting or trapping in violation of wildlife law X3. The subject was lodged at Franklin County Jail.

-Boardman PD took a report on an accident that had just occurred on Pheasant Court. A male ran toward Eagle Dr.

-A man in Boardman reported damage to the driver's side door on his pickup truck. He advised it had happened some time the night before through that day.

-An anonymous caller reported hearing five shots three to five minutes before in the area of Bella Vista Estates. Boardman PD responded but was unable to locate.

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