



# the HEPPNER GAZETTE TIMES

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## Group seeks possible recall of county commissioners

By Andrea Di Salvo

Another county-wide recall may be in the works after a meeting last week in Heppner.

A group calling itself Morrow County Citizens for Liberty and Justice, spearheaded by Irrigon man Stuart Dick, held the first of five planned community meetings in Heppner last Thursday. Nearly 50 county residents attended the meeting, with additional participants on Zoom.

According to the group's Facebook page, open forums will be held in each Morrow County city to "reveal any threat to our citizens' liberty and justice."

"If these open public meetings reveal the need for a corrective measure or a recall of any public elected official then the appropriate measure we be in acted (sic)," the page stated.

In fact, the meeting did center around three main topics, with the idea of a possible recall of some or all county commissioners hanging in the air throughout the meeting.

The silent presence of Morrow County deputies gave the impression that some might have expected the meeting to take a contentious turn. However, aside from a few instances of raised voices, the tone of the meeting stayed mostly civil.

At the end of the meeting, a vote was taken on whether to move forward with recall efforts toward Morrow County's three county commissioners. The crowd voted 26 for and 14 against the recall, though five of the yes votes came with qualifications—four wished not to include Morrow County Board Chair David Sykes, and one wanted to recall only com-



County Administrator speaking to th crowd during the recall meeting. - Photo By Andrea Di Salvo

missioner Jeff Wenholz of Irrigon.

The two-hour meeting allowed citizens to stand and either give comment or ask questions of those present. Both Sykes and Morrow County Administrator Matthew Jensen were at the meeting to present the county's side of the three issues.

According to Dick, the three topics in question were the county's proposed new Ambulance Service Area (ASA) plan; lack of transparency regarding the ASA, the new circuit court building planned in Heppner and the county administrator's salary; and Amazon tax abatements and water nitrates.

### County Ambulance Services

Dick kicked off the meeting with a discussion of the county's proposed new ASA plan, a topic that has been making news in the county for more than a year and has many citizens upset. He brought up complaints of "call-jumping" against Boardman Fire Chief Michael Hughes.

"Imagine these EMTs. They're worn out," he said of Morrow County Health District personnel.

He also stated that the jobs of 25 full-time EMTs will be lost if the health district discontinues coverage in the county, as it threatened in a termination letter

to the county last month.

"We're not going to put up with it anymore," said Dick.

Morrow County Health District board members Diane Kilkenny and John Murray were also there to give comments on behalf of the health district. Murray is also on the Port of Morrow board.

Board chair Kilkenny reminded the crowd of the health district's history and stressed the need for the special district in a rural county like Morrow County.

Kilkenny said a swift resolution would be best for the whole county, but said she saw a lack of transparency in the county's dealings.

Murray pointed out that the health district provides many services often not found in rural areas.

"It is my opinion that all of these services are in danger of disappearing," he said.

Sykes responded that he came into his time as commissioner wanting to know what the county's legal responsibility was and sought the guidance of a legal expert from Lake Oswego. The expert advised that the county needs to develop an ASA plan, a process that 33 other counties in Oregon have already undertaken. He and Jensen both laid the current uncertainty at the



Stuart Dick. - Photo By Andrea Di Salvo

feet of the health district.

"We did not ask them to do that," Sykes said of the MCHD termination notice. "We asked for an extension. They refused."

"It is not the county putting 25 full-time jobs on the line," added Jensen.

Jensen reassured everyone that the county is committed to ensuring uninterrupted ambulance services and is exploring multiple options to achieve this goal within the bounds of its legal responsibilities.

Part of the sticking point between the health district and the county currently seems to be the county's request to have a signed contract in place before the ASA is adopted. Both Murray and Jensen confirmed that at the meeting, but with extremely different views on the idea.

Murray said it was reasonable to sign a contract and roll it into a new ASA when it takes effect, while Jensen said it made no sense to sign a contract before the plan had been adopted.

Other residents also gave their input. Jodi Ferguson of Lexington, who is a health district employee as well as an EMT, scoffed at the county commissioners' lack of medical experience.

"Tell me you guys are ready, in less than 40 days, to take over ambulance services," she said.

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## Crez II disbursed over \$13 million collected in 2023

The 2023 Crez II disbursed more than \$13,036,158.49, this excludes Public Safety which has not been determined yet. The other disbursements are as follows:  
Morrow Education Foundation - \$571,000  
WCVEDG - \$579,357  
ICABO - \$161,225  
City of Irrigon Economic Dev - \$1,020,452  
Boardman Community Development Association - \$2,122,712  
Town of Lexington Econ Dev - \$116,225  
Port of Morrow - \$2,237,786.49  
Morrow County - \$2,237,786.49

City of Boardman - \$2,237,786.51  
Affected Taxing Districts Where EZ Facilities Located - \$1,249,958.07  
Bond Payments for Affected Taxing Districts - \$501,869.93

Columbia River Enterprise Zone II (CREZ II) is a locational incentive program for businesses that meet minimum hiring and wage targets in Morrow County. The program provides tax abatements to eligible entities. The Enterprise Zone is made up of representatives from Morrow County government, the Port of Morrow and the City of Boardman.

## Inaugural Barney Lindsay Scholarship Dinner & Auction achieves tremendous success

Raises over \$54,000 to support scholarships for Morrow County high school students



Barney Lindsay's children (L-R), Catherine, Alex, Kaelyn and Brian pose in front of a family photo during the inaugural dinner held in memory of their father. - Contributed Photo

Heppner—The inaugural Barney Lindsay Scholarship Dinner Auction, held this past Saturday, January 27, was an overwhelming success, grossing over \$54,000 to support scholarships in each of the four high schools in Morrow County. The event, organized in memory of Barney Lindsay, a long-time farmer in the Heppner/Lexington area and a Morrow County School Board member, saw tremendous support from the community, showcasing the power of unity in fostering education.

The event was made possible through the dedicated efforts of the organizing committee, whose hard work and commitment played a crucial role in the success of the evening. The committee members include Erin Heideman, Beth Dickenson, Alita Nelson, Ashley Lindsay, and Tiah Devin. Their passion for the cause and meticulous planning ensured a memorable and impactful event.

Kimberly Lindsay, expressing gratitude on behalf of the Lindsay family, said, "Our family is overwhelmed by the generosity of our community in the support of this endeavor. It

is something that will help remind my children why giving back to your community is so valuable. I cannot thank everyone enough for their donation, sponsorship, and help. There was a tremendous crew of people jumping in to fill roles, and I am so grateful."

The funds raised from the auction will be used to continue scholarships in each of the four Morrow County high schools—Lone, Riverside, Heppner, and Irrigon. These scholarships will honor the memory of Barney Lindsay and provide support to deserving students pursuing their education in some capacity beyond high school.

The success of the inaugural event reflects the community's commitment to education and the enduring impact of Barney Lindsay's legacy. Scholarship applications are available now in each school's guidance and counseling offices and are due May 1, 2024 to school counselors.

For further information or media inquiries, please contact:

Kimberly Lindsay  
541-980-8551/[kimb97939@yahoo.com](mailto:kimb97939@yahoo.com).

## HSM to host Annual pancake supper, Ash Wednesday, and lent

Hopeful Saints Ministry is preparing for the season of Lent. Lent is a time for us to reflect and prayerfully strengthen our relationship with Christ. We have several opportunities that you can join us in sharing a meal, Bible Study and Worship. Everyone is welcome to come learn, explore and journey alongside others as we prepare for the celebration of Easter.

**Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper:** Mark your calendar and join us February 13<sup>th</sup> we will be serving pancakes, ham, fruit, & beverages from 5-7pm. Our Chairs Cody & Taylor will be adding strawberries and whipped cream this year! All proceeds raised support our Mission & Outreach for local needs here in our Willow Creek Valley Communities. Cost of the meal is \$4 Students; \$5 Adults; \$15 for family. We do appreciate your support.

**Shrove Tuesday,** the day before Ash Wednesday. Though named for its former religious significance,

it is chiefly marked by feasting and celebration, which traditionally preceded the observance of the Lenten fast.

**Ash Wednesday:** We will continue our new tradition of "Ashes to Go" from 11:30am to 1pm on Wednesday, February 14<sup>th</sup> near Thompson Square. We will gather for Ash Wednesday Service, led by Rev. Liz Cahill at 6pm at Hopeful Saints' Ministry.

**Mid-week Lenten Services:** Each Wednesday beginning February 21<sup>st</sup> through March 20<sup>th</sup> we will gather for a Soup Supper at 6pm, Bible Study and complete our evening with a short Evening Prayer Service. This is a great way to help keep your personal focus throughout Lent.

All are welcome to join us at Hopeful Saints Ministry every Sunday morning at 10am for Worship, Sunday School (ages 3-12) and some time for fellowship. You can find us on the corner of Church and Gale Street.

## Report deer and elk tags by Jan. 31 or pay \$25

SALEM, Ore.—Big game hunters who purchased or were issued a deer or elk tag in 2023 must report their hunt by Tuesday, Jan. 31 at 11:59 p.m. PT (for any hunt that ended by Dec. 31, 2023).

Report online, at a licensed , or via the MyODFW app. As of today, more than 57,000 customers still need to report their 2023 deer and elk tags by the deadline.

Failure to report by the deadline will result in a \$25 penalty when purchasing a 2025 hunting license. Hunters should also report any other 2023 big game (cougar, bear, antelope) or turkey tags though there is no penalty for not reporting these tags.

Hunters need to report on every 2023 deer, elk, bear, cougar, turkey, and pronghorn tag purchased—even if they didn't harvest an animal or go hunting. That includes any tag issued as part of a Sports Pac. E-taggers who validated

their tag through the app or online also still need to complete a separate report.

Hunters who don't already have an online account can easily set one up to report online. Go to <https://odfw.huntfishoregon.com/login> and use Verify/Look Up Account to find your profile which will include any tags you need to report

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