

~ Letters to the Editor ~

The Heppner Gazette Times will print all letters to the Editor with the following criteria met: letters submitted to the newspaper will need to have the name of the sender along with a legible signature. We are also requesting that you provide your address and a phone number where you can be reached. The address and phone number will only be used for verification and will not be printed in the newspaper. Letters may not be libelous. The GT reserves the right to edit. The GT is not responsible for accuracy of statements made in letters. Any letters expressing thanks will be placed in the classifieds under "Card of Thanks" at a cost of \$15 Email to editor@rapidsolve.net or upload to Heppner.net.

REALITY CHECK

Facebook has no sense of humor. I posted my Gunsmoke Comment of the Week: Kid: "But what about Pa?" Mat: "Let me know when he comes to and I'll knock him out again". I got scolded for inciting violence and threatened with account closure. Kill joys. Oops...I doubt that's allowed either. Good thing I didn't mention cutting horses. I would have been handcuffed, hauled off to jail, and fighting a PETA lawsuit. They do like terms like "Reproductive choice" and "Gender reassignment" though. And we all know those involve some serious cutting. But it's not violence if you call it something friendly and non-offensive. Maybe Mat should have said "Let me know when he comes to and I'll Re-orient him". And if he would have thrown in the F word...he would have gotten top billing. Facebook loves that word. Living in a social media world is hard for normal folks. They've got us surrounded. Those of us who haven't learned the art of Photoshop haven't a chance. Wrinkles, pimples, bags under the eyes are not to be seen. Cleavage is ok though...the more the better. Tan faces are best, but make sure there's not the slightest tint of orange or you'll be branded for life. And by all means, use the correct Liberal language. That way, you can make any despicable activity appear moral and vice versa. It works. These days, reality is buried deeper than our Secretary of Defense's hospital stay. And what prevails is a brand-new standard based on news as accurate as

Biden's southern border assessment. How is the average soul supposed to live up to this unattainable façade and what does it do to our perception of ourselves? By the new standards, most of us deserve to be hanging on the Walmart clearance rack. I seriously feel for the youngsters today. They're being dupped into thinking that what they see in their mirrors will never be acceptable. The average teenage girl's worth will never be as good as that pouty lipped, sharpie eye-browed, smooth-faced girl on fb. When in truth.... all that "perfection" has proven to never satisfy the human hunger for acceptance. How many big "stars" have we seen still searching for happiness with anything and everything they can.... money, drugs, multiple relationships.... only to end up taking their own lives. Even in the elite... something's missing. But every day, various media reminds us how our lives should really be. Success is just around the corner if we just do this, buy this, eat this....it's deafening. What if we could only see people as they really are. We're human. We have flaws. We don't all have perfect abs and "wind" blowing our flowing hair. Maybe we could actually relax and work on what's inside instead...because that's what God cares about. "But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7

- Susie Crosbey
Prineville OR

January 8th Heppner City Council meeting

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is using a previous ASA as a template but is making changes to re-establish the county as the authority over the ASA, establish an ASA advisory committee that is independent of providers, and create up to three ambulance service areas in the county.

A draft document was submitted to the Oregon Health Authority in December, which Jensen said was meant to bring forward major problems before the county conducts public hearings on the issue.

One issue Jensen highlighted was the controversy over the supposed seizure of an ambulance service provider's equipment.

"There literally has been no change in language from what Morrow County Health District has been operating under for 35 years," he said.

Jensen provided a slide comparing the 1998, 2022, and draft ASA plans. The wording in all three stated that "the ambulance service provider vacating their area will be required to turn over their ambulance(s) and equipment to the Board for use by the recruited interim personnel until a replacement service can be established in the area."

"It's just, 'We need to use it. We can't leave our Morrow County residents high and dry,'" he said.

However, he said that the language had been stricken from the polished draft submitted to the health district and Boardman Fire for review last week.

At the top of everyone's mind was the 90-day notice of termination of services issued by the health district immediately after the submission of the draft ASA. Jensen said the county was still in discussions with the health district but had options in place to ensure the continuation of services.

"In three or four months, hopefully, this is an issue that people can gripe about but that they notice that ambulance services are still being provided with the

quality they're used to and the response times they're used to and that things can move forward," said Jensen.

However, the council wanted to know what that looked like for the residents of South Morrow.

Heppner Fire Chief Steve Rhea asked Jensen if he knew how many Eastern Oregon counties had multiple ambulance service areas in them. He replied that one small county had four service areas. On the flip side, he said, there are very large counties with a single provider.

Rhea also pointed out that ambulances most often operate at a loss in rural areas. He also said the fire districts in Irrigon, Heppner, and Lone would not be able to take over ambulance services.

Heppner Councilor Cody High questioned why the county would create three areas unless it was interested in three providers. Jensen responded that the county is trying to allow for future growth and change.

"All I'm focusing on right now is getting the ambulance service agreement plan to set up so we can even consider it," said Jensen. "If we can consider it and it doesn't make sense, we'll still have one provider in three different areas."

"As we grow, as Boardman continues to grow, maybe it does make sense in the future," he added. "If Heppner wanted to do their own, we'd want to be able to say, 'Okay, show us how it is, sounds great, you're good.'"

"I would go on the record and under oath. There has been no predetermination of providers," he said.

"Is there anyone who has expressed any interest in, given the facts, to potentially bid for the south end of the county?" High asked.

Jensen said no.

Councilor Ian Murray pointed out that the rural areas could be a problem for a provider coming in with no knowledge of the area or where they were going. He also asked the cost to the

county if the health district chose not to continue coverage and the county had to contract with someone else.

"I just don't see how you're going to get the same results for the same amount of money here in the south where it's not desirable," Murray said. "I think that's what we're all expressing."

"We don't feel like we're winning in any sense," he added.

Councilor Dale Bates questioned possible cost containment for ambulance rates if the county did need to find a new provider.

"That rate could be just anything," he said. "Are we opening the door wide open to outrageous rates?"

Jensen said that they did have cost averages from the health district and other areas, and that would be part of any negotiations with new providers.

"They won't be able to just willy nilly put any price they want?" Clarified Bates.

"Not if they want to do business with us," Jensen replied.

Rhea added that insurance companies are only going to pay a certain amount, regardless of the cost difference.

"You're running at a loss," he said.

Jensen admitted that, to maintain current coverage levels, the county would have to subsidize ambulance services.

Heppner Mayor Corey Sweeney asked why the health district would choose to issue the notice of termination. Jensen said they had expressed to him a fear that there was nothing in the draft ASA to keep the county from seizing their ambulances with no compensation.

"I don't agree with that logic," he added, "but they felt that they needed to preserve the integrity of their inventory."

He added that the turn-over language only applied if a provider vacated an area, not if the county fired a provider.

"Them giving a 90-day notice, it actually opens up the idea that we could take it," he said. "We're not interested in that."

"The easiest (option) is to have the health district continue," said Jensen. "For me, for the residents, it's the easy. I'm hoping that we can get there."

Other Business

Lt. Nathan Braun of the Morrow County Sheriff's Office reported 410 Heppner deputy hours for the month of December. Out of 154 incidents, there were 42 traffic stops resulting in 38 warnings and four citations.

Councilor Sharon Inskeep stated that she thought there should be more citations rather than warnings issued for violations involving crosswalks since that posed a danger to pedestrians.

"A warning is not sufficient, I don't think," she said.

Heppner Public Works Director Chad Doherty reported that the city is continuing to update the GIS mapping for the water system and work on the water meter master list.

For the streets department, Doherty reported that they are using a pump to drain the puddle that builds up by Murray's Drug.

City crews also fixed the downed street sign on Morgan St. and filled in potholes around town.

Heppner City Manager John Doherty reported that the city website has been updated with the public records request on the homepage, as well as links to commission minutes.

"That will take care of our public information inquiries," he added.

He also reported that they are still working to get the remaining reimbursement from the state for the HB 2017 street project. The repairs on the state's ADA ramp project are still not completed, with the weather being the current holdup. Doherty said the completion is out of the city's hands.

The city will also be working on the eviction of a tenant on Gale St.

Engineering firm Anderson Perry was not at the meeting, but John Doherty said they requested multiple work sessions with the council as projects moved forward in 2024. The first one will take place Feb. 12 at 6 p.m. before the regular council meeting.

The next meeting of the Heppner City Council is scheduled for Monday, Feb. 12, at 7 p.m. at Heppner City Hall.

HHS Championship signs in Heppner

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HHS sign at the Heppner Fire Dept. - Contributed Photo



Before picture. - Contributed photo



(L-R) (AIC) Pardon, Andy Smith, head of the metal physical work shop, (AIC) Burkhardt and (AIC) Robinson. - Contributed Photo

the job. He and his crew took it from there. They received donations of labor, rock, and concrete from Ryan Miller of Miller and Sons Construction and help with electrical from Wight's Electric. Steve and Mindy Wilson graciously agreed to have the sign on their property as you enter from the south. The sign next to the fairgrounds is visible from both directions. Another part of this project was the repurposing of the old school district reader board. Roger's Toyota came aboard to provide funding for the power and new sign. They will be making an annual donation to HHS athletics as part of the deal. "The new sign really lights up your entry to town now with "GO MUSTANGS". Stated Will Allred after installing the sign.

Contributors to the signs were the Heppner Booster Club, Howard and Beth Bryant Foundation, and the Kilkenny Family Foundation. "We are continually blessed to have such generous donors," said Grant. The Heppner schools and community

are being transformed in so many ways with the work of the Heppner Community Foundation providing administrative assistance for such projects. "We could not have accomplished so many things without their effort and expertise". Kim Cutsforth and Joe Armato really have multiplied the local money for this and many other projects." This is the letter sent to Mr. Grant

"Mr. Grant, I don't remember why we originally talked to you about getting the signs made, I just remember we said that we could get them made here at Two Rivers Correctional Institution.

Jim Kindle and Shawn Kempas had an idea about the new Heppner Mustangs Championship signs that would be placed coming into the city of Heppner. We knew that they were going to be rather large and were not sure if it would be possible, so we contacted the metal shop supervisor Mr. Andy Smith and explained about how big they would be and if he thought that the metal shop here at TRCI could do it. Mr. Smith

thought that it would be a huge project but that they could do it. Mr. Kindle and Mr. Smith talked with AIC Douglas Burkhardt and gave him our vision to see if it was possible for him to design the signs on the Lincoln Electric Plasma CNC machine. AIC Burkhardt said, "absolutely he could do it".

We checked in with AIC Burkhardt frequently and sent images to Mr. Grant to make sure we were all on the same page of what was wanted to be put into our community. AIC Burkhardt with the help of AIC Jarod Pardon spent a lot of time designing everything from getting the metal cut, welded, put together and then taken back apart. The signs were too big for the paint booth here at TRCI so they had to be disassembled so TRCI's paint shop crew could get them painted. There were 2 painters who worked on the project. AIC

Glenn Robinson who is still here at TRCI and a former AIC who has since paroled back into the community and is doing very well.

When the project was almost completed AIC Burkhardt gave detailed plans and pictures with step-by-step directions on how to assemble the signs since they were too big to be hauled out of TRCI in one piece. There were several pieces to each of the three signs, so Mr. Kindle had to get authorization for several AICs (Adult In Custody) from Physical Plant to load the signs on to his trailer to take them out of the secured perimeter of the prison. From the day that that the signs were taken out of TRCI to the day that they put up the AICs that helped with the project asked, "are they up yet" and wanted to see a picture so they could see how awesome they had turned out."

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