

~ Letters to the Editor ~

The Heppner Gazette Times will print all letters to the Editor with the following criteria met: letters submitted to the newspaper will need to have the name of the sender along with a legible signature. We are also requesting that you provide your address and a phone number where you can be reached. The address and phone number will only be used for verification and will not be printed in the newspaper. Letters may not be libelous. The GT reserves the right to edit. The GT is not responsible for accuracy of statements made in letters. Any letters expressing thanks will be placed in the classifieds under "Card of Thanks" at a cost of \$15. Email to editor@rapidsolve.net or upload to Heppner.net.

Concerned about the MCHD

I am writing this because I am deeply concerned for the Morrow County Health District.

My family has needed the services of the emergency room several times in the past years. I have been grateful to have a medical facility close. However, in the past year or more the experiences have greatly disintegrated. Lack of staff familiar with the room and supplies, unavailable doctors and even just the absence of comfort that comes from knowing anyone on the staff is personally looking out for your family. All these things are happening at once.

I understand that recruitment is a problem. My concern is that the health district's reputation for what might be considered a toxic work environment will further hinder applicants. I am hopeful that there is a plan to improve this reputation and would be interested in a public statement explaining what this might be.

I serve on many boards. I understand the amount of work and time this commitment requires. Elected board members have a commitment to serve the community that they represent and not the administrative staff that works for them. I have heard multiple times that something is better than nothing. There are entire philosophical topics dedicated to this argument and very few of them are on the supporting side of this statement. I am pleading with the board to review the trajectory that Morrow County Health Districts is on and take action to correct the course while there is time.

Sincerely, Kim Coil, Heppner, OR.

MCHD concerns

Although I am retired, I am proud to say that I spent 19 years working for Morrow County Health District. I have continued to support the District because I know how important it is to our communities. That said, I do have concerns, which I addressed at the District's September Board Meeting. I now believe it's best to discuss them using this platform.

The Gazette-Times front page story covering that September board meeting, "Citizen's voice concerns to MCHD board," took up a good part of the page and was continued inside. The article stated, "The meeting room at Pioneer Memorial Clinic was packed, with more than 25 members of the public present and standing room only. About 13 participants were also present via Zoom."

Eleven of us addressed the board during the Public Comment period. The comments provided by nine of us were regarding numerous concerns with MCHD that included, amongst others:

The district's viability
The lack of doctors and medical providers at Pioneer Memorial Clinic

Fear of burnout of the sole regular clinic provider who is in clinic 3 days each

week, and for the lone provider helping out during the other two days

The disintegration of the patient experience since local staff have left the district

Treatment of past and present employees, a toxic environment, the large number of physicians and employees who have left in the last three years, along with the fact that at least 9 local medical providers and professionals, who were employed by MCHD and who still live in Heppner, now travel to work at medical facilities in other cities

Of the other two people who spoke, one discussed the rural healthcare landscape, and the other gave glowing remarks about working with the CEO in her last few years before retiring.

Most interesting to me is that when the minutes of the meeting appeared on the website, only the names of those of us who spoke were listed. There was nothing at all about the comments given. The board approved those minutes at their meeting last week. On the agenda, under Approval of Meeting Minutes, it says September 30, 2024 — Regular Session. After reviewing all of the previous minutes posted on the website, it seems this is their common practice. I'm guessing that because they allow public comments before the meeting is called to order, they (whoever is making these decisions) aren't putting the comments on the record. However, alongside the link for the September 30 minutes were links for the two favorable statements that were given!

I have served on several boards over the years, including a Special Districts board for 12 years, most of that time as the Secretary (MCHD is an Oregon Special Service District). I know it can be difficult, to say the least, to serve on a public board, and that most of the MCHD board members are fairly new. I am not blaming the person who records the minutes, but who is responsible for this No Comments on the Record tactic? The CEO serves under the direction of the board, and the board is to serve the public.

I started digging and reviewed the Oregon Department of Justice information regarding public meeting law. It states that the law does not include the right to participate by public testimony or comment, but it also states:

"Other statutes, rules, charter, ordinances, and bylaws outside the Public Meetings Law may require governing bodies to hear public testimony or comment on certain matters."

So, next I went to the Special Districts Association of Oregon website, and in their Administrative Handbook found that the topic of the comments we gave is allowed, and it states,

"Minutes, in whatever form, must give a true reflection of matters discussed at the meeting and the views of the participants."

What is going on? Don't they have to follow these rules, or is there some other governing policy or loophole that allows public comments made at a board meeting to be swept under the rug? Those of us who took the time to attend, and

comment felt we had important things to say to the board. Since board meeting minutes are normally reviewed during any business audit or survey, I would think the board would want an accurate and complete record of the meetings. Ironically, at that same meeting, board members were given a training course on Public Meetings Law through Special Districts.

Should we talk about trust? Of course, not all of the staff are unhappy, but it's worth noting that the MCHD nurses unionized this year, joining the Oregon Nurses Association. Last week I received an anonymous text message from an unknown number about an HR question. This has happened before from employees of random employers. This person was asking if it is okay to award a posted position before the closing date. I answered with various scenarios and how they might be handled. Then the person said that a position at MCHD had been awarded to a board member a day before the job closed. I am not weighing in on the hiring; my point is the absence of trust. Even though I'm no longer with the district, people tell me about the experiences of their family members, their problems with this or that, maybe out of habit.

Below, from the MCHD website, is the Values statement. These are very good values, but is this what is happening here?

Integrity encompassing honesty and consistently adhering to the principles of professionalism and accountability with our patients, fellow employees, and community partners; integrity is at the heart of everything we do.

Compassion, being motivated with a desire to assist patients and staff with empathy and kindness and committed to going the extra mile to ensure patients and staff feel comfortable and welcomed.

Quality creating standards of performance that surpass ordinary expectations; we want to make this the place where patients want to come, our providers want to practice, and people want to work.

Respect recognizing and valuing the dignity and uniqueness of everyone; respect creates a work environment based on teamwork, encouragement, trust, concern, honesty, and responsive communication among all employees and our patients.

Financial Responsibility being good stewards of public funds; always considering whether expenditures are in the best interests of patients and the community; ensuring financial sustainability for the future.

One of the positive comments made at the meeting mentioned that a "Whisper Campaign" was going on with those of us with concerns. Not so. We are not whispering. We care, we're very concerned, and want it on the record.

Sincerely,
Patti Allstott, Heppner, Or..

MCHD ignoring citizen concerns

The duties of the health board members is to support local public health and encourage community involvement in settling public health priorities.

Well, the public has spoken! After attending MCHD board meetings, I conclude that they are ignoring our concerns!

After Bob Hauser retired, the new CEO and Administration succeeded in disposing of 30 employees. Many were fired, and some resigned under duress. Susie Thompson, RN of 35 years, was told they didn't need her. Their offer was for her to answer phones during lunch hour! She was demoted. This act by the administration was vindictive and cruel! I am sure that you have heard similar stories, from your friends, neighbors, and family who lost their jobs. How can the MCHD board think this is okay?

The board is supporting the Administration instead of fulfilling the needs of our community. Get over your egos and personal feelings. We have three providers who are currently seeing patients at St. Anthony Hospital. They will not come back here to work until there is a new CEO!

As a board member of the Pioneer Memorial Hospital foundation, I am concerned about not having enough providers to serve South Morrow County.

Sincerely, Shanny Miller, Heppner, OR.

Moving on

So many thoughts are rummaging around in my brain. Not long until election day and the closer it gets, the more I wish I were one of those "non-political" types. But then I guess I'd have to be pretty disconnected...and living in the boonies...just me, my critters, all my quilting stuff... and plenty of chocolate. Actually, sounds pretty good. But by the time these words are published, half the country will be happy and the other sad...and mad...and I'll be right there with tears of joy (not Kamala's joy) or disgust. Or we may be scratching our heads, trying to figure out who really won (legally). Or Donald Trump may be headed for jail for another ridiculous indictment. I figure only a miracle will let Trump see election day. The Deep State doesn't give up easily. I sincerely hope I'm wrong and he's alive and well...and giving us a fist in the air as our new President. Thankfully, we've already seen a couple miracles so far.

But moving on from Tuesday, there may be a rough road ahead. If Kamala wins, watching our country turn Socialist won't be fun. But if Trump wins, maintaining our freedom won't be pain-free either. Those trying to destroy us from within are still there. We can't just sit back and do nothing. Benjamin Franklin's famous quote "A republic, if you can keep it" comes to mind. That's a big "if".

When I look at the rapid decline of society, it amazes me and worries me. Where was the outrage over the atrocities of October 7th? Shouldn't this whole country be horrified and eager to jump to the defense of Israel? Instead, we have people marching in the street, waving Palestinian flags and chanting "From the river to the sea". Really? Marching for terrorists? But then where is the outrage at the barbaric practice of

abortion in which the same atrocities are committed? The blindness is incredible...and scary.

Is America too far gone? God knows. As a country, some serious repentance is in order. And no matter who is elected, our voices should continue to be heard. Stand up for what's right...no matter what. Many have prayed for the outcome of this election. Did God listen? Can we really move His hand or even make Him change his mind? I wonder about that a lot. God isn't fickle. He doesn't just up and say "Nah...I don't think I'll do that. I think I'll do this." He is reliable, merciful, and He keeps His promises.

But He gives us a choice. Yes, we have the freedom to choose, but we aren't free from the consequences....good or bad. And our choices will determine God's response. Jesus never demanded we accept his gift of salvation. He offered it and we each have the freedom to accept or reject it. Whether our country ends up Red or Blue, nothing is more important than where we will spend eternity. And whether we accept or reject Jesus, it is the most important choice we will ever make.

"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land." 2nd Chronicles 7:14

By Susie Crosby, Prineville, OR.

Faith


I often get asked, "Why do you have faith?" By that, they mean faith in God. I reply: "Do you have any faith in love?" "Yes." "What do you consider the supreme good from which others are derived?" Often they say, "I've never thought about that. An excellent question." "How about love?" "Yes; I'd agree." "Love of self?" "No, love of others. Love of self is selfish." "Who, more than anyone, exemplifies love?"

"I know loving people, but I can't think of one person." "How about God, who wills the good from and for all of us, with love?" "Okay." "Would you agree that the highest good, therefore, is God alone?" "Yeah." "It sure wouldn't be us--would it?" "No way!" "We're talking absolute truth?" "Yes." "Doesn't it make sense that if we wanted to be in communion with the highest good, the love of God, we ought to have faith in God?" "Good point." "Do you now understand why faith is important?" "I do." "You're aware that our nation was founded on the faith that we are all 'endowed by our Creator (God) with inalienable rights' such as 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness'?" "Yes." "Do you realize that the notion of 'separation of church and state' isn't in our founding documents--the Declaration, Constitution, or Bill of Rights?" "Really?" "Yep. Jefferson alluded to it in a letter to a church; that's it. Do you see anything wrong with our nation being guided by the highest good?"

Keith Gallagher, Morrow County, OR.

Three ODA Approved Pesticide Credits for Farmers

Morrow County (OSU) Extension will offer a 3-credit class for farmers who need to maintain their private applicator license. The class will take place from 9 AM to noon on **Tuesday, November 12th**. There is no charge. Featured speakers include Judit Barroso who will talk about herbicide resistance and Larry Lutchter who will lead a discussion on soil properties, soil health, and their influence on herbicide efficacy. Participants are encouraged to bring (and share) one of their recent soil test reports. Seating is limited. Please RSVP to 541.969.0580.



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Re-enrollment is October 15 to December 7th

Any changes to plans need to be made in this time frame.

We are NOT a provider for any HUMANA plans

This also includes Condon



217 North Main St., Heppner, OR
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