

Morrow County Board of Commissioner meeting public input circuit court

-Continued from PAGE ONE

ularly interesting situation as it had potential environmental contamination from the milling process. This meant that extensive surveys would be necessary to determine the extent of the problem. Additionally, there were uncertainties regarding the installation of new pipes to get water to the site. Connecting to the city water supply would involve an unknown cost, while installing a well water system, similar to what neighboring buildings used, was an alternative option.

Sewer, too, presented its own challenges. Hooking up to the city sewer system was possible but required the installation of a pressure system due to the site's downhill position. This pressure system would need to be implemented within a range of 1 to 2 miles. However, the fairgrounds site and the Boardman site already has sewers in place, eliminating this concern.

Kelly proceeded to elaborate on the estimated costs associated with each location. The fairgrounds site and the Boardman site were already included within the budget, leaving the mill site as the primary focus of discussion. The cost for the mill site was projected to be between \$1.945 million and \$2.910 million. However, this range did not include potential environmental costs, which were still being assessed.

To provide a more accurate estimate of the overall expenses, a geotechnical survey needed to be conducted at each site, which could cost up to \$30,000. Depending on the results, ground improvements or adjustments to the building's structural plans might also be necessary. These additional factors made it difficult to determine the exact cost of the mill site.

Moreover, the longer the project was delayed, the more costly it would become. Kelly stressed that each month of delay incurred an additional \$100,000 in escalation costs. With the fairgrounds site already behind schedule by three months, this accounted for an extra \$300,000. Similarly, the mill site and the Boardman site would face escalating costs due to their own individual challenges.

Considering all the factors, the fairgrounds site appeared to be the least expensive option, with an additional cost of \$300,000. In contrast, the mill site could potentially cost an extra \$3.6 million, plus unknown environmental expenses.

Commissioner Sykes took a beat to remind the room that the unknown costs, shown on the slides presented, are how to remedy obstacles that could come about.

Jensen says the fairgrounds site is the cheapest, the Mill site is all about potential, and the Boardman site has logistical answers "we lay before you a heavy decision."

The first to speak during public comment was MC resident Mollie Rhea, suggesting that the existing water, power, and sewer infrastructure at the site may be usable and asks John Murray, who is a member of the Port of Morrow Commission and was in attendance to this meeting, if it is available to tie into. John Murray responds by saying that there is one small well on the site, but it is not suitable for drinking.

John Doherty, the City Manager, expressed his support for the fairgrounds saying "We are for the fairgrounds; we can work with the residents and the fair and Rodeo board to have a smooth transition and

KNOWN COSTS

Potential Cost Item	Fairgrounds Site	Kinzua Mill Site	Boardman Site
Provide Water to Site			
Option A	Connect to city water	Included in Base Budget	1 to 1.5 miles @ \$100/ft = \$895,000 to \$1,165,000
Option B (not recommended)	Provide well water on site	Not Applicable	\$150,000
	Fire suppression tank & fire pump	Not Applicable	\$1,125,000
	Well Water Treatment System	Not Applicable	\$75,000
Dispose of water from site			
Option A	Connect to city sewer- with lift stations vs pressure system	Included in Base Budget	1 to 1.5 miles = \$1,235,000 to \$1,560,000
Option B	Provide sewer disposal system on site	Not Applicable	\$1,050,000
Water and Sewer Development Cost Range:	Base Budget	\$1,945,000 to \$2,910,000	Base Budget

UNKNOWN COSTS

Potential Cost Item	Fairgrounds Site	Kinzua Mill Site	Boardman Site
Environmental Needs			
Environmental Survey - Phase 1	Not Applicable	Plus 3 Months= \$300,000 (concurrent)	Not Applicable
Environmental Survey - Phase 2	Not Applicable	UNKNOWN (Pending phase 1 results)	Not Applicable
Environmental Survey results impacting soil remediation	Not Applicable	UNKNOWN (Pending survey results)	Not Applicable
Geotechnical Needs			
Geotech Exploration & Reports	Complete	\$30,000 per potential building location Plus 3 Months = \$300,000	\$30,000 Plus 3 Months= \$300,000
Geotech results impacting ground improvement and structural foundation	Completed / Base Budget	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN
ODOT	Not Applicable	plus 3 months= \$300,000 (concurrent)	Not Applicable
Site Selection Analysis	plus 3 months= \$300,000	plus 3 months= \$300,000	plus 3 months= \$300,000
*Time = \$100,000 per month in escalation costs	\$300,000	\$690,000 + UNKNOWN	\$630,000 + UNKNOWN

TOTAL KNOWN + UNKNOWN COSTS

TOTAL POTENTIAL COSTS:	Fairgrounds Site	Kinzua Mill Site	Boardman Site
Water and Sewer Development Costs:	Base Budget	\$1,945,000 to \$2,910,000	Base Budget
Site Survey Costs:	No Additional Cost	\$90,000 + UNKNOWN	\$30,000
Site Remediation Costs:	No Additional Cost	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN
Time Added Costs**:	\$300,000	\$600,000	\$600,000
	\$300,000	Up to \$3,600,000 + UNKNOWN	\$630,000 + UNKNOWN

Costs estimates provided by the city.

smooth operation. We've come up with different ideas. I've met with members of the rodeo board on parking issues. And then there been some very loud discussion with the Port [of Morrow] and some of the county about possible development at the mill site for fairgrounds possibly in the future, that would have a much larger area available for development than the current fairgrounds site, the city is in favor for this site."

Next to speak was Lexington resident Jodi Ferguson, she expressed her concern that the presentation during the public meeting only focused on the financial impact of the courthouse project. She argued that placing the courthouse at the Mill site would have a significant larger cost, but it would also have unique factors such as the Blue Mountains, the Morrow County fair and rodeo, and other county offices that could contribute to the prosperity of the south end of the county.

Ferguson mentioned that the tax abatement from the Amazon sites was meant to improve different aspects throughout the entire county, and building the courthouse in Heppner would be a visual representation of the county's gain from these tax abatements. She agreed with the statement that 80 percent of court cases come from the north end but pointed out that in a rural area like Morrow County, people often had to travel for education, work, and other purposes. However, Ferguson disagreed with moving the current fairgrounds to the Mill site, as she believed it would not create more jobs or consistent income for the south end of the county and would be a misuse of the land. She also opposed placing the courthouse at the fairgrounds or the Boardman location due to their proximity to schools and private properties. Ferguson emphasized the need for growth opportunities in the south county and urged the board to consider putting south Morrow County back on the map.

Sharon Inskeep, a resident and city council member for Heppner, expressed concerns about the cost analysis for the port site. She inquired whether the estimated cost was based on the entire site or if it had been broken down for specific parcels, such as the two-acre parcels on the south or north side of the site. Inskeep pointed out that these two locations would differ significantly in terms of cost.

In response, Commissioner Drago explained that the cost analysis provided a range because the exact location of the port site had not yet been determined. He stated that if the port were

closer to the town, the water and sewer infrastructure could be extended for a shorter distance, thus reducing costs. Conversely, if the port were located further away, the expenses would be higher.

Following this explanation, Inskeep turned to John Murray and asked if he had any ideas for a potential site. Murray mentioned that there was brief discussion about a site near the golf course, specifically the corner next to the road, which would provide easy access to the highway. Additionally, Murray noted that there were suggestions to remove the old existing storage buildings located right next to the road or build near the left-hand side of the extension office, as this area was not in the flood way.

Resident Terry Gentry then raises a question about what would happen if hazardous materials are encountered during the surveys at the mill site, and who would be responsible for the cost of cleanup – the county or the POM [Port of Morrow] she mentions that hazardous material cleanup can be a significant expense.

Jensen address that question saying that there are certain areas on the hills that have been used as landfills in the past and the county would like to avoid those areas. The transfer of land would need to be discussed and negotiated with the POM. Although there have been preliminary studies conducted, none of them have been certified by the state yet. Jensen mentioned that some of the areas the county has been considering are least impacted by any surprises. For example, the area closest to the golf course on the far east might have had wood stacks on it, while the area next to the extension office on the northwest side is probably not a big issue. Jensen also mentioned that while the storage unit area may not be problematic, the area behind it could be. The unknowns regarding the potential locations of the project could have an impact. Ultimately, the POM, the city of Heppner, and the county would need to come together to find solutions and determine if the chosen location is suitable.

Terry Gentry expressed uncertainty regarding who would be responsible for the cost of the project. She mentioned that it is unclear whether it would come out of the pockets of the county, the city, or the participating organizations and residents.

Jensen added that currently, they are anticipating an increase in project costs. He mentioned that they are providing the commission and the public with as much information as they have. Drago pointed out that the presentation assumes that if

there is a need for project mediation, it would be a cost incurred by the county to correct the situation.

Bob Mahoney, Morrow County resident states "I've worked on the Morrow County fairgrounds helping develop that site. I would hate to see that all go down the drain. You don't realize the work the community has done to develop that. It's not just the rodeo, funerals, wedding, playoff football games. I think the site sucks, we don't need it there. Built down at the Kinzua they've already squandered millions of dollars trying to make a plant work. Why don't you put something down there that works."

Morrow County resident Rick Drake asked if the parking issue at the fairgrounds been solved?

Jensen replies to that saying no, but they've had discussion with the Fair and Rodeo Board about various options for handling parking, depending on where the event takes place. If it is held at the fairground site, measures will be taken to increase parking capacity. However, he says it will impact the use of the fairgrounds, and temporary stables might need to be created to accommodate horses while people park elsewhere. And that the city of Heppner is willing to assist in finding a solution, but there is currently no definite answer.

An unnamed resident raised a question regarding the fairgrounds site being a commercial building in a public zone. They asked if a public meeting is necessary for this matter and if the public has the right to express their opposition to it. Jensen responded by stating that the fairgrounds site is also zoned for residential purposes, allowing for schools and courthouses. Jensen explained that there would be a conditional use hearing where certain considerations, such as site plans, landscaping, parking, and design, would be taken into account. Jensen mentioned that the city of Heppner wanted to assess the impacts before proceeding with a traditional use permit. He further clarified that legally, residents cannot simply express their opposition and prevent the project from happening, as long as the conditional considerations outlined in the city planning code are met. However, there will still be public hearings where residents can voice their concerns. When asked who decides whether the project proceeds or not, John Doherty responded that the Planning Commission makes that decision. Matt added that if the Planning Commission has a valid legal reason, they can deny the project.

An unnamed resident

from Lexington voiced concerns about the football field, mentioned that there is no other place to park if they were to install horse stalls. Also saying he would rather his tax money go to infrastructure.

Jensen reassured the resident that the concerns regarding the fairgrounds, rodeo, and football fields are being taken into consideration by the Morrow County BOC.

Another Morrow County resident Mollie Rhea asks about the infrastructure saying "Is the infrastructure that is possibly going in to the Mill site, is that overkill for future development and is the courthouse build footing that bill?"

Commissioner Drago replies saying "You're asking questions that have not been decided." Mollie then asked for confirmation saying "So its not built into the numbers you showed us today" Drago confirms that saying "Not at all."

An unnamed resident inquires about how much unused land they need saying "we only need two acres, are there not two acres that have never been used?" Kelly Stewart replies saying there is limited evidence, and it was not recorded what was used or not. The resident replies saying that those who have lived here their whole lives know it's never been used, that was debunked by another attendee, unnamed, saying their had been development in that area, and if you were to talk to the people that had once worked their they could tell you they stored oil behind the storage sheds in that area. Jensen also confirms that saying that there had been fiber glass and asbestos buried up on that hill as well.

Former resident Patrick Collins asked about the bridge expansion at the fairgrounds site, Jensen replies saying "The Hinton Bridge by the school is very sufficient, the other bridge on the city road on Elder street is slim but wouldn't need updating."

An unnamed resident then asks if the bridge will fit fire trucks and construction trucks and Jensen confirms saying the civil engineers say everything is okay.

Ione resident Kirsten Espinola says she doesn't

understand why building on the mill site is a big issue. Jensen replies saying "it is a usable site if it wasn't the POM wouldn't have held onto it and offered it to use. But they're are unknowns that can be mitigated, we just want to make sure to the public that going with this gift horse we wanted to make sure its shoed and saddled before talking it for a ride." Kirsten the expresses that she feels the board is dismissing the Mill site saying "-it feels like you guys are counting it out and adding these costs, but I've seen it done (referencing a story she told of her hometown building a school on a condemned mill site)." Jensen then replies assuring that they have not counted the site out saying "- we haven't counted it out, we haven't inflated the cost, the major cost that we have in there is just the infrastructure and Geotech surveying that we need to do to see if there is anything else, we are definitely not counting it out. The 3-4 million dollars is to get the water and sewer there. If we were counting it out it wouldn't be on this list."

Kirsten replies saying she feels like the Mill site is a better spot, rather than having it next to an elementary school and the fair and rodeo saying, "I just think it's a better solution."

Janet Greenup, a Morrow County resident, says out of respect for the pioneers that settled here it needs to be kept in Heppner. Resident Rick Drake says there are earthquakes in Boardman, and he wonders if they have tested for that in the Boardman site. Kelly Stewart replies saying there are seismic zones, but she doesn't know.

Morrow County resident Trevor Rhea asked why they need to pump sewer uphill at the Mill site, and if they've considered drilling a well and a septic system? And asks if the school is going to have to change their pickup system if the fairgrounds site is chosen. Drago replies to the first half of his questions, the water and sewer, saying it's an option on the spreadsheets.

Resident Stuart Dick expresses that he feels that the 100 acres (on the Mill

-Continued to PAGE NINE

Murray's will be closed Sunday 5/26 and Monday 5/27 for Memorial Day

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