

# Board of Commissioners meeting Feb. 7<sup>th</sup>

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countability, when in the proposed agreement, you have the right to audit our records," she said. "The post-pandemic healthcare landscape is very different than pre-COVID. Many rural entities have closed or are facing closure due to declining revenues and skyrocketing expenses. We're experiencing this in our current operations and are exhausting every resource to support services as we are faced with tough decisions and tough economic times."

Charlie Sumner, Lexington Fire Chief, told the commissioners he was frustrated by the political atmosphere in the county.

"From what I understand, there's two side to this issue, and neither side had been willing to propose something concrete or tell people what's going on," he said. "The bottom line is that we all belong to Morrow County and we should all be together on this. Certain individuals want certain things, but what's good for the county?"

"It's not the way we should be operating," he added. John Kilkenny of Heppner, husband of MCHD board chair Diane Kilkenny, said he was disappointed to see an agreement with ambulance provider AMR in the meeting packet.

"What's disappointing to me is that we're that far down the road without exhausting the talks with the health district," he said. "By talking to people from an ambulance company in Portland who I can't imagine won't cost more money, have less knowledge, is going to have less expertise locally, we're going to have less services ultimately, instead of keep going down that path with Morrow County Health District."

He pointed out that both the BOC and the MCHD board are elected by the people.

"To my knowledge, the two parties have never met," Kilkenny said. "Forget about the past. Let's move forward. Let's find a resolution. We're getting to the 11th hour and beyond." "Find out what it is you can agree to. You've made progress on the ASA," he added. "Do the same thing on these ambulance services."

Nancy Arnsen of Blake Ranch said Morrow County is a "family" that takes care of each other.

"Morrow County Health District is an important member of our family," she said. "They set a deadline because they needed to know what they needed to do to continue operating. That is not strong-arming." "Transparency. We're like the parents of children. We think the worst if we don't know the truth. Just tell the truth."

Stuart Dick of Irrigon, representing Morrow County Residents for Liberty and Justice, presented a list of demands to the BOC. And requested a written reply.

1) Negotiate a settlement with MCHD to end the crisis with our Morrow County Ambulance service.

2) Establish a number one priority of the BOC to take the lead to safe guard private well drinking water in our county wells.

3) BOC has stated the county has a extra \$12,500,000 available to build a new Circuit Court-house to be matched by the government. Funds have been allocated for architecture drawings yet the site has yet to be approved by the city. Morrow County Citizens request a committee to be organized immediately to determine the best site and best use of taxpayer funds. We request all funds

and effort to continue this BOC project cease until there is public support for the project.

4) Morrow County Citizens requests an advisory committee of citizens and negotiation experts paid for by the county and the state of Oregon to be established to negotiate with any future Amazon Complex. The purpose of this committee is to represent all Morrow County cities, Fire departments, schools, taxpayers. etc.

5) Morrow County Citizens requests one County Administrator not a second at \$160,000. There are multiple complaints against the present County Administrator that need to be investigated. The BOC is not saving \$125,000 as stated.

The BOC has 6 days (the same number BOC gave MCHD to respond to draft ASA) to respond to Morrow County Citizens. We desire a resolution of these issues, not a recall. However, of the BOC chooses to continue stonewalling our efforts to solve and at least mediate these issues we will initiate a recall of all three Commissioners. Let the people decide who they choose to govern our Country.

The vote of the lone meeting was 13 for recall and 2 opposed. The total of all five meetings was 84 for recall and 37 against.

Scott Ezell of Irrigon, a member of the Irrigon fire board, said Irrigon is being left out of the conversation.

"We want this communication. We would like you to come to our public meetings and provide public comment," said Ezell. "Please get on the record and let us know what the plan is."

Raymond Akers of Boardman told the commissioners there is growing support for a recall.

Kirsten Espinola of Ione, also a health district employee, said she had been in a small town that went with an outside ambulance company, and people had died because of response time and lack of local knowledge.

"I don't want to have to worry for myself and my children or my husband," she said. "Why can't we work together?"

Sara Bayless of Irrigon, health district paramedic, said she had previously worked for AMR, and stated that poor management and wages meant the company operates at all times with new and inexperienced providers.

"AMR does not care for their patients, their staff, or the communities they serve. They care about money," said Bayless.

Colleen Neubert said she did not believe an outside provider from Portland was in the best interests of the county. "They do not know our roads. We have a lot of addresses that are very hard to find," she said. "They don't know our citizens."

Kevin Jepsen, a Umatilla resident who works for the health district, also said he was frustrated by people not being heard.

"It hurts me to see these people being left behind and unheard," he said. "As representatives of the people, you should be doing what they want."

He also stated that he, too, had experience with AMR.

"I am telling you; they are not a company you want in your county," he said.

County Administrator Update

Jensen said the Oregon Health Authority has confirmed receipt and is reviewing the ambulance service plan.

"We're excited that they are making headway and that things are going

well," he said.

Meanwhile, according to Jensen, MCHD has expressed acceptance of the current proposed ordinance and ASA.

"This is good news. We appreciate it. This is common ground," he said, adding that he "had to hear about it through a newspaper article," but had since had it confirmed by MCHD. "It provides a basis for us to have further discussions on."

However, Jensen said the health district has insisted on an exclusive one-provider model in a contract sent out on January 30, 2024. Due to the health district's stance, Jensen said, county staff are reviewing proposals for interim services.

"The problem is, we need to get the plan," said Jensen, "We have expressed this to the health district since October, November. We need to get a plan first, then we can reach out to providers."

Jensen also said that the health district insisted on an exclusive contract and "were not budging" on the 90-day deadline.

"With those two things, it puts us in the situation we're at right now," Jensen stated. "From the get-go, we've asked for patience—we just need to fix the plan and then we'll work through the providers."

"Morrow County Health District is uniquely positioned to provide the best service for the county," he added. "We have not asked them to terminate."

Jensen again laid the tension at the feet of the health district, saying MCHD had created a situation the created uncertainty for its employees and county residents.

He also said that he had reached out to the Irrigon and Heppner fire chiefs and had attended a MCHD board meeting.

"The main players, we are reaching out to," he said.

He also said that considering multiple coverage areas within the county was nothing new but said past ASAs had had up to four areas, one of which was served out of Hermiston. He said that, logistically, the county doesn't need three or four areas, but "geographically and politically," they are necessary. "You can't have an ambulance up in Boardman covering for Heppner," he said.

He also said that MCHD ambulances had served Morrow County for more than 30 years as a largely volunteer service, but that had changed in the last three years when they switched to 24/7 paid staffing.

"It makes sense to make it exclusive when it is free or they're doing it as a service," Jensen stated. "As soon as a provider suddenly says, 'County, we need money,' then it should go to a fair and representative consideration of all providers."

Jensen said the county has not requested contracts or proposals because the ASA is not in place. He also said discussions with AMR had not included personnel, but only the leasing of ambulances and equipment.

"We are not looking to have MCHD provide ambulances because this is a sticking point for them, and we're looking at providing from outside sources." He said the intent is still to have the interim plan to the public by Feb. 21.

"I want to get to a resolution on this," he said.

**SYKES REAL ESTATE**  
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-Continued from PAGE FOUR

er of forestland or the representative of an owner of forestland, at least one member must be an owner of grazing land or the representative of an owner of grazing land. Forestland is land defined in ORS 526.005 that lies within an Oregon Department of Forestry Fire Protection District within Morrow County. Grazing land is land defined in ORS 526.324 that lies within an Oregon Department of Forestry Fire Protection District within Morrow County. Interested members will be appointed to a four-year term and may be reappointed to any number of terms. Letters of interest must be received by Monday, February 19. Please submit letters to Valerie Ballard, vballard@co.morrow.or.us or by regular mail, Morrow County Board of Commissioners, P.O. Box 788, Heppner, OR 97836." Published February 14, 28, 2024 affid 1c

## IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE STATE OF OREGON FOR THE COUNTY OF MORROW

Probate Department In the Matter of the Estate of: THOMAS L. MOORE, Deceased. Date of Death: October 15, 2023. No. 23PR10173 NOTICE TO INTERESTED PERSONS. Notice is given that the undersigned has been appointed and has qualified as the personal representative of the estate. All persons having claims against the estate are required to present it, with proper vouchers, within four months after the date of first publication of this notice, as stated below, to the personal representative at Kuhn Law Offices. 267 N. Main Street, P.O. Box 428, Heppner, Oregon 97836, or they may be barred. All persons whose rights may be affected by the proceedings in this estate may obtain additional information from the records of the court, the personal representative or the attorney for the personal representative. PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE: Dated and first published February 7th, 2024

*Cristi Hamilton*  
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S: HAMILTON, CRISTI  
TOM MOORE EST ATE\ PLD\Beginning Estate\ NOTICE TO INTERESTED PERSONS.Doc February 7, 14, 21, 2024 affid 3c

## REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS FOR

Engineering Aviation Project Services Morrow County Lexington Airport Morrow County, Oregon, requests proposals from qualified Aviation Engineering Companies provide engineering services for various Morrow County Lexington Airport projects. Firms submitting qualifications shall be considered based upon the following general evaluation criteria:

- A. Consultant's Capabilities/Experience
- B. Qualifications and ex-

## PUBLIC NOTICE

perience of outside consultants regularly engaged by the consultant under consideration  
C. Labor & Equipment Availability  
D. Method of Approach  
Copies of the Request for Qualifications may be obtained from Morrow County, P.O. Box 428, 365 W Hwy 74, Lexington, Oregon 97839, (541) 989-9500, spointer@co.morrow.or.us. Complete proposals will be accepted at the same address until 4:00 p.m., March 7, 2024. Published February 7, 14, 2024 affid 2

## NOTICE OF SHERIFF'S SALE

On March 7, 2024 at the hour of 11 am at the Lobby Doors inside the Morrow County Court House, 100 N Court St, Heppner, OR 97836, the defendant's interest will be sold, subject to redemption, in the real property commonly known as: 595 SE 13TH STREET, IRRIGON, OR 97844. The court case number is 22CV37958, CARINGTON MORTGAGE SERVICES, LLC, Plaintiff and THE ESTATE OF KENNETH R. ELWARD; THE UNKNOWN HEIRS, ASSIGNS AND DEVEISEES OF KENNETH R. ELWARD; MARY KATHERINE PERINE; SARA NOLAN; TAZIE ELWARD; KEITH MARTIN ELWARD; MICHAELA ELWARD AKA SHAYLA ELWARD; SECRETARY OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT; AND ALL OTHER PERSONS OR PARTIES UNKNOWN CLAIMING ANY RIGHT, TITLE, LIEN, OR INTEREST IN THE REAL PROPERTY COMMONLY

KNOWN 595 SE 13TH STREET IRRIGON, OREGON 97844, Defendants. The sale is a public auction to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check, in hand, made out to Morrow County Sheriff's Office. For more information this sale go to: <http://oregonsheriffsales.org>  
Published January 31, February 7, 14, 21, 2024 affid 4c

## The Morrow County Heritage Museum & Agricultural Museum

will hold their Annual Board Meeting February 20 at 7:00 PM at the Heritage Museum (next to the library) Topics discussed will be work and displays completed in 2023 and the ongoing work at the Agricultural Museum. Published February 14, 2024 affid 1c

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