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VOL. 144 NO. 26 8 Pages Wednesday, July 10, 2024 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

BOC selects ambulance service providers

Health district to serve Irrigon, south county, while Boardman Fire will serve Boardman

By Andrea Di Salvo
After years of tension, the Morrow County Board of Commissioners voted to award contracts to two county ambulance service providers at its regular meeting July 3 in Heppner.

The board of commissioners chose to award the contract for the Northern Ambulance Service Area (ASA) of Boardman and the surrounding area to Boardman Fire Rescue District (BFRD).

The Northeast ASA (Irrigon) and Southern ASA (South Morrow) were awarded to Morrow County Health District (MCHD).

"I feel good about the way we got here," said Morrow County Board of Commissioners Chair David Sykes. "We followed the law. We did it the way it was supposed to be done."

"This has been a long process," said Morrow County Administrator Matthew Jensen. "While this has caused much concern and strife in the county, we believe the adoption of the ambulance service plan that's now in place and the initial establishment of these providers will allow us to have some groundwork where we can rebuild some faiths, some trust between providers, and continue to provide exemplary EMS service to the residents of Morrow County."

The award to MCHD carries the stipulation that Morrow County staff and outside legal counsel Bob Blackmore will negotiate the terms of intergovernmental agreements requested by the health district if MCHD did not get the contracts for all three ASAs.

It has been more than a year since the Morrow County Board of Commis-

sioners (BOC) tasked attorney Bob Blackmore and the county administrator with developing a new ASA plan and updating the language. Jensen, who took over as county administrator last August, said the update re-establishes the BOC as the authority over the ambulance service plan, with an independent advisory group, and also reestablished the three ambulance service areas in the county.

"This has historically always been in the ambulance service plan," Jensen added in reference to the three individual areas. "It's just that we've had a single provider for 30-plus years."

The road to last week's BOC vote has been rocky to say the least. In addition to public outcry, accusations and a recall effort against the commissioners, MCHD chose to cease operations as the county's ambulance service provider on March 12 of this year.

Boardman Fire—whose original request to be licensed as an ambulance service started the chain of events a couple of years ago—has been operating as the interim county provider since then.

The BOC adopted the new ASA on April 17 of this year, with an effective date of July 17, 2024. Upon the ASA plan's adoption, Requests for Application went out May 8. Applications were due June 3rd and were certified internally and sent to the ad hoc committee June 7.

Boardman Fire and Morrow County Health District were the only two applicants.

Regarding the ad hoc committee, Kelly Doherty of Boardman spoke up during public comment and presented a grievance re-

garding the way the ambulance service area requests for proposals were handled, even questioning the legality of the process.

She had concluded by asking that the recommendation be put on hold and that the county set up "the committee you were supposed to set up" and redo the application process.

During his presentation, Jensen didn't address her comments directly but noted that the adopted ordinance had two options for selecting a provider or providers. One was to have the county commissioners make the selection themselves, while the other was to form a committee to review the applications. Jensen said the BOC had taken the second option and given him permission to form the committee.

"This is allowed in ORS," he said. "We do this all the time in county government."

He said the members of the committee were not appointed by the board of commissioners but were selected by the five cities within the county, with the addition of an EMS professional from outside the county.

City representatives were Emily Jack of Heppner, Sheila Miller of Lexington, Jerry Rietmann of Lone, Brenda Proffit of Boardman and Michelle Patton of Irrigon. The committee also included David Anderson, EMS Coordinator for North Gilliam County ambulance services. Jensen and Blackmore rounded out the eight-person committee.

"I'll tell you, they did a fabulous job," Jensen said. "They asked all the hard questions."

He also noted that the

ASA advisory committee outline in the plan is meant to have representation from providers, which was difficult during the selection process, since the county was operating with an interim provider.

"It's kind of difficult to have that committee formed to talk about initial providers when that committee's not around and it's not effective until the effective date on July 17," he said.

Applicants were asked to submit proposals for each of the three ASAs, which would then be scored individually.

Applications were scored using an 80-point scoring metric. Of those, 25 points were for ability to provide service and meet specifications, 25 points were for provider stability and experience working with local governments, 25 for team member qualifications for the type of services required, and five points for reference checks. Financial considerations were not part of the scoring.

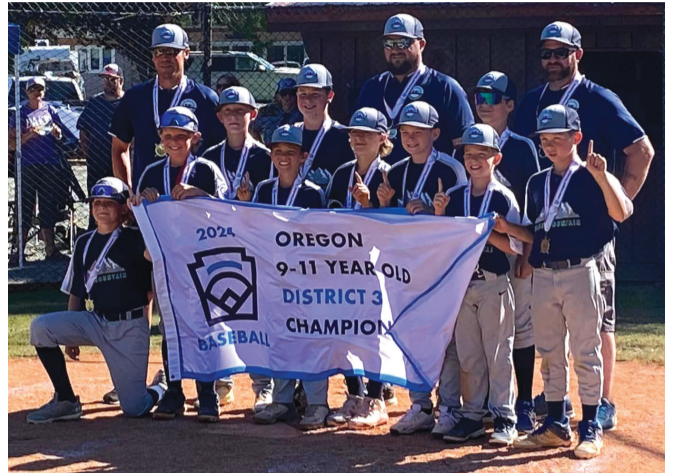
"They (the committee) should not be driven by who's the cheapest," said Jensen.

That said, Jensen said Boardman Fire had provided an "up-to" cost estimate, while Morrow County Health District expressed some uncertainties and had chosen to provide an estimated loss that it would expect the county to cover. MCHD had also provided a slight discount for being awarded more than one ASA.

Jensen said the committee did provide consideration for "synergies" in having multiple ASAs awarded to a single provider.

The selection committee

BM 11U team wins OD3 championship



The Blue Mountain 11U boys Baseball team and their coaches. -Photos contributed.

The Blue Mountain baseball team won the Oregon District 3 Little League Championships in the 9-11 yr. age group and

will be advancing to State. They defeated Pendleton, Hermiston, Baker, and La Grande to secure the championship.

Morrow County Fair harvest photography contest



Farmer Ken Nelson, Norman Nelson, and Alfred Nelson Jr., and "Porky" Lyons using the model 30 gas Cat, ca. 1929.

-Photo contributed.

Wheat harvest is the lifeblood of Morrow County, and the 2024 County Fair celebrates its importance with a special contest in the photography department. The winning photo of harvest in our county, a photo that has never been entered in the Fair before, will receive a \$25 award

sponsored by Jake Lindsay, the President of Morrow County Wheat League.

In keeping with this year's Fair theme, "Admiration for Generations", the harvest photo may be from the past or the present. The exhibitor is encouraged to provide as much information as possible. -Continued to PAGE SEVEN

Dooney sworn in as Patrol Deputy



Sheriff David Bowles and Patrol Deputy David Dooney. -Photo from the MCSO Facebook page.

MCSO - Sheriff Bowles did the honors and swore in Patrol Deputy David Dooney today. We could not have wished for a more perfect candidate for the job. He is retired from 30 years in the U. S. Navy with over 20 of those Mas-

ter-at-Arms (Navy Law Enforcement) and retired as a Master Chief (the highest rank for enlisted personnel). He served both on ship and shore, all over the world. (Thank you for your service!)

Ione School District Gears up for exciting new construction projects with support from project managers

By Annalynn Black

The Ione school district is embarking on an exciting journey with the help of project managers Doug Carl and Eurl Eastrum from the company Alliance. Two years ago, they were entrusted with the responsibility of adding onto the existing K-12 building to create a unified campus. After much hard work and preparation, a bond was finally put together by members of the Ione community, followed by a three-month bidding process from contractors.

To ensure community involvement, a committee of five dedicated individuals was formed to oversee the bond creation. Their ultimate goal was to bring all K-12 classes on one campus, with a particular focus on constructing a new high school building. Additionally, plans were made to include a football field and track field, as well as career technical education (CTE) classes.

The project is moving



Ione School District staff (L-R) Chelsea Geer ELA Teacher, Cathy McCabe, Tracey Johnson-Superintendent, Lea Hagenauer- Secretary posing in front of the last beam. The beam is decorated with a tree and a US flag.

-Photo contributed

forward steadily, with the track and field expected to be completed this summer. The high school building is set to follow, with a projected completion date around next February. Once finished, the remodeling of the current school building will commence.

One special aspect of the construction process is the tradition of "topping out" observed by iron workers. This tradition involves hoisting a tree, wreath, or flag to the top story of a framed-out building when

the last beam is placed. This custom, which can be traced back to ancient Scandinavia, represents the conclusion of the project and brings good luck to its future occupants.

Tracy Johnson, the Superintendent of the Ione School District, is eagerly looking forward to the changes taking place. She emphasizes the importance of creating a cohesive workplace, stating, "The staff and students are excited for the new building, science labs, shop/ CTE

(career technical education) area and flexible classroom space. Looking forward to creating a central office space connecting the two buildings creating more cohesiveness for the staff and students. The community of Ione was so generous in passing our bond, we want to make sure we are honoring their vision and increase all opportunities in Ione for all our students and community members."



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