

# Heppner council meeting

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Morrow County Sheriff's Office transporting trapped cats to Pet Rescue.

"You paid, I paid as a citizen, six trips, five trips to haul a cat per trip—one trip may have been two cats—to Hermiston, by a deputy," Wolff said.

Wolff said a Heppner citizen on May St. had trapped the cats and called the sheriff's office to get rid of it. He said that, in his estimation, each trip was at least three hours of patrol time the city is being charged for to haul the cats. He also said the problem was escalating, as litters born in the spring were moving out on their own.

Wolff also said he couldn't find a cat ordinance on the books for the City of Heppner.

"We have dog ordinances, and vicious dogs and vagrant dogs and different things about dogs," he said. "I don't know what the council's flavor is as to what we do about feral cats."

Heppner City Councilor JoAnna Lamb responded that there is no state ordinance regarding cats, either. She said she had done animal control for two years.

"It doesn't matter what county or what state or even what country you're in," said Lamb, "it does not enforce the laws on cats."

She said the city might be able to create a code regarding feeding stations, but that regulating cats has always been difficult.

"Cats have always been a difficult thing," added MCSO Lt. Nathan Braun, who was present at the meeting. "You can't keep a cat contained. It's impossible."

He added that deputies have been transporting cats for as long as he's been a deputy, around two decades. The City of Irri-gon also used to pay the sheriff's department for cat transport, but eventually said they wouldn't pay for transports any more, Braun said.

"They still have cat problems. We just don't haul them anymore," said Braun.

Wolff said Heppner citizens, especially neighbors near the feeding stations, were complaining. He mentioned one resident who owns a soft-top Jeep.

"And the cats are defecating and spraying on his soft-top," said Wolff.

Another resident complained that cats were

climbing into a stroller and spraying.

"I can't find any muscle for the city to do anything about it, but I feel you need to be aware of that," Wolff said.

He also said the city had paid out more than \$500 dollars for Pet Rescue to receive the cats.

"Two issues for me. One is that we're paying for patrol time under our sheriff's contract," said Wolff. "Number two, we're paying for this animal shelter, disposal outfit to take these cats."

Heppner city councilor John Doherty suggested the city create resolutions discontinuing cat transport by the sheriff's office and banning feeding stations.

Lamb said she didn't have a problem with not having deputies transport cats; she said her family has trapped cats and transported them themselves. However, she added that there might be legal issues with banning feeding stations.

"Proving ownership on that cat would be very difficult," she said. "One of the biggest problems is that no country has a law on cats that actually works. The United States certainly doesn't, and each state certainly doesn't either. I haven't found one yet."

"What is going to happen if they don't get transported?" asked Heppner City Councilor Cody High. "Obviously, in this situation, the gentleman on May St. who is actively catching them is not doing that."

"If he continues to actively catch them but he's not actively driving them, but is actively annoyed with these cats, what do we think is going to happen?" he added.

High added that a policy against using city resources to deal with feral cats would also preclude any kind of mass round-up and transport the city might want to do.

"I cannot believe that we're saying we have these two places with a hundred cats and the City of Heppner is just like, hands off," said High.

"It is a problem. It's also a legal catch-22," said Lamb.

"Why? Nobody owns them," responded High. "These are completely stray, random. I don't understand."

Wolff replied that, as a citizen, he didn't want his resources used to round up

stray cats.

"But you want the feral cats gone," said High.

"There's ways to take care of that, by private citizens," said Wolff.

The council voted 4-3 to discontinue use of city resources, including the sheriff's office and public works, to trap or transport feral cats.

"The second item—what are we going to do about the cats?" said Heppner Mayor Corey Sweeney.

Heppner Councilor Dale Bates suggested an ordinance against feeding feral cats.

"Two or three, you could probably get away with that, but if you get a picture of someone with 20 cats in their yard, that can be presented to our code enforcement people," he said.

Heppner City Counsel Bill Kuhn said he would contact the League of Oregon Cities and see if any other cities had a working ordinance like that. He also added that, if they created such an ordinance, the city would be using resources if an officer had to go and issue a citation.

Heppner City Councilor Adam Doherty also addressed the gray area of people placing feeders on property that doesn't belong to them.

"Where they just say, 'That's not my feeder. What are you talking about?'" he said.

Wolff replied that the two feeders in question were obvious—one woman was even posting on Facebook, asking for donations for cat food. However, he conceded that he could see people moving feeding stations to avoid the city ordinance. Lamb added that, if the feeder were on city property, the city could simply remove it.

High also suggested contacting the Feral Cat Coalition of Oregon (FCCO).

"It needs to be done by a nonprofit organization," agreed Lamb. "That's more organized and specifically for these cat problems."

Wolff said he would create a list of resources for residents dealing with feral cats.

"But the city is not transporting them," he said. "We're not paying to have them fixed. We're not paying to have them delivered. We're not paying to have them euthanized."

had also requested information on what signage, if any, exists where the crosswalk is at the intersection of Hwy. 74 and Hwy. 207.

"There is currently no signage," Ferguson told the council. "Just the painted lines on the road."

That section of roadway used to be posted as 20 mph due to that area being a school zone. However, in 2019, Morrow County School District requested the sign be changed because there was no longer a need for it. It has been decades since the building operated as a school, though the school district had kept its district offices at that location until 2013.

According to Stanton, that created two separate issues for the intersection—the speed zone and the crosswalk. ODOT is responsible for signage and other upkeep for crosswalks within school zones, but all other crosswalks fall to the care of local municipali-

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# Heppner Elementary to close Stansbury two hours on school days



Stansbury Street in Heppner will soon be closed for an hour in the morning and in the afternoon during school days. The closure comes from a concern for student safety after school staff observed unsafe driving on the street. -Photo by Andrea Di Salvo

**By Andrea Di Salvo**

Heppner Elementary School will continue with its plans to close Stansbury Street two hours a day on school days beginning on the first day of school this year.

The closures will begin Aug. 28. The street will be closed between 7:30 and 8:30 a.m. and 3-4 p.m. on school days, typically Monday through Thursday. Morning hours may change to 10:30-11:30 a.m. when school is delayed due to inclement weather or on the four STEAM days throughout the year.

The traffic flow for parent drop-off would be a circle through the parking lot and then down to the side of the school to drop off at the school yard gate. The crossing guards would still be on duty and would be there to put up and take down street barriers, including if an emergency vehicle needed to get through.

The school had sent a request to the Heppner City Council earlier this year, asking for the temporary closure due to safety concerns. The city council approved the request at its April 10 meeting, but the school opted to put off the change until the new school year this fall.

"With a city street bisecting our campus at Heppner Elementary School we often see potential auto pedestrian accidents waiting to happen," HES Principal Dieter Waite wrote in a letter to the council.

Waite also said in the letter that the school has seen more parents dropping off or picking up their students by car. He said they had enacted safety measures such as moving the parent pick up location to the recess gate near the fairgrounds, using sandwich boards to direct traffic in a circular pattern by the gym and increasing crosswalk staffing. Still, safety concerns remain.

Heppner councilor JoAnna Lamb, who also works at HES, told the council that there have been several traffic violations, with drivers trying to go through when there are people crossing the street.

"Not everyone has been very patient with wanting to get where they're going," said Lamb.

Waite said the idea for the temporary closure came from another school in a small town, where they use traffic cones to create a similar closure.

"This creates a safety zone that removes many

of the auto pedestrian conflicts," Waite wrote.

Several council members and city staff expressed concern with the idea when it first came up, since it would block one of two accesses to that side of town. They suggested educating the public, using cameras to track offenders or trying to divert a deputy there during that time period.

However, with the

school's promise to provide access for emergency vehicles, councilor Cody High said that it came down to the school making a request because of safety.

"I don't think for two hours a day that it's too much for people to avoid one cut-across," said High.

"The ultimate concern is the safety of the children," added Lamb. "And there are people not being safe."

# WCCC Sunday men's play

Twenty-three participated in the par-three challenge on Sunday, Aug. 13, at Willow Creek Country Club.

Results are as follows: Net—1<sup>st</sup>, Dale Holland, 53; 2<sup>nd</sup>, Gary Watkins, 54; and 3<sup>rd</sup> (tie), Kelly Fox, Rick Britt, 57.

Gross—1<sup>st</sup>, Tim Wright, 60; 2<sup>nd</sup>, Charlie Ferguson, 62; and 3<sup>rd</sup> (tie), Dennis Peck, Jerry Gentry, Jeff Watkins, 65.

The next men's play will be Aug. 20, hosted by Kelly Fox and Mike Doherty.

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# Lexington continues discussion on traffic, speed zones

**By Andrea Di Salvo**

Streets, speed zones and signage were again topics of discussion during the Aug. 8 Lexington Town Council meeting.

Lexington Town Recorder Veronica Ferguson told the city council she had submitted the request to Oregon Dept. of Transportation to lower the speed limit to 20 miles per hour through town. She said she also had a follow-up call with ODOT traffic investigator Rick Stanton about reducing the speed zone.

She had been told that the town is one of 11 in the investigator's jurisdiction currently seeking a speed zone change.

"He's the investigator for this entire district," she added. "He has to respond to all 11 of those."

The traffic investigator has to go to each site and assess the traffic and the need for the speed zone change. Stanton said it could take several months before he could even make it to Lex-

ington.

"But it's submitted," Ferguson repeated.

Ferguson said she had also spoken with Stanton about how best to get vehicles to slow down through town.

"We spoke about our need for signage," she said. "He said the most 'bang for our buck' is going to be the radar speed flashing light that flashes how fast people are driving by."

The signs are not made to record information, and nobody would be issued a ticket based on the sign's reading, but Stanton said it really helps get people's attention.

The jurisdiction usually pays for the sign, while ODOT would install it and maintain it. The cost for the signs is high, but Ferguson said she was told there might be a possibility of funding.

"I like that idea," said councilor Bill Beard. "It gets my attention."

Ferguson said ODOT



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