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Jensen addresses ambulance concerns in Heppner City Council meeting

By Annalynn Black

The April 8th Heppner City Council meeting began with the council granting Latosha Headman permission to keep chickens on her property. The floor then went to resident Marie Johnson, a representative from Cat Utopia Cat Rescue in Pendleton, expressed concerns about the cat ordinance in Heppner. She stated that even if cats are not fed, the cat problem will worsen. However, she mentioned that she is currently fostering more than the allowed limit of 6 cats in her home and is worried about potential fines. Johnson proposed an amendment to the ordinance for people like her who foster cats and help address the issue stating “I just want to make sure people like myself who are helping the problem aren’t gonna be hurt by this ordinance.” She provided examples of similar ordinances from Pilot Rock and Ontario, Oregon. City manager John Doherty explained that the Heppner ordinance was implemented due to the excessive cost of transporting cats to Hermiston for spaying/neutering. Johnson offered to assist the town of Heppner with trap-neuter-release (TNR) efforts and mentioned that she had other individuals present at the meeting who are also involved in TNR. An unnamed resident shared her experience with the Morrow County Sheriff’s Office (MCSO) regarding a lost dog and suggested that there are people in the community willing to volunteer, which would allow the sheriffs office to focus on more important matters. Another unnamed citizen voiced support for Ms. Johnson’s work in Heppner and expressed concern about her potentially being fined. Council member Adam

Doherty clarified that the intent of the cat ordinance was not to penalize those actively working to solve the problem. It aimed to target irresponsible pet owners who do not spay/neuter their animals, which led to banning feeding stations and setting a limit on pet cats. Johnson emphasized her desire to take a leadership role in resolving the cat problem. Council member Adam Doherty suggested she start a Facebook page so residents would know to contact her instead of the MCSO.

Kim Cutsforth with the Howard and Beth Bryant foundation is partnering with the Willow Creek Park District and is requesting the council to grant a mini golf course where the old pool was in Heppner. The course would be located where the old pool used to be and would be managed by the Willow Creek Park District. The course would have 18 holes with a local theme, featuring obstacles created by the TSA at Heppner High School based on local landmarks like the rodeo and the dam. Cutsforth requested a commitment from the council to move forward with the project. The council members had no objections and granted the property to the Willow Creek Park District. Cutsforth assured them that the water tasting area would be preserved and that the park district would grant a permanent easement to the city. The maintenance of the mini golf course would be low, using astroturf, concrete, rocks, and preserving existing trees. The course would be fenced with code access for members or day pass holders. The council motioned to approve the agreement with the park district.

County Administrator Matt Jensen took to the

floor to address comments made at a previous BOC meeting regarding a “five-hour response time” for a mutual aid call for an ambulance stuck in snow on a call. Jensen said “I wanted just to address that since this is in the area that you all are impacted by. Looking back in the records response time is an interesting definition, [they] made it sound like they were out there suffering for five hours before response, looking at the information response time was actually 30 mins, it was up past Cutsforth park so a little bit [of a drive], the duration of the full completion of the call was 4 and a half hours partly because the difficulty of the situation, they got there within 30 minutes, they had to hike a quarter mile up a snow impacted road and then help facilitate a transfer with the help of neighbors and such and getting it down a snowy area.” He also wanted to make it clear on record that “we are not seeing any calls taking five hours to respond to.” He also clarifies that they are getting certified paramedics and EMTs on site within acceptable standards and that is their standard. Jensen assures that they are forming a committee “one {person} from each city and an EMS advisor from an adjoining county” to aid in getting their ASA plan adopted and get permanent advisors on as well. Jensen was then asked by council member Adam Doherty if there is a backup plan for coverage in the town when an ambulance is out in a rural area, Jensen assured that an ambulance moves into position as soon as one leaves he says “Quite frankly as soon as the call went to Cutsforth another ambulance is moving down to be in place, so Heppner was probably without cov-

erage for about 20 minutes.’

Jensen also states that they are working on an “intergovernmental agreement” to get response teams if the ambulances are not able to make it, of course that is worst case scenario. Heppner Fire Chief Steve Rhea took a moment to also address the “five hour wait time” saying “the call was out of District- We do not have equipment for Heppner fire to access a foot of snow on the way to the patience residents, nor do we have any way to tow an ambulance stuck in a ditch in a foot of snow.” He also states a few concerns, the first being, the Boardman ambulance doesn’t have a vehicle with four-wheel drive. Secondly, he wonders why the QRT team wasn’t dispatched with a four wheel drive he states “that’s a concern. I cannot responsibly dispatch any of my crews out of district for that length of time and leave the tax paying public that I protect and the district and the city without adequate coverage, and that was the decision on refusal. I am not boycotting Boardman ambulance in any way, and I never will.” He also states that he would like to see an MOU, where they can respond to boardman ambulance despite being out of district.

Jensen concludes by mentioning that Heppner fire had previously provided assistance to that location months before. He then reiterating that there are no five-hour response times with the interim ambulance service stating “-we are committed to maintaining and we appreciate the patience and cooperation that we have. And we can work through those as we finalize the ambulance service plan and hopefully get a final

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Heppner Youth Baseball hits a home run on opening day



Heppner Youth Baseball had its opening day ceremony on Saturday, April 13th. The weather was perfect, with sunny skies and temperatures in the 70s. The atmosphere was fun as all the kids eagerly awaited the opening ceremonies. The different divisions are coach pitch, t-ball, majors, minors baseball and softball. They even provided free doughnuts and hot chocolate for everyone. The smell of burgers and hotdogs filled the air, adding to the excitement. The kids had a great time as they ran onto

the field upon hearing their names being announced by Jason Hanna, the announcer. Dale Bates was in charge of setting up the music and microphone system so the kids could hear their names being announced and run out onto the field. After the opening ceremonies, the teams went to different fields in Heppner to start their games. All the volunteers played a huge role in making the day special for the kids. **More pictures from opening day**

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MS walk April 20th

The Heppner MS Walk is this weekend! This is an opportunity for you to get out and show your support for those of us who fight this disease every day, every step. We want to be ‘normal’ but that is not quite what happens. We have holes in our brains from them shorting out.

We are a stubborn bunch. I can do this by myself...until I can’t, sometimes we sound like toddlers, sometimes there is no warning. I just can’t, or I choke or fall, or I can’t remember your name. We try to appear ‘normal’ but sometimes it doesn’t work.

Statistically, there are about 1 in 1000 people with MS. The population of south Morrow County is around 3,000. So, there should be about 3 to 4 MS Warriors. There are 12 that I know of. Unless it helps find a cure, we don’t care how or why we fight this disease, we just want to make life easier. MSFocus helps. This organization has Zoom exercise classes

for MS Warriors: Taichi, Chair Yoga, general exercise, and even dance. These classes are specifically designed for MS patients (I tried chair Yoga and could do everything but one move).

MSFocus provides lectures from famous doctors, caregivers, and even support groups. These lectures provide information on diet and movement. This group can provide help in obtaining respite care, housekeeping, and home accessories like portable ramps and bathtub chairs. They even offer cruises for MS Warriors.

Please join us for the Heppner MS Walk on April 20th, 2024, at Hager Park at 10 a.m. This is a fun way to give moral support (as well as monetary) to your MS neighbors. You may join the Walk along the way. Come join us on the short route and meet at Bucknam’s Tavern for a no-host brunch at about 11:20.

Lexington Council discusses May-Day parade and RCV

By Annalynn Black

The April 9th Lexington Council meeting began with condolences to Mayor Julie Kennedy for a family loss and recognition of new town recorder Autumn Crumpton. The head of Maintenance, Larry Hess, reported on the engineering plans for the firehouse door and mentioned that six contractors are lined up for the bidding process. He also requested an income survey to determine eligibility for the CBG grant for the water improvement project. During public comments, local Barb Orwick notified the council about an upcoming MS walk on the 20th of this month. Carol Dougherty, Co-Owner of the Broken Spoke, discussed the need for volunteers for the May-Day celebrations and mentioned that they had a meeting on the 15th. She expressed confidence in the funding for the event this year. Council Member Katy Ines inquired about the May-Day hood-



Illustration of a Maypole - Photo Contributed

ies, and Mrs. Dougherty assured her that they have been ordered and will double-check the arrival date. Mrs. Dougherty also emphasized the importance of the neighborhood watch group and urged people to contact the Sheriff’s Office for proof of any incidents. In new business, council position number four remains vacant, and only one application has been received, but discussion will be postponed until the May meeting. Council Member

Ines informed the council that she was approached by a representative for H2O for Eastern Oregon, a non-profit coalition aiming to provide safe drinking water, and they will decide on supporting the cause at the May meeting. Morrow County Republicans chairman Clint Carlson gave a presentation on “Rank Choice Voting” and expressed opposition to it. He advised everyone to research the topic as it will be on the ballot in the upcoming fall election. When

asked about Representative Smith’s opinion on RCV, Carlson confirmed that he had discussed it with him. A citizen spoke up, stating that Smith seemed uninformed and lacked time to delve into the details when asked about it at the Senior Meals event. Lastly, Council Member Ines mentioned that they are currently working on distributing Bus Route Brochures to the public.

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