

MC Commissioners meeting on ASA

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er's—influence.”

“If you look at other ASAs, that is not the case,” he added.

Jensen said the re-do of the ASA would provide oversight and allow the county to consider, though not guarantee, multiple providers. He pointed out that the county had previously gone through changes with its law enforcement structure and said a new ASA would allow the county to have the same flexibility with ambulance services.

He also restated his previous assertions that no provider determinations have yet been made, despite continued chatter on social media.

“Yes, this does provide an opportunity to consider other providers, but it is not a guarantee,” Jensen said.

Jensen also said that, despite previous assertions that the ASA submitted to the Oregon Health Authority was not a draft, it was indeed a draft document, and OHA was aware of that.

“They (OHA) said, ‘Send us the initial draft. We’d like to work through the issues,’” Jensen stated. “They were fully acceptant of it being a draft.”

He also said he had been in contact with MCHD and they were looking into some “tweaks” that had been brought up. Once the county has finished the feedback process with OHA and interested providers, he said, there would again be public hearings.

Jensen also addressed the upheaval caused in Irrigon, especially, by MCHD’s announcement that it would terminate ambulance services in the county. He said the county already had assurances from different parties to ensure that ambulance services within the county will continue after MCHD discontinues services, though he did not specify who those parties were.

Jensen said he was also reaching out to the various communities to discuss plans and options.

“We realize that change is difficult, but at the same time we believe that this is necessary,” he said. “It might feel painful right now, there is a certain level of uncertainty, but this is something that needs to be done.”

Circuit Court Building Update

Also on last week’s agenda was an update on the progress of the planned new circuit court building in Heppler. Jensen said that, per the board of commissioners’ recommendation,

the county has been targeting the proposed site next to the county fairgrounds in its planning so far.

Jensen admitted there has been silence concerning the new circuit court building. He said much of that was due to delays in planning, specifically with finalizing the contract with the architect.

Once the design team is in place, he said, the county will begin coordinating stakeholder meetings. Those stakeholders will include staff to be located in the new building, impacted neighbors such as the Collinses, and neighboring organizations such as Heppler Elementary and the fair and rodeo.

“And that will be, ‘Hey, here is what we’re planning. Let us know of things we need to take care of,’” he said.

Jensen said that, realistically, those stakeholder meetings will begin in February.

He also said that the current costs for the building look high, but that the county will try to strike a balance between cost and design as the project moves forward.

Geotechnical surveys are already underway at the sight, Jensen said. Once those results are in, the county will know whether the proposed site is even suitable for building. Those also should be ready around the first of February.

A town hall regarding the issue was last held in September. Jensen said he hopes to have more public engagement after the county has met with stakeholders and created a preliminary design. Jensen did add that, because the building will house the circuit court, the state courts will have final say on almost all aspects of internal design. For that reason, outside engagement will be limited.

“They have very strict and steadfast requirements,” he said.

Construction is anticipated to take place in 2025.

Sykes called for a five-minute recess after the report so members of the public could address Jensen directly with questions.

Other Business

Also at last week’s meeting, the board of commissioners held a public hearing regarding the Bristol Estates Subdivision just west of Irrigon.

With no public comment, the board approved the final subdivision plat, accepted a road dedication for the subdivision and approved the road name,

Nicole Drive.

Also on the subject of roads, the BOC approved a road use agreement with Wheatridge East Wind, which will include portions of Baseline Ln., Sandholow Rd., Myers Ln. and Spur Loop Rd, among others.

The road agreement is for the energy company to move equipment for a proposed wind energy project in the Butter Creek area. Morrow County Public Works Director Eric Imes said the agreement would help the county maintain road integrity and the safety of the motoring public during project construction.

Wheatridge supply trucks will be required to use designated pull-out areas, and Wheatridge will be responsible for any damage caused by their equipment. They will also keep roads maintained to county standards.

Imes said he and someone from Wheatridge would complete a road survey to log road conditions before work begins and again after the project is completed.

In other business, the board:

-Reappointed Gibb Evans to Morrow County Budget Committee Position #3, a position expiring June 30, 2026.

-Appointed Morrow County Finance Director Kevin Ince as the budget officer for Fiscal Year 2025.

-Approved amendments to the county administrator job description; major changes remove the administrator as the budget officer and give the county administrator more purchasing authority within the budget.

-Approved a contract for county counsel services with Morrow County District Attorney Justin Nelson and Deputy District Attorney Gregory Goebel.

-Accepted Sykes’s resignation from the Wolf Depredation Advisory Committee and appointed Morrow County Commissioner Roy Drago Jr. in his place.

-Appointed Keira Klein and reappointed Braxton Adams to fill vacancies on the Morrow County Fair Board and learned of an additional vacancy created by the resignation of board member Sarah Baker.

-Heard from Jensen that the BOC held 31 meetings in 2023 for a total of 94 hours and 19 minutes, for an average of more than three hours per meeting. That time does not include public hearings and town halls.

That averaged a little

more than three hours per meeting, Jensen said, which was comparable to previous boards who met four times a month. Jensen also noted that several processes had been streamlined to make meetings more efficient.

“You’re still dedicating just as much time as the previous board of commission, and it does allow time for staff and you as a commission to have other meetings and attend to other matters on those off weeks,” he told the commissioners.

DEADLINE:
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The Heppler Cemetery Maintenance District will hold their monthly meeting on Tuesday, January 16, 2024. The regular meeting will be held at 5:15 p.m. Agenda items include minutes of previous meeting, financial report & Cemetery Operations. The meeting will be held at the Ag Service Building conference room at 430 W Linden Way. Meetings of the Heppler Cemetery Maintenance District are open to the public according to ORS 192.640(1). For questions, contact Janet Greenup at 541-561-6768.



Thank You!

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Allstott Construction, LLC.
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Blue Mountain Community College
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Christian Life Center
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City of Heppler
Columbia Basin Electric Coop.
Columbia Development Authority
Community Counseling Solutions
Connected Professional Accountants, LLC
Craig Miles Farming
Creekside Ranch
Dickenson Chiropractic Clinic
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US Forest Service - Heppler Ranger District
Heppler Seventh Day Adventist Church
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Hopeful Saints Ministry
Horseshoe Hereford Ranch
Heppler Community Foundation
Hughes Ranch (Merlin and Claudia)
Intermountain Morrow ESD
Jay Coil Fabricating
Kilkenny Ranch
Kuhn Law Office
Les Schwab Tire Center
Mid-Columbia Bus Company
First American Title Insurance Company
Morrow County Triangle Ranches
Morrow Co. School District

Morrow County Fair
Morrow County Health District
Morrow County Parks
Morrow County Veteran's Services
Morrow SWCD
AgWest Farm Credit
O So Kleen Inc
Oregon Trail Pro Rodeo
Oregon Trail Library
District-Heppler Branch
Frank and Cara Osmin
SU Extension Service
Pettyjohn's Farm and Builders Supply
Pioneer Memorial Therapy Services
Port of Morrow
Portland General Electric
Silver Creek Contracting, LLC
SLIM'S PLACE AIRBNB
Richard Ladd
Neighborhood Center of South Morrow County
Statewide Publishing
Sweeney Mortuary
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Willow Creek Park District
Windwave Communications, Inc.
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Apex Outdoors, LLC
Jag Journey, LLC
Gateway Cafe
Murray's Drugs
Miller and Sons Welding, Excavating and Garbage Services
Morrow County Grain Growers
TREGO Ranches
Lindsay Ranch
Lexington Pump, LLC
Northwestern Motel
Morrow County Museums and Farm Foundation
Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group
St. Patrick's Catholic Church of Heppler
Balm Fork Lodge
Sykes Real Estate
Morrow County Sheriff Office
Training and Employment Consortium
M Technology Solutions
Wheatridge Wind II, LLC
Heppler Chamber of Commerce
Upper Place
ConcessionsSteve's Guide Service
Dale and Sheryll Bates

Blown Away Ranch
Heppler Daycare and Preschool
Browne House Coffee Company
Morrow Development Corporation
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Flood Town Books LLC
Willow Creek Property Management LLC
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SAGE Center
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The Swanson Insurance Group
HomeLightLiberty Grains
Wright Design by Kirst
Jeannies Jam's & Jellies
Essential Massage
Tillamook
Indian Lake Campground
Camas Prairie Cowboy Convention
Sherwin Williams
Serendipity Designs by Sheena
Rogers Toyota of Hermiston
Crum Farming
Feather Touch Cleaning
Foundry Collective
Morrow County Unified Recreation District
D2 Photography, LLC
Michael & Kay Proctor
Pine Gate Renewables
American Pacific Mortgage
Howard & Beth Bryant Foundation
Broken Spoke Restaurant & Saloon
Barnett and Moro, P.C.
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Sherrell Chevrolet
Faded Joe's Barbershop
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"NextEra Energy Resources
Hansen Veterinary Services
Lancaster Fencing, LLC.
Jack Rabbit Candle Company
Townsend Career Coaching
Blue Mountain Plumbing LLC
RimRock Canyon Church & Cottage at The 32 Ranch
EOU Small Business Development Center
Kenny Land Surveying
Heppler High School
Booster Club
Taste of The South, LLC

CONGRATULATIONS!

Mom on your 50 years as President of Grieb Farms, Inc.! We THANK YOU for all your hard work raising Angus cattle, wheat, and us your family. Here's to another year of checking the wheat market and joining us to move equipment on the last day of harvest.

Love, Ken, Julie & Geri



THANK YOU TO OUR 2023 CHAMBER MEMBERS!