



City of Ione Breaks Ground on 2024 Wastewater Improvement Project

By Chris Sykes

The City of Ione has officially broken ground on a new wastewater improvement project, marking the culmination of a decade of planning. The project, long anticipated by the community, is set to enhance the city’s sewer infrastructure with significant upgrades.

Brad Baird, Senior Engineer for Anderson Perry, reflected on the project’s origins, noting that in 2014, the firm conducted a study to explore various wastewater management options for the city. The City of Ione engaged in discussions with the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to develop viable concepts, with the assistance of Jerry Rietmann. Project Manager Dane Maben, also from Anderson Perry, expressed his excitement about the long-term benefits for the small community, calling it a rewarding project that would have a lasting impact on Ione’s future.

Funding and Support
The project’s funding comes from multiple sources, including the United



(L-R) Dane Maben, Brad Baird from Anderson Perry, Shad Hass, Mike Skow and Brian Spivey from the City of Ione, Nathan Rudder, Mathew Byrd and Dan Rogers from the Swaggart Brothers. - Photo by Chris Sykes

States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Oregon DEQ, and the Ione School District, which contributed an estimated portion of the total costs. Notably, the engineering design received a significant contribution from ICABO, which donated half of the required resources. The estimated cost for residents is around \$45 per month for system hookup.

Mike Skow, who has served as both a city council member and now mayor, indicated that the project is expected to be completed within 12 months.

Project Details
The “Wastewater System Improvements - 2024” project, managed by the City of Ione in collaboration with Anderson Perry & Associates, Inc. (AP) and Swaggart Brothers, Inc. (SBI), will improve the city’s wastewater system through a series of milestones, including:

- Potholing existing sewer service connections
- Upgrading the school collection system

The project officially began with the Notice to Proceed, issued on October 1, 2024, and is slated

for completion within 548 days. Key milestones include completing sewer service connections within the first 100 days and upgrading the school collection system within 400 days.

Payment and Oversight
Payments for the project will be handled monthly, with 95% of material and equipment costs covered, while the remaining 5% will be retained until final approval. All payment applications will undergo a review process that includes input from the project’s engineer, the City of Ione, and agencies like USDA and the Oregon DEQ. The goal is to process payments within 30 days, though some delays may occur due to agency reviews.

Project Compliance and Safety
Responsibilities are divided among the contractor, consulting engineer, owner, and funding agencies to ensure that the project adheres to schedules, quality control, and permitting requirements. Environmental safeguards and labor stan-

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Ione Education Foundation raises funds with successful annual Dinner and Auction



Inside the Ione Legion Hall during the IEF dinner and auction. – Photo by Chris Sykes

Ione - On September 28th, The Ione Education Foundation hosted its annual fundraiser dinner, silent and live auction on Saturday night, drawing a large crowd to the packed Legion Hall in Ione. The atmosphere was lively and filled with excitement as The Baker Auction Company led both the live and silent auctions, contributing to the

event’s energetic tone.

Dinner and Auction Highlights
Guests were treated to a hearty meal featuring tri-tip prepared by Broken Spoke, complemented by mashed potatoes, green beans, and cupcakes made by Suzanne Rea. The auction itself featured a wide

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Eastern Oregon Hall of Fame Class of 2024 selects Grant for Mountaineer Athletic Legacy Award



Greg Grant

LA GRANDE, Ore. – Eastern Oregon University Athletics is proud to announce the 2024 Hall of Fame Induction Class, honoring exceptional individuals who have made significant contributions to Mountaineer Athletics. The inductees will be celebrated during the EOU Athletics Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony on Thursday, October 10th, at the Gilbert Center. The evening begins with a reception at 6:00 p.m., followed by the induction ceremony at 6:30 p.m.

Greg Grant – Mountaineer Athletic Legacy Award the Mountaineer Athletic Legacy Award

recognizes individuals who have made positive contributions to athletics while attaining outstanding accomplishments and/or achievements in their professions. Greg Grant has made outstanding contributions to high school athletics in a 40-year coaching career. A former EOU track and cross-country athlete (1981-82), Grant’s football career ended in high school due to injury, but his passion for coaching began during his time at EOU. As head coach at Heppner, Grant has amassed 339 wins heading into his final season (third all-time in Oregon high school football), secured three state championships (1992, 2015, 2019), and led his team to multiple runner-up finishes. His teams have always posted winning records, with 12 seasons boasting at least 10 wins, including three undefeated 13-0 seasons. In addition to football, Grant coached golf for 31 years, guiding the girls’ team to four state runner-up finishes. In 2021, he was named the NFHS Football Coach of the Year, a national honor.

BOC approves first reading of zoning code amendment

Data centers will not need conditional use permits

By Andrea Di Salvo

After a long and sometimes tense public hearing in Heppner last week, the Morrow County Board of Commissioners approved a code amendment to the county zoning ordinance.

Missing from the approved version, however, was one contentious change that would have moved data centers from outright allowed use and placed

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Despite opposition, decision stands Boardman to host new circuit court annex

By Annalynn Black

At the October 2nd Board of Commissioners (BOC) meeting, community members voiced their concerns regarding the decision to locate the new Circuit Court project in Boardman, urging the commissioners to reconsider and potentially hold a revote. Residents of the area, including Amy Kollman and Terry Gentry, were the first to express their hope for a change in the decision. Gentry highlighted the community’s proactive response, mentioning a collection of over 200 signatures in just two days.

Adding a different perspective, Aaron Palmquist, the Irrigon City Manager who spoke in his capacity as a citizen, shared insights about the logistical challenges faced by Morrow County residents, particularly those from the northern end, in traveling to the south end for court hearings. According to Palmquist, a staggering 80% of the court cases originate from the northern regions, a statistic that has been frequently discussed in recent months. He advocated for the construction of an annex, considering it a positive development that would strengthen the entire county.

“We are all in this together,” Palmquist remarked, emphasizing the need for a forward-looking approach. He argued that the community needed to embody a vision-oriented mindset. Palmquist also tackled the topic of the reconsideration of the vote. He firmly believed that the decision made by the BOC should remain unchanged,

warning against the dangers of reversing decisions post hoc. He drew a parallel to the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on January 6th, 2021, as a stark example of the repercussions when groups do not accept established decisions. “Decisions have been made; you can’t just say, ‘Okay, now we’re gonna throw a fit and change,’” he articulated, suggesting that community members should have voiced their concerns before the decision was finalized by the BOC.

August Peterson, a community member, expressed strong dissatisfaction with the BOC’s communication tactics. “You’re pulling the rug out from everybody, and every decision that gets made feels like somebody gets blindsided,” Peterson remarked. He pointed out what he perceives as a concerning pattern in the BOC’s decisions, highlighting a disconnect between pre-election promises and post-election actions. “If you change [your stance] after a couple of months of securing your position, it makes it feel like you never really meant it,” he added, showing his disappointment over shifting commitments.

Contrasting Peterson’s critical view, Brandon Hammond, the City Manager of Boardman shared a more optimistic perspective. Not originally advocating for the annex’s location, he nevertheless welcomed the decision once made. “I do appreciate the idea of having the annex in Boardman and see a great benefit to our citizens,” he stated, indicating potential positive outcomes from this deci-

sion, such as fostering unity among neighboring cities.

Additionally, an Irrigon citizen also called in to express support for the new annex location. “It’s time that we move on and put it in the north end,” he said.

Moving on to new business while with the topic of maintaining the courthouse in Heppner, John Doherty, the city manager for Heppner, articulated a strong case during a city meeting. Advocating on behalf of the city, Doherty expressed gratitude to the Board of Commissioners (BOC) for engaging in discussions with city representatives, setting the stage for a thorough presentation.

Doherty drew attention to the mandates dictated by Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) which require the 6th judicial court to hold proceedings in Heppner among other locations. He underscored the necessity for suitable court facilities, as outlined in ORS 1.185, which mandates sufficient courtrooms, offices, and jury rooms provided by the county.

In his address, Doherty also relayed concerns from Residing Judge Hill regarding the current courthouse’s inadequacies such as lack of spaces for two-party trials, juvenile matters, and secure file storage. Moreover, Judge Hill’s correspondences throughout 2023 and 2024 conveyed a recurring theme of deficiencies and the need for a new or repurposed facility.

Judge Hill had floated the idea of a new courthouse in Heppner and an annex in Boardman to accommodate growing needs. However, Doherty sug-

gested that the proposals, influenced by convenience rather than necessity, leaned towards personal preferences rather than the broader judicial requirements. He argued that Heppner should remain the primary location for the courthouse based on various factors including cost analysis, historical precedence, and geographical considerations.

The city manager brought to light a range of issues with relocating significant court functions to Boardman. Doherty pointed out the economic implications of moving courthouse operations, expressing concerns about job retention and the negative impact on Heppner’s economic development.

Rounding up his plea, Doherty called on the commissioners to reconsider the motion to move the courthouse facilities to Boardman, advocating instead for Heppner to be reconsidered as the primary site based on legal, economic, and community support grounds.

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