

# Heppner City Council talks street repairs and park projects

The Heppner City Council meeting on May 13th began with an overview from Barb Orwick, representing the Neighborhood Center and Heppner Thrift Store. Orwick reported that they distributed a total of 67 food boxes during the month, which was considered slower than usual. Additionally, she mentioned that they had been granted a WCVEDG to support their work.

In other news, Stacy Sarrels was granted permission to keep four chickens at her home within the city limits of Heppner.

The council then moved on to discuss the minutes from the previous meeting on April 8th, as well as the monthly bills. During this discussion, a council member raised a question about the large number of utility deposit returns, asking if there had been a significant amount of people moving. John Doherty, the City Manager, confirmed that most of the returns were indeed due to people relocating. The council approved the payment of last month's bills.

Next, various department reports were presented. Fire Chief Steve Rhea reported that there had been a total of 59 calls, including 28 chief calls. The department had also conducted smoke detector installations. Rhea mentioned that they were expecting a new Tactical Tender to be delivered in June and that the training academy for NFPA Firefighter 1 would be completed by the end of the month, resulting in the addition of three new firefighters. Assistant Chief Chick and Training Officer Zinter attended the FDIC (Fire Department Instructors Conference) in Indianapolis, Indiana. It was also mentioned that they had received a grant request for \$35,000 from Wildland Staffing, but the specific application of the grant funds was still uncertain.

The Sheriff's Office provided their report, indicating that there were 15 traffic stops and five arrests during the reporting period.

Chad Doherty, the Public Works Director, discussed the activities within the Water, Sewer, and Streets departments. He mentioned that the Water department had installed water lines for the new Heppner Community Foundation building and replaced multiple water meters. Doherty also worked on the GSI water master meter spreadsheet and spent several days working on revisions to Oregon's lead

and copper rules. In the Sewer department, they had conducted 23 septic dumps and cleaned the storage effluent water tank at the golf course. They had also installed a filter screen and pressurized the relevant equipment for the golf course on the City side. The Streets department sold an old street sweeper for \$12,450 and an F350 vehicle for \$4,850 on GovDeals.com. Additionally, they installed limited-time parking in front of the City Hall and activated the main street irrigation system for the trees. The Parks department repaired sprinklers in all the city parks and turned on the irrigation systems for all the parks. Furthermore, the report mentioned that Chad, John, and Caleb had a meeting with Skip Mathews and Joe Armato to discuss the pool overview and expectations. Caleb from the shop department attended a conference in Ontario for continuing education training.

City Manager John Doherty presented his report, highlighting the most noteworthy events and activities. He mentioned completing the fiscal year 2024-2025 budget with input from department heads. He had meetings with Steve Rhea, Bill Kuhn, and Matt Jensen regarding Heppner fire response, and an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) between the City and County was being worked on. Doherty also mentioned meeting with Bill Kuhn of Kuhn Law to discuss the city/county IGA, delinquent payments from a former tenant on Gale St, deed transfer for the "Old Pool" property, and the sale of Chase St properties. He reported the successful completion of an Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) grant to update the City Park and the approval of a \$50,000 grant from WCVEDG. Doherty also mentioned meeting with contractors to discuss the design for City Park and researching applications for additional grants. He had meetings with Amy from Wheatland to review upcoming profit and loss changes for CIS insurance. Additionally, he mentioned meetings with Blue Mountain Networks regarding fiber installation for the city. The city manager attended two monthly meetings concerning POM (Power Operations and Maintenance) and flood mitigation to begin work soon. He also had communication with John Bice about the ODOT ADA ramp project, met with

Ryan Hill from NextEra for new housing discussions, and had the monthly meeting with WCVEDG, which included discussions about their desire for property on Chase St for tiny homes. Moreover, he met with the city, the county, and the Port regarding the mill site, Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) expansion, and the Community Development System (CDS) infrastructure project. Lastly, he attended the manager luncheon.

In regard to the Chase Street properties located at 290 and 200 North Chase Street, Doherty shared that there has been interest in developing these properties. He mentioned that he contacted Sykes Real Estate to conduct a competitive market analysis to determine the starting pricing point. Doherty reported that Chris Sykes provided the analysis, and based on that, he set the price at \$24,000 for both properties. He emphasized that the properties would be sold together due to their small size. The council also discussed advertising the sale in the local newspaper. Doherty noted that the West Central Valley Economic Development Group (WCVEDG) is interested in building tiny homes on these properties. When asked, Doherty confirmed that WCVEDG intends to sell the tiny homes, mentioning that they already have potential buyers lined up and may even sell the houses before they are built. Doherty expressed hope that in the upcoming June council meeting, they will have bids to review for the properties.

The next topic discussed was the update on the city park project. Doherty informed the council that he applied for an Oregon Parks and Recreation District grant, which could provide up to \$100,000 in funding. In addition, he mentioned having a list of 8-10 other grants that he plans to apply for. He also mentioned that the city was awarded a \$50,000 grant from WCVEDG, but this amount will be disbursed in increments of \$25,000. Doherty explained that he needs to provide receipts to WCVEDG to show how the funds are being used. He stated that the estimated cost of the city park project is around \$410,000 to \$415,000. He expressed plans to apply for several more grants between now and August saying "My hope is to be able to do the park right the first time, and work my tail off to get \$415,000 or more." Doherty pointed out that in

the previous year, the city had budgeted \$75,000 for playground equipment, but they did not purchase any. However, he noted that this year they are sticking to that budget and intend to invest in inclusive playground equipment for children with limited mobility. Doherty stressed that currently, there are no accessible options for individuals or children in south Morrow County. He also mentioned that the Heppner High School senior class had extra funds that they wanted to donate in the form of a table.

John addressing a raise in the public works fees. He stated that the current septic fee is \$0.16 per gallon and proposed increasing it to \$0.20 per gallon or a minimum of \$100. The current drinking water connection fee is \$800, and he proposed increasing it to \$1000. Additionally, the current sewer connection fee is \$300, and the proposed fee is \$500. John emphasized that Heppner's development fees are lower than neighboring municipalities. It was mentioned that the proposed fees will be further researched for potential increment increases, and a "Master Fee Schedule" will be created by John, the city manager, and Chad Doherty the public works director. Chad Doherty added that the fees were last raised around 2019, and the motion to approve the proposed numbers was passed.

John then provided an update on the street's discussion. He informed the council that they will be receiving \$1.5 million in congressionally directed spending, which Rep. Greg Smith has pushed forward for the city. This funding is to be used by the end of the next fiscal year for road reconstruction in Heppner, specifically on Gilmore, Pioneer, and Thompson Streets, as well as storm drains on Morrow Street. Additionally, he highlighted the need to fix the corner of Gale and Main Streets, as well as update the drainage on Willow Street near the public works building.

In addition, John mentioned that he is collaborating with Kay Proctor to facilitate the distribution of 'Yard of the Month' awards.

Lastly, the council attorney reported that a meeting was held with John Doherty the city manager, Matt Jensen the county administrator, and Steve Rhea the fire Chief to establish an Inner Government Agreement (IGA) aimed at enhancing understanding of the emergency services available to rural residents.

## ~ Letters to the Editor ~

### FIGHT!

Remember the playground fights in grade school? First insults, then push comes to shove, then the fists (or fingernails) then "FIGHT FIGHT!!" and a teacher would come running. Well, I just watched an exchange between two Congresswomen that brought me back to those days. It was painful to watch....and embarrassing. Marjory Talor Green made a snide remark in reference to the "fake eyelashes" of Jasmine Crocket, which was an unnecessarily juvenile dig. Ms. AOC had to chime in with "Oh Girl... Baby Girl..." and then the fireworks began, and the chaos continued.

Ok, we all have our moments where insults flow off the tongue (or keyboard), some more appropriately placed than others. But Congress? Seriously folks? These are the people we elected to make decisions that basically control our lives. And didn't their Mamas ever teach them it's wrong to interrupt? So much for the dignity of our legislature. How about we send them back to fifth grade where they belong? "Hey Baby Girl....go get your backpack. You're going home!"

And, by the way, somebody watch the encounter and try to convince me that there's no difference between men and women. Because I'm pretty sure you wouldn't hear a (straight) man use the term "Baby Girl" or mention false eyelashes. Anyway, I think I'd

rather see two guys duke it out than listen to two women have a verbal catfight. Can you imagine these women in a debate?

"You're so stupid!"  
"I know you are but what am I!"

It was interesting to watch the response of the men in the room. I think they were looking for the guy in the striped shirt. Where's the Ref? Somebody stop the game! And the guy with the gavel was mumbling "I don't understand a word you're saying". He looked a bit like he wanted to leave the premises.

Hey ladies, you've been given the privilege of sitting in a place of authority, where maturity and wisdom are to be honored and a level of decency, manners, and respect should be maintained. Yes, debate the issues, speak your mind, and come to needed conclusions that benefit the people you're supposed to benefit. Try to remember where you are and leave the personal attacks to the media. Currently, if you're trying to convince the world that, as a woman and an elected official, you're capable of using the left side of your brain (or any of it for that matter), you're failing miserably. You're also letting us in on your ability to control your tongue...or lack of. Wait your turn, speak the truth, and stop throwing ridiculous insults....or take it outside. "The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly."

Proverbs 15:2  
By Susie Crosby

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