

# Currins named St. Pats Grand Marshal

-Continued from PAGE ONE

Pendleton Round-Up and even made it to the National Finals Rodeo in steer wrestling in 1987. Tony is happily married to his wife Kelli, and they are proud parents of two children. Their daughter Shayla recently completed her bachelor's degree, while their son Carter works as a computer programmer in Sand Point, Idaho.

Mike, with his exceptional talent and unwavering passion for rodeo, achieved remarkable feats, securing prestigious titles such as the National College Steer Wrestling Champion and the Pendleton Round-Up All-Around Champion. Sadly, his life was cut short in a tragic plane accident in 1990, but his legacy remains forever etched in the annals of rodeo history.

Steve Currin, a lifelong resident of Heppner, is the fifth generation to run the renowned Butter Creek ranch. Steve graduated from Heppner High School in 1985, where he was a part of the rodeo team. He continued his passion for rodeo by joining both the Blue Mountain and Montana State University rodeo teams. Steve's dedication paid off when he won the steer wrestling championship at the Pendleton Round-Up in 1991. Alongside his wife, Lorraine, they are proud parents of two children. Their son, Kolby, is employed as a commercial loan officer at the Bank of Eastern Oregon in Hermiston. Meanwhile, their daughter, Jacee, has pursued a career as a registered nurse and currently practices in Phoenix, Arizona.

Jennifer Currin Gutridge became well-known in 1991 after being crowned Round-Up Queen at the Pendleton Round-Up, a symbol of elegance and beauty. Currently, she lives in Wilsonville, Oregon with her husband Shane. Together, they have two children named Kallen and Cydney. It is worth mentioning that Kallen has recently committed to playing football for the Oregon State Beavers this year. Cydney is a financial advisor and lives in Santa Barbara California.

Ron and Judy proudly displayed over 30 saddles that their children had won in their home on Butter Creek. In addition to the saddles, their boys had also earned numerous rodeo titles and circuit titles, too many to mention.

In recognition of their remarkable achievements and contributions, the Currin family was inducted into the Pendleton Round-Up Hall of Fame in 1996. Their legacy as ranchers, rodeo champions, and ambassadors of the Pendleton Round-Up will forever be remembered and celebrated by generations to come.

Tom and Marlene Currin, natives of Heppner, Oregon, have deep roots in the community. Tom, raised on Little Butter Creek, was a Heppner High School alumnus and returned to contribute to the family cattle ranch after pursuing an agriculture degree from OTI. In the 1960s, he began his rodeo journey, starting with managing timed

event chutes and eventually overseeing entries and all-around awards for the Morrow County Rodeo. He served as Vice Chairman for three years and then became the Chair of the rodeo committee for a year, dedicating a total of nine years to the event. He played a crucial role in transitioning the rodeo to a PRCA-sanctioned event in the early 1970s to enhance its success.

Marlene, too, contributed significantly to the local rodeo scene. As a young woman, she engaged in barrel racing and held titles such as rodeo princess and queen in the 1960s. Following her studies at the Northwest School of Business in Portland, she returned to marry Tom in 1981, with whom she has two sons Ryan and Jeff. Marlene's involvement included roles as the Fair Secretary and Rodeo Court chaperone, and later, upon Jerry Gentry's recommendation, she became the Rodeo Secretary for thirteen years. Her efforts were pivotal in upgrading the fair and rodeo grounds, working tirelessly on planning and budgeting alongside devoted volunteers.

Beyond the rodeo, Tom and Marlene have contributed to their community in various capacities. Tom was the treasurer for the Morrow County Livestock Growers for over three decades and participated in several local committees. Marlene, meanwhile, directed the Family Community Education for three counties and was President of the Heppner Book Worms, also indulging in her passion for quilting. Together, they continue to embrace and enrich their lives and community with dedication and love for their hometown. Even though Tom and Marlene live in Pendleton now, Tom said Heppner will always be home to him.

Their efforts were recognized through numerous accolades and positions of honor, including serving as Grand Marshals of the Oregon Trail Pro Rodeo in 2006, a testament to their contributions to the sport and community.

The legacy of the Currin family, from their pioneering beginnings in the 1800s to their present-day endeavors, reflects a deep-rooted connection to Heppner, a passion for rodeo, and a commitment to community service. Each generation has carried forward the values and traditions of their forebears, adapting to the times while preserving the essence of their heritage.

Today, the Currin family's legacy lives on, not just in the rolling hills and golden fields of Morrow County but in the hearts and minds of those who have witnessed their journey. Their story, marked by triumph and tragedy, hard work, and community service, continues to inspire and uplift, serving as a testament to the enduring spirit of the American West and the bonds of family and community that transcend generations.

Ron Currin Sr., 86 years old, passed away on March 26, 2023, in Hermiston. He was born on May 26, 1936, in Pendleton, and dedicated over six decades of his life to ranching and farming.

# Morrow County Circuit Court building site

-Continued from PAGE ONE

proceedings in this new era."

"As contemplated by ORS 1.085, the updated order will still specify that each circuit court must have a principal physical location somewhere in each county in the judicial district," Flynn wrote. "But the order will not specify a particular physical location for the courthouse within any county. As you continue to work through the project in Morrow County, please feel free to share with the county commissioners there that the Chief Justice does not have an order in place that would dictate any particular location for the new court facility."

The statute does state that, if the principal location is outside of Heppner, the city would still need a facility in which to hold court based on caseload.

Jensen said the change will result in some delays in planning and construction but that the impact is much less now than it would have been a few months down the road. He also said he will need to check with the county planning department before moving forward with any other site.

Morrow County Counsel Justin Nelson also told the commissioners he will check with Chief Justice Flynn to make sure there are no additional legal requirements the county needs to meet regarding the circuit court's location.

## ASA Update

The other hot-button topic on the agenda was the county's Ambulance Service Area (ASA) plan. The county has moved forward with an interim service contract with Boardman Fire Rescue district (BFRD) after the Morrow County Health District's rejection of the county's offer at the health district's Feb. 26 board meeting.

The county's offer would have designated MCHD as the initial provider for the Northeast (Irrigon) and South (South Morrow) ASAs for five years and included reimbursement of up to \$1 million per year for any funding shortfalls.

In rejecting the offer, MCHD cited the inability to staff those areas effectively since the health district was unwilling to rely on Boardman Fire for mutual aid. The hesitation on the part of the health district came both from the animosity that has developed between the two entities and from BFRD's announcement that it would no longer be providing mutual aid to Irrigon Fire.

Boardman Fire assumed ambulance response for the Boardman area on March 4 with the stated intention of testing and working out any bugs before taking over the Irrigon and South Morrow areas. The transition to that coverage took place this week, March 12, at 6 p.m.

Because of BFRD's limited equipment, the county also finalized a contract with American Medical Response Northwest (AMR) to lease three additional ambulances at a cost of \$500 per month per ambulance. The BOC authorized Jensen to sign the AMR contract, and Boardman Fire picked up the ambulances March 7.

As for the ASA plan itself, the county received back the Oregon health Authority review of the draft plan on Feb. 22, Jensen said. County legal counsel was reviewing the comments and making adjustments with the goal of resubmitting the document by March 6.

Jensen said the OHA will provide final review, and then staff will present it to the commissioners to

initiate public consideration and final adoption of the ASA plan.

Meanwhile, though rejecting the county's offer last month, MCHD has stated that it will provide limited emergency backup in the interim. In a Feb. 29 letter to the BOC, the health district said its Quick Response Teams in each community may respond as needed to medical calls to provide stabilizing care.

MCHD may also transport patients by ambulance "if appropriately dispatched and if a delay in transport would place the patient at risk of harm or death, based upon the professional judgement of the care provider on scene."

However, the health district will only have one full-time EMT or paramedic on staff at a time after March 12.

The health district also expressed concerns over whether BFRD will transport patients to the nearest appropriate facility when in South Morrow and urged the commissioners to provide oversight in that area.

Finally, MCHD made public its intention to submit a proposal for a five-year service agreement as the county's sole ambulance service provider as soon as the county completes the ASA and releases a request for proposals.

## Administrator under Fire

As a result of the tension in the county, the board of commissioners also fielded a request from Jensen that he be allowed to live outside Morrow County.

The discussion was originally scheduled for executive session but was moved to open session when county counsel expressed concerns over whether it fell under the correct use of executive session.

Jensen said that, while the county housing shortage was an issue, he was also concerned for his family in the "current political winds" in Morrow County.

"We've lived here six months. Our full intention was to dive in and get involved in the community," said Jensen. "I want to be fully committed to Morrow County."

He added that he understood that his position is in the public eye and calls for a thick skin but asked for consideration, saying the situation his family is facing is "not normal."

"For peace of mind and mental health, a little anonymity for my wife and children would be appreciated," he added.

Jensen said the requirement that the county administrator live within the county had been in the job posting and the letter of offer, but he didn't believe it was in his contract or in county ordinance. He also pointed out that several county employees live nearby in Umatilla County without it affecting their work.

However, Morrow County Commissioners Roy Drago and Jeff Wenzholz both said they were reluctant to grant the request since one candidate for the county administrator's position had been discounted because of the requirement to live in-county.

"So I have a hard time making an exception at this point," said Drago.

"Not that I don't have sympathy for Matt in his situation," added Wenzholz. "What he's having to put up with is unacceptable."

Morrow County BOC Chair David Sykes, however, said it was a unique situation.

"I've seen some messages that were written to him that were disgusting.

They're vile," said Sykes. "I've been called some names in my time, but some of this stuff is awful."

Sykes added that he had seen messages to Jensen where he was attacked for his religion, called "an SOB" and that used extensive profanity, among others.

"Is this the way Morrow County treats people?" he asked. "Apparently, now this is how life and business is done here."

However, faced with questions of discrimination and liability, the board of commissioners decided to set aside the request for a time and asked Nelson to look into legal ramifications of making an exception for Jensen.

## Other Business

In other business, the board of commissioners conducted a public hearing and second reading of the 2024 Threemile Canyon Farms Plan Map and Zone Map Amendment.

The commissioners unanimously passed the accompanying ordinance, which amends the comprehensive plan to change the comprehensive plan map and zoning map of a 318-acre parcel of land owned by Threemile Canyon Farms from space age industrial to exclusive farm use.

In 2023, Morrow County approved the rezoning of a nearby 274-acre parcel, also owned by Threemile, from exclusive farm use to general manufacturing. The change was made to allow the construction of a large data center.

The Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development appealed that decision. The current zoning change is the result of a settlement agreement with the State of Oregon over the appeal of the 274-acre rezone and plan and map amendment decision.

The board of commissioners also voted to commit \$750,000 to the Heppner Daycare for expansion and capital improvements. The money will come from the county's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.

Heppner Daycare is the only nonprofit licensed childcare and certified preschool center in South Morrow County.

The daycare center is seeking the funding to increase its maximum capacity of three- to eight-year-olds to 40 children, as well as expand its service to include an infant and toddler center with a capacity of 28. The proposed facility would also have more workspace for teachers, caregivers and administrators.

Daycare representatives said they have officially secured \$425,000 in pledged funds and were requesting Morrow County to commit the \$750,000 to the total project goal of \$1,500,000. They say they plan to fundraise the additional project costs through grant writing, community events, and private and in-kind donations.

The BOC voted unanimously to commit the funds, with grant distribution details to be worked out later.

The commissioners also unanimously passed a resolution exempting the Morrow County Courthouse project from the competitive bid process and instead using a qualifications-based Request for Proposal (RFP) competitive procurement process to select a construction manager/general contractor for the project.

The commissioners also voted to support a 31.4-acre expansion of the Columbia River Enterprise Zone (CREZ) III boundary. That will leave 2,250 acres still available for CREZ

expansion.

The City of Boardman requested that the two tax lots be added to the enterprise zone for hotel development.

-Continued from PAGE FOUR

## PUBLIC NOTICE

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 on this sale go to: <http://oregonsheriffssales.org/> Published March 6, 13, 20, 27, 2024 affid 4c

## Morrow County Public Works is Requesting Bids for rock crushing in specified pits in Morrow County.

Responsive and Responsible Contractors submitting bids will be considered based on lowest cost and availability to Morrow County. All documents for this Invitation to Bid must be obtained from the Morrow County Website Bids & RFPs tab ([co.morrow.or.us](http://co.morrow.or.us)). The Invitation to Bid closes and will be reviewed March 21, 2024, at 1:00 pm P.S.T. at Morrow County Public Works 365 West Highway 74 Lexington, OR 97839. Contract terms and conditions may be reviewed at the Morrow County Public Works Office. Sealed Bids marked "Rock Crushing ITB" will be received by Management Assistant Sandi Pointer in person or via UPS or Fed-Ex to: Morrow County Public Works 365 West Highway 74 Lexington, Or. 97839 Attn: Sandi Pointer Published March, 13, 20, 2024 affid

The Planning Commission for the City of Heppner will conduct a public hearing on April 01, 2024 at 7:00 PM at Heppner City Hall regarding the following application: Variance Permit to allow the construction of a sidewalk and retaining wall on a lot in an R-2 zone. Map #2S 26E 26CC Tax lot #400, AKA 355 E Aiken Street. Applicants Kelly and Lorie Fox. A Copy of the application and copies of all documents and evidence submitted by or on behalf of applicants and copies of any applicable zoning criteria are available for inspection at no cost with copies provided at a reasonable cost. Contact Heppner City Hall, 111 N. Main ST. PO Box 756 Heppner OR 97836. Phone (541) 676-9618. Persons who wish to attend this meeting and need assistance are asked to call City Hall or TTY relay 1-800-735-2900. Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87976499461> Meeting ID: 879 7649 9461 Published March 13, 20, 27, 2024 affid 3c

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