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Port of Morrow in stalemate over commission appointment

County commissioners may step in on the decision

By Andrea Di Salvo

The decision on who will fill a vacant seat on the Port of Morrow Commission is still undecided, as Port commissioners remain deadlocked over their choices. The Port Commission met on Oct. 6 to decide on a new commissioner to fill a vacancy but recessed the meeting after reaching a stalemate.

The four Port commissioners are tasked with appointing a fifth commissioner to fill the vacancy left upon the resignation of former commissioner Jerry Healy. Healy resigned on Aug. 8, and the Port began advertising the vacancy on Aug. 14. The appointment requires a majority vote of three of the four remaining commissioners.

The commissioners narrowed the field of eight applicants down to five, who were interviewed during the Port's public meeting on Oct. 6. From there, two front-runners emerged—Jerry Rietmann of Ione and Brian Thompson of Heppner.

Rietmann is a fourth-generation Ione resident. He left the banking industry in the 1980s to return to Ione and farm. He has been involved in farming in Morrow and Gilliam counties since then, as well as being involved in renewable energy development



Jerry Reitman (left) and Brian Thompson during an interview by the Port of Morrow Commissioners. -Contributed Photo

since 2008. He has never held an elected position in Morrow County, saying he never felt he had the time to devote to such a position but that he is now at a different point in his life.

“And of all the groups in the county that I am interested in, the Port is probably highest on my list,” said Rietmann.

Thompson is also the fourth generation on his family ranch. He holds an ag degree from Oregon State University and has spent most of his career on the family ranch. He has been involved in various local projects, including appropriating irrigation water out of Willow Creek Reservoir and piping it from Heppner to Lexington. He has served on various county boards including the

Heppner Rural Fire Protection District board, Morrow County Road Advisory Board, and Morrow County Planning Commission.

With two qualified candidates in front of the commission, though, that was where progress ended. The commissioners failed to agree on a final selection, instead splitting in a 2-2 decision. Commission vice president John Murray and Commissioner Kelly Doherty said they preferred Thompson, while Commission President Joe Taylor and Commission Secretary/treasurer Rick Stokoe said they felt Rietmann was a better choice.

After a lengthy discussion, it became apparent that both sides refused to give way. If the commission is unable to make a choice,

the next step is to hand the decision to the Morrow County Board of Commissioners.

However, neither Murray nor Doherty appeared in favor of passing the choice on to the county government.

Doherty said she saw nothing in the Port bylaws that required immediate action. She suggested it might be best to prolong the decision, perhaps with more candidate interviews.

“I have questions that didn't make the list of questions, and I still have those questions,” she said.

Taylor pointed out that all the questions asked of the applicants had been vetted by the Port's attorney, but Doherty replied that she wasn't sure if legality was the only standard the attorney had used, and she would like to revisit some of the questions.

Rick Stokoe disagreed with the idea of extending the process.

“Obviously this is why we have a five-commissioner board,” said Stokoe, “Because we can't come to a stalemate each time we have something come before this commission.”

“So I'm not in favor of kicking the can down the road,” he added. “We either make a decision or we allow

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Camper catches rainbow over Willow Creek RV Park



The photo above was sent by Ben Howell, who was staying at the Willow Creek RV Park shortly after a rainfall. Photo by - Ben Howell

Lexington plans to improve Town Hall

The town of Lexington is embarking on a project to enhance the parking lot of its Town Hall and Fire Hall. They have received a grant of \$10,000 from the Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group to partially fund the project. However, additional funds will be required to complete it. The grant money will be allocated towards improving safety access to the Town Hall, installing parking lines and proper signage, creating parking spaces that meet ADA re-

quirements, constructing a suitable driveway for the Fire Hall, ensuring right of way for Fire Trucks, and installing a new garage door for the Fire Department.

The project organizers are confident that if they can gather all the necessary funds, the project will be completed within a month of commencing. The town of Lexington Council is highly motivated to initiate this project promptly to ensure that the town facilities are safer and easily accessible for all.

Morrow County Rural Fire District to participate in Disaster Preparedness Drill

HERMISTON, OR – On Tuesday, October 17, 2023, from 9:30 a.m. until 1:00 p.m., Good Shepherd Health Care System (GSHCS) will participate in a full-scale disaster preparedness drill. This simulation drill will provide training to GSHCS staff in their roles and responsibilities during disasters, and how to execute coordinated response efforts with outside agencies.

Many local agencies and their support personnel will take part in the drill including:
Oregon State Police
Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT)
Umatilla County Sheriff's Office
Umatilla County Emergency Management
Umatilla County Public Health
Umatilla County Fire District 1
Life Flight Network
Morrow County Rural Fire District
Pendleton Fire Department

First Student Bus Company
Bert's Auto Salvage & Towing

“This is about taking care of our community,” stated GSHCS President & CEO Art Mathisen. “We want to give our team the experience needed to be as prepared as possible for real-world occurrences.”

Access to medical care will not be affected by the drill. “Good Shepherd will remain fully operational while the drill is underway. Patients may hear and see our emergency response system and local agency officials on our campus during that timeframe, but rest assured it is only a scheduled drill,” stated Mathisen.

Umatilla County Public Health
Umatilla County Fire District 1
Life Flight Network
Morrow County Rural Fire District
Pendleton Fire Department

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Two Locals take on Rose City Comic Con



Amanda Fenn Poses with Poison Ivy and Bain from Batman - Pictures by Amanda Fenn

By Annalynn Black

On September 22nd two locals, Amanda Fenn and Dallas Mullins headed for Rose City Comic-Con located at the Portland Convention Center. The two share a love for video games and popular TV shows and got to share memories that will last a lifetime. Actors like Zoe Saldana of Guardians of the Galaxy, Karen Gillan of Doctor Who, Ralph Macchio of The Karate Kid, and so many more popular stars were there for meet and greets, to sign merchandise, and pose for pictures. In the sea of enthusiastic participants, you could spot authors, youtubers, creators, and cosplayers dressed up as their favorite characters ranging from movies, anime, tv series, and video games. And we can't forget iconic characters like Daleks from Doctor Who, The infamous car from Super natural, and Droids from

Star Wars. Fenn says, “It's always been a dream of mine to act out the characters I watched while growing up.”

Ms. Fenn dressed as her personalized character from the video game Red Dead Redemption and her favorite character D.Va in the video game 'Overwatch' while Mr. Mullins dressed up as the main character Steven Universe from the show 'Steven Universe.' While the atmosphere of a big event may seem overwhelming, MS. Fenn says “Everyone at the convention had so much support for one another, no one is judging anyone, it's a very open and normalized environment.” “There isn't any wrong way to go. You can be whatever or whom-ever you want. The sky is the limit really. I was able to be myself without hesitation.” The event lasted three days giving all participants a chance to meet their idols and mingle with



Amanda Fenn poses with Dead Pool - Pictures by Amanda Fenn

like-minded people before hanging up costumes, that had been planned for months, and returning to their regular lives.

While you can show up for the celebs and costumes some have other interests in mind, the convention offers a wide arrangement of panels and workshops like writing and illustrations, behind-the-scenes discussions with industry insiders, panel discussions with actors, and even gaming zones.

As of October 17, 2023, there are more than 1,000 comic cons held annually in the United States. The Rose City Comic Con, now in its eleventh year, boasts over 4,000 attendees. However, it's important to note that Rose City has a strict weapons poli-

cy. Only simulated or costume weapons are allowed as part of your costume. Real swords, bats, shields, or heavy staffs are strictly prohibited.

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