



the HEPPNER GAZETTE TIMES

50¢



VOL. 143 NO. 36 8 Pages Wednesday, September 6, 2023 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

Health district talks accomplishments, credit lines at Aug. 28 meeting

By Andrea Di Salvo

The Morrow County Health District Board heard a long list of accomplishments for the past fiscal year at its last meeting but was also faced with a possible shortfall in cash flow, thanks in part to hiccups with a new software.

Regarding cash flow concerns, the MCHD board approved a tax anticipation note with the Bank of Eastern Oregon for up to \$2.5 million at its meeting Aug. 28 in Heppner.

MCHD Chief Operating Officer Nicole Mahoney requested the board approve the line of credit due to an anticipated cash shortfall between now and when the district receives its next tax payments in November.

"In the event that we need to draw ahead to cov-

er cash flow and operation ahead of receiving those tax proceeds from that first distribution," she explained.

The district usually gets the bulk of its tax proceeds at the end of November. Last year that amount was around \$2.7 million. The total tax levy the district expects to receive for the fiscal year is \$3.5 million. Mahoney said that \$3.5 million is a conservative number and that the district is assured of getting the taxes because they have already been levied.

At the same time, Mahoney said the district needs the line of credit because it has seen some cash flow disruption with its conversion to Thrive, with claims being delayed.

"We're working on it diligently, but there's still a delay," said Mahoney.

"We'll still collect them but not in the time frame we're accustomed to in terms of keeping our cash flow rolling."

Mahoney said another reason for the ask was the significant number of cost increases the health district incurred this year.

"We won't receive the cash from those until the cost report is settled," she said, adding that it would likely be January. "A couple of those delays could cause significant cash flow burden for us."

She said the Bank of EO is willing to lend to MCHD on a line of credit up to \$2.5 million. Anything borrowed will be paid back as soon as the district receives its tax distribution from the county.

"It's really just borrowing in anticipation of

getting them," she said. "I don't honestly think that we're going to need to draw that. We may need to draw some of it."

MCHD Board Member John Murray said he agreed.

"And, boy, Thrive is a real challenge, that's all I can say," said Murray. "The software is not very supportive of operations in my opinion."

"Everybody's in a tough situation in health-care here, in the whole state," said MCHD Board Vice Chair Diane Kilkeny, adding that a hospital in Eugene just closed and Oregon Health and Science University is absorbing Legacy Health.

The board approved the tax anticipation note

-Continued to PAGE SIX

Morrow County mosquitoes test positive for West Nile virus



A mosquito pool captured in Morrow County in August has tested positive for West Nile virus. - Contributed photo

West Nile virus was detected in a mosquito pool captured Aug. 21 on the Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge according to the Oregon State University Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory.

North Morrow Vector Control District Manager Gregory Barron says they are advising people in Morrow County to take precau-

tions against mosquitoes to avoid the risk of infection, including preventing mosquito bites.

West Nile virus is spread to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. About 80 percent of people infected with West Nile do not develop symptoms, while one in five might develop a fever with

-Continued to PAGE FIVE

Heppner hires new city manager



John Doherty

Local man John Doherty has been hired as the new Heppner City Manager, the Heppner City Council announced this week. As city manager, Doherty will oversee the city's business and community affairs.

"I am excited and eager to take on this new task, and to serve the city, taking care of day-to-day issues and concerns, and meeting the needs of the various city commissions and committees," said Doherty.

Doherty is a long-time

Heppner native, raised in the Sand Hollow area. He attended Carroll College in Montana, graduating with a bachelor's degree in economics and business management.

Doherty comes to the city with a variety of work experience. He has spent time in the construction trade, employed in framing, roofing and concrete work. He has held supervisory roles in the food processing industry and, most recently, was employed by the Bank of Eastern Oregon.

He is involved in the Heppner community as a current city council member and is an officer in the local Elks Lodge. He is also a member of the Heppner IOOF Lodge.

Doherty is to start at city hall mid-September. Citizens are encouraged to stop by city hall and welcome him to the new job.

Robbins retires from Morrow County Sheriff's Office



Morrow County Sheriff John Bowles (left) congratulates Morrow County Parole and Probation Lt. Dan Robbins (right) upon his retirement. Robbins retired earlier this year after 13 years with Morrow County Sheriff's Office. Robbins did not only work for parole and probation; he was instrumental in setting up and organizing the parole and probation division beginning in 2010. Robbins also received a plaque in recognition of his service. "Your hard work has developed this division into the effective community service it is today," the plaque stated. "Thank you for your 13 years of service to Morrow County."

-Photo courtesy of MCSO



Federal grant gives local dairy a solar boost



Terry Felda's business, Tin Willow Sheep Dairy, has operated in South Morrow for more than a decade. It will receive money for new solar panels this year through a government grant.

-File photo

A local sheep dairy will be getting some new solar panels thanks to a grant from the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) program, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced last week.

Tin Willow Sheep Dairy of Lexington, owned by Terry Felda, will receive \$11,824 to purchase and install an 8.76 kilowatt

(kW) roof-mounted solar photovoltaic system on top of its dairy building.

The system is expected to generate 9,775 kilowatt hours (kWh) of renewable electricity per year, which is enough energy to power one home. According to a USDA press release, the solar array will replace 55 percent of Tin Willow's energy use with renewable electricity, reducing Felda's

utility bill by \$782 per year.

Felda's dairy is one of 1,334 renewable energy and energy-efficiency projects in 47 states, Guam and Puerto Rico to receive a combined \$266 million in loans and grants through REAP, including funding from President Joe Biden's Inflation Reduction Act.

"Creating opportunity for rural communities means investing in farmers, ranchers, and small businesses," USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack said. "These once-in-a-generation investments in renewable energy, like wind and solar, and energy efficient technologies create new markets and deliver real cost savings for our small and mid-sized agricultural operations and Main Street businesses, building and keeping wealth in rural America."

The Department expects to make additional awards in the coming months. Eligible applicants

include rural small business owners and agricultural producers.

USDA continues to accept applications and will hold funding competitions quarterly through Sept. 30, 2024. The funding includes \$144.5 million for underutilized renewable energy technologies.

POLARIS
UPGRADE YOUR RIDE

ELEVATE YOUR ADVENTURE

NEW 2023 MODELS

CHECK OUT THE NEW 2023 POLARIS LINEUP. CONTACT US TO RESERVE YOUR RIDE TODAY.

Public use restrictions eased on the Umatilla National Forest

As of late last month, and just in time for hunting season, Umatilla National Forest officials have reduced public use restrictions (PURs) to Phase A, which is the first level of restrictions that are generally implemented when the fire danger is moderate to high.

PURS are phased in collectively, as conditions

warrant, and may differ from forest to forest. Restrictions under Phase A include:

Chainsaws may be operated only between the hours of 8 p.m. and 1 p.m. local time. A one-hour fire watch is required after saw operations cease. Saw op-

-Continued to PAGE TWO



CALL
541-989-8221
ext 204
for more information

WARNING: Polaris® off-road vehicles can be hazardous to operate and are not intended for on-road use. Driver must be at least 16 years old with a valid driver's license to operate. Passengers, if permitted, must be at least 12 years old. All riders should always wear helmets, eye protection, and protective clothing. Always use seat belts and cab nets or doors (as equipped). Never engage in stunt driving, and avoid excessive speeds and sharp turns. Riding and alcohol/drugs don't mix. All riders should take a safety training course. Call 800-342-3764 for additional information. Check local laws before riding on trails. ©2022 Polaris Inc.

POLARIS | OFF ROAD