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VOL. 144 NO. 32 8 Pages Wednesday, August 14, 2024 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

102nd Annual Oregon Trail Pro Rodeo comes to Heppner

It's that anticipated, favorite time of year again where cowboys and cowgirls from all across the country travel the various circuits, competing against the clock in the time-honored tradition called Rodeo. This weekend Heppner is honored to host the 102nd annual Oregon Trail Pro Rodeo. This NPRA rodeo welcomes many famous cowboys and cowgirls from across the area including their own from Morrow County.

This year's rough and rowdy rodeo stock is once again being provided by the B Bar D Ranch. Returning to the microphone to entertain the audience is the much anticipated and favorite Rodeo Announcer, Scott Allen. In the arena will be the 2024 PRCA Columbia River Circuit Finals Clown and Barrel man, Kyle Bode. Kyle, winner of many prestigious awards in the last few years, will be



Hunter Greenup. -Photo contributed

out in full swing, dazzling the crowd with his amazing athletic skills along with his witty jokes and comments. Friday and Saturday, August 16th and 17th, will host a myriad of talent, both local and abroad, as cowboys and cowgirls compete for the #1 spot. Just to name a few, we have Jordan Crossley-Minor, 2023 OTPR All-Around Cham-

pion returning this year in the Barrels and Breakaway Roping. Local sensation Hunter Greenup, ranked 4th in the NPRA Bareback Bronc Riding, will be competing this year. He will have to share the limelight though as his sisters, Savanna and Sierra Greenup will also be competing. Not to be left out of the spotlight is their grandmother, Mary-

Ann Munkers. She is the past OTPR Chairman and is currently ranked #11 in the NPRA Barrel Racing.

On Sunday August 18th at 1:00 the MOCO Rodeo will begin. This rodeo is a long-standing tradition as local cowboys and cowgirls compete against each other for the coveted BEO All Around Saddle that they have been working toward all year. This saddle can only be won once per contestant and the competition is tough. Another fan favorite of the MOCO Rodeo is the local Stick Horse Race. Local cowgirls and cowboys do not forget to bring your trusty stick horse and your running legs for this event.

So, Morrow County get ready for an action packed, fun filled weekend that will keep you on the edge of your seats impatiently waiting for the next event.

Progress on circuit court site, ASA contracts slow, county administrator reports

By Andrea Di Salvo

Progress on Ambulance Service Area (ASA) contracts between Morrow County and Morrow County Health District have not ground to a halt, but the wheels are turning slowly.

That was the gist of the report the Morrow County Board of Commissioners heard from Morrow County Administrator Matthew Jensen at its Aug. 7 meeting in Heppner.

"I was very hopeful to have a contract before you today, and we are very close," said Jensen.

He said he has continued meeting with the health district to discuss contracts for the Northeast and Southern ASAs. The BOC awarded the two contracts to MCHD at its July 3 meeting, but the two parties have been in negotiations over contract details since then.

The health district had requested Intergovernmental Agreements (IGAs) with the county and all five Morrow County municipalities as part of its proposal.

According to a statement by MCHD, the IGA helps to "promote a spirit of cooperation and signals that all entities intend to move forward in collaboration."

Notably, the agreement establishes that the cities and county will support the health district and not attempt to remove territory from MCHD.

After pushback from cities, however, MCHD pulled the cities out of the requested IGA, leaving only the county and health district involved in the agreement.

"I appreciate that the health district heard the concerns of the city, and I'm hoping that the final issues with the county can also be resolved as we continue to discuss with them,"

said Jensen.

Jensen said the county and MCHD were currently "massaging" the details and necessity of the IGA. A draft contract for each of the ASAs has been given to the health district, and they were still reviewing them.

"We're really hoping that we're seeing the light at the end of the tunnel," said Jensen.

Morrow County Commissioner Roy Drago Jr. asked what the IGA would accomplish, saying he looked into it a little bit and didn't see that an IGA was a common thing between ambulance providers and government bodies. The county does not have an IGA with Boardman Fire Rescue District for the Northern ASA.

Jensen said that was true.

"Part of it is to settle the political waters," he said, "or the perceived disruption there."

Jensen said the IGA stated that the county would not take any active participation in any effort to withdraw an area from the health district. Drago countered that the board of commissioners is obligated by state statute to hear such petitions.

"My concern is that this IGA is going to make that muddy," he said.

Jensen said that was part of the language they were looking to refine in negotiations.

"It's a little bit redundant, and we want to make sure that the statutory requirements the county has in case any petitions come through, that we're not tied, because that would be unconstitutional," said Jensen, adding again that the IGA was a step to settle the troubled waters between the two parties.

Morrow County Com-

missioner Jeff Wenzholz said Community Counseling Solutions Executive Director Kimberly Lindsay had also come to him with concerns about how the IGA would affect the county's partnership with CCS. Wenzholz said the concern is that an IGA would make MCHD the exclusive provider of all services, to the exclusion of CCS.

Jensen said the health district had reached out to Lindsay and offered language that would ensure there is no such exclusivity.

"That this doesn't preclude the county from contracting and working with other people to provide health and mental services," Jensen said. "So there has been some give and take on the language of that."

Jensen said the two parties would meet again Aug. 9.

Also at the meeting, the BOC approved payment of a \$2,850 invoice for a mobile HVAC connection for St. Patrick's Senior Center in Heppner.

Jensen said the invoiced work had already been done but admitted that it was not a valid use of county funds since it was an unbudgeted expense and not for direct county business.

According to Jensen, it was a "well-meaning" but misguided step taken due to miscommunication between himself and Morrow County Emergency Manager Steve Freeland. Freeland thought he had county approval and had authorized the wiring for a temporary HVAC system to provide temporary relief for the vulnerable residents of the senior center.

Morrow County Finance Director Kevin Ince said he could not approve the expense, but Jensen asked the BOC to approve payment of the invoice with

the "assurance that processes have been reviewed and that any future incidents will be curtailed in a timely manner."

Wenzholz asked whether the wiring, since it is a mobile unit, could be repurposed when the senior center is finished with it. Jensen said the wiring, basically a heavy-duty extension cord hard-wired to the panel and HVAC, could possibly come back to the county and be used by another department.

Morrow County BOC Chair David Sykes said he saw where the communication breakdown occurred but looked at it as a learning experience.

"Is there a way to avoid this in the future," asked Sykes, "and how do we impart that information? Who do they go to for clearance?"

Progress on the planned new circuit court building has also slowed as Jensen says the county is still awaiting environmental testing results for the proposed site near the old Kinzua Mill. The results had been expected the week prior.

"So we're trying to

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Pioneer Memorial Hospital nurses and techs unionize under Oregon Nurses Association

Nurses and technical support workers at Pioneer Memorial Hospital in Heppner have officially unionized under the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). The unionization process started in March when nurses and technicians from various departments, including x-ray, lab, and radiology, expressed their interest in forming a union. Since Pioneer Memorial is a public hospital, the process required approval from the state's Employment Relations Board (ERB) instead of the National Labor Relations Board, which handles federal cases. The ERB ruled in favor of the employees on July 12, 2024, officially certifying the ONA as their exclusive representative.

Pioneer Memorial is now the second group to unionize with the ONA, following Oregon Health & Science University in Portland. While the unionization marks a significant step, further actions are needed to achieve the union's goals. Pioneer Memorial Hospital, part of the

Morrow County Health District and primarily funded through property taxes, has expressed its commitment to negotiating a collective bargaining agreement with the ONA and aims to maintain a positive working relationship, similar to its long-standing partnership with the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME).

ONA's press release 8/6/2024: After a four month wait, RNs and technical support workers with Pioneer Memorial Hospital are finally able to celebrate their union win. In March, the employees announced their intent to join a union with Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) and delivered their declaration to hospital administration demanding to be recognized. However, the hospital administration filed an objection with Oregon's Employment Relations Board (ERB). Following hearings and the submission of post-hearing briefs, the ERB ruled in favor of the employees and

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The Heppner Fire Department celebrates 125 years of heroism

To host a free public BBQ on August 25th

This year marks the 125th anniversary of the Heppner Volunteer Fire Department, a milestone that reflects a long-standing tradition of bravery, community service, and dedication to protecting the town of Heppner.

Founded in 1899, the Heppner Volunteer Fire Department has grown from a small group of volunteers with basic equipment to a modern, highly trained force ready to tackle the diverse challenges of fire and emergency services. Over the past century and a quarter, the department has been a pillar of the community, responding to countless emergencies and saving innumerable lives and properties.

A Legacy of Bravery

The history of the Heppner Volunteer Fire Department is rich with stories of heroism and resilience. From the early days when firefighters used horse-drawn carriages to today's state-of-the-art fire engines, the commitment to protecting Heppner has

never wavered. The department's evolution mirrors the growth of the town itself, adapting to new technologies and techniques to better serve its residents.

One of the most significant moments in the department's history was the 1903 Heppner flood, a devastating natural disaster that claimed over 200 lives and destroyed much of the town. The firefighters' response to the flood, risking their lives to save others, is a testament to their courage and dedication.

Modernization and Growth

Today, the Heppner Fire Department boasts a fleet of advanced firefighting and rescue vehicles, as well as a team of highly trained firefighters. Continuous training and education ensure that the department is always prepared to handle emergencies efficiently and effectively. Volunteer Firemen train every Monday evening and occasional weekends. Strict guidelines

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