



# the HEPPNER GAZETTE TIMES

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## Morrow County BOC seeks more public input on court building location, decision still pending



Two of the three sites chosen for the circuit court building. (L-R) The site near the rodeo ground in Heppner near the rodeo ground and the other proposed site at the old mill site. - Contributed Photo

By Annalynn Black

At the public meeting held in Heppner, the Morrow County Board of Commissioners awaited feedback from the community regarding the construction of a new courthouse. The meeting was attended by key individuals, including Matt Jensen, the City Administrator, Austin Gutierrez and Kelly Stewart, architects from the DLR Group Design Team, Doug Carl from Alliance Project Management, and the three Morrow County Commissioners - Roy Drago, David Sykes, and Jeff Wenzholz.

Matt Jensen, the city Administrator, took the floor and began explaining the reasons behind the need for a new courthouse. He highlighted the current building's technology and security issues, emphasizing that it did not meet the requirements expected of a modern courthouse. Jensen clarified that the funding being sought was for new construction rather than remodeling an existing structure. Additionally, he mentioned that Oregon state law stipulated that the new courthouse had to be located within the city limits of Heppner.

Initially, the Heppner Fairgrounds seemed like the most feasible option. However, the Chief Justice of the state later clarified in a letter that the courthouse could be constructed anywhere within Morrow

County. This allowed the design team to explore alternative sites. Ultimately, six sites were identified for consideration.

The first site was still the Heppner Fairgrounds, which had been previously discussed. Another option that arose was a parcel of land offered by the Port of Morrow (POM) free of charge. The old school building located in Lexington was also considered, along with a site across the street from the public works building in the same town. However, the team discovered that a 2-acre lot initially purchased by the county to be used as a transit center was now unusable due to certain grant restrictions. Lastly, a site in Irrigon was explored, but statutory requirements limited its use and it was subsequently ruled out.

After careful consideration, the commissioners decided to proceed with three potential sites: the Heppner Fairgrounds, the Kinzua Mill site, and the Boardman site. The decision was made in order to ensure that the new courthouse would be conveniently accessible to as many residents of Morrow County as possible.

Kelly Stewart, an architect with DLR group, presented her findings on the potential locations for the courthouse. She emphasized the importance of selecting a centrally located

site, easily accessible to the public, and highly visible to enhance the community's identity.

Kelly began by outlining the criteria that needed to be met for the courthouse's location. It had to be outside the flood zone, be able to connect to city utilities, have a minimum of 2 acres of buildable land, and accommodate 24,000 square feet building with ample parking, around 123 stalls to be precise.

As she flipped through her presentation slides, Kelly pointed out the various sites that had been considered. One option was the fairgrounds site, which had already been surveyed and deemed suitable for construction. However, there were concerns about it being a residential area, although she says it's not unprecedented.

The Kinzua Mill site is 115 acres, she says the appeal is contingent on future building with the hopes of putting it there to be a catalyst in future growth and development but the reality is an unknown because the POM has not disclosed future development on the site. Lastly, Boardman site, which appeared to be ready for construction. She says the only requirement was that it needed to be surveyed to confirm its feasibility.

Austin Gutierrez, another architect with the DLR group, began by outlining

the possible sites for the new government building. He explained that all the locations were situated outside of the flood zone, ensuring safety and stability for the county offices. The Fairgrounds site and the Boardman suite were already owned by the county, while the Mill site was the property of the Port of Morrow (POM). Although the port mentioned a building that could be provided, the specifics of the site's allocation were yet to be discussed.

Austin emphasized the importance of proximity to businesses along Main Street. The Fairgrounds site, less than a half mile away, was an attractive option due to its easy accessibility for court users. On the other hand, the mill and Boardman sites, both a mile and a half away from nearby amenities, offered more secluded and serene views for those who preferred a quiet environment.

Matt Jensen interjected Austin's presentation with an impactful statistic. He pointed out that only 20% of court cases originating from Heppner, Ione, and Lexington, while the remaining 80% of cases stemmed from the northern end of the county.

Kelly began explaining the different factors that distinguished each location. The mill site posed a partic-

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## Heppner Girls place 6th overall at state and set new 4x400 relay school record



(L-R) Healy Hisler, Lily Nicols, Hallee Hisler and Arianna Worden after placing 3rd in the 4x400 at the state track meet. - Contributed Photo

The Heppner track team participated in the OSAA 2A state track meet on May 16th and 17th at the University of Oregon's Hayward Field.

Hallee Hisler, last year's 200-meter state champion, had a successful meet. She secured 2nd place in the 400 meters with a personal best (PB) and new school record (NSR) time of 59.07 seconds, surpassing her previous record from this season. In the 200 meters,

Hallee finished 2nd. She also placed 5th in the 100 meters with a PB time of 12.90 seconds, earning her a spot in the all-time top 5 at Heppner High School (HHS).

Lily Nichols participated in the 800 meters, 1,500 meters, and 300 meters hurdles, contributing significantly to the team's success. She placed 4th in the 1,500 meters, 8th in the 800 meters, and 8th in the 300 meters hurdles.

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## Break-in at Taste of the South Food Truck in Heppner



Security camera photo caught the back of the person who broke into the Taste of the South - Contributed Photo

According to a Facebook post by Dan Ficke, the owner of Taste of the South food truck in Heppner, their first break-in occurred on Saturday night, May 19th. Dan mentioned that the perpetrator likely entered through a small window, indicating that it must have been someone of small stature. The stolen items included a portable speaker and cooked brisket.

Dan emphasized that as a small business, they do not keep much cash on the truck and encouraged anyone in need of food to approach them instead of resorting to theft. He also mentioned requesting the city to review surveillance footage, not so much because of the value of the stolen items, but because the act of theft itself was unsettling.

Dan expressed gratitude towards the community, highlighting their support and concern in responding to the incident. He and his partner, Deb, relocated from Salem almost two years ago and appreciate being part of a caring community.

As of now, no further updates on the situation have been provided.

## Celebrate National Poppy Day May 24th



The names of fallen veterans in front of the Ione legion Hall - Contributed Photo

Celebrate National Poppy Day by supporting our veterans and honoring the fallen! Join us on Friday, May 24th from 9:00 am until 3:00 pm in front of the Heppner post office, where we will be selling beautiful red poppies.

Poppy Day is recognized and celebrated in countries all over the world. In the United States, the American Legion Family initiated National Poppy Day® by urging Congress to designate the Friday before Memorial Day as a day to honor our fallen heroes.

By wearing a red poppy on the Friday before Memorial Day, we pay tribute to

those who have served our country and express our support for the brave men and women who have worn our nation's uniform.

The red poppy has long been a symbol of sacrifice and remembrance, worn by Americans since World War I. It serves as a powerful reminder of the immense sacrifices made by our veterans in defense of our freedoms.

Led by the American Legion Auxiliary, members of The American Legion Family distribute poppies each year. With each pop-

py, we kindly request a donation to support the future needs of veterans, active-duty military personnel, and their families, particularly in terms of medical and financial support.

Additionally, on May 27th, there will be a memorial service at Ione Legion Hall at 10:00 am. During this event, the names of the Morrow County service men and women who have died will be read aloud. We invite everyone to attend this solemn ceremony and offer doughnuts and coffee

for those in attendance.

Let us come together as a community to honor our veterans, remember the fallen, and show our gratitude for their service and sacrifice. Wear a red poppy and contribute to support those who have given so much for our country.

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