

CHRISTMAS BUSINESS PAGE CONTINUED



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Merry Christmas





Heppner, Oregon

Heppner council hears update from WCVEDG



Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group’s work includes funding to help revitalize the Heppner Chamber of Commerce. That support has spurred developments like Market 87 on Heppner’s Main Street, which now houses more than 30 vendors. -Photo by Brooke Christy

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totaling \$373,000.

WCVEDG also offers incentives for lot development, abatement and new housing, as well as working on construction projects of its own.

The group has already built three townhouse duplexes, and Coil said they are planning something a little bit “different” next. WCVEDG has bought lots in Heppner and plans to build two 1,000-square-foot, single-level homes. The housing is targeted at seniors looking to downsize into something smaller and more manageable.

“So, if you’re in a four-bedroom, two-bathroom home, several floors, you would move into this home that’s smaller, lower maintenance,” said Coil.

The small homes also have low-maintenance landscaping and will be within easy walking distance of downtown Heppner.

WCVEDG plans to begin that project within the next few weeks. Coil also said that WCVEDG hopes those homes will open the way for building family-sized homes in the future.

They are also considering gathering resources and professionals to help those who want to build new homes for themselves.

“There’s a lot of things to know about it, and maybe we would do that so people could just get their foot in the door and figure out what it takes to get a construction project going,” she said.

WCVEDG is also brainstorming other ways

to promote new and rehabilitated housing in South Morrow, including flood plain management—a huge concern in Heppner.

“That impacts every project we look at, every project anybody looks at,” she said.

While housing is a hot topic, that doesn’t mean WCVEDG hasn’t been busy in other areas. Coil said they also invested \$129,000 in new and existing businesses last year.

They have also provided technical assistance catered to entrepreneurs and small businesses. One project she said they are excited about is a collaboration with Heppner Chamber of Commerce, Reinventing Rural and Business Oregon to provide small business startup training classes, as well as grants and financial assistance.

“So that’s been a great program,” she said.

Last year, WCVEDG also gave \$15,000 to South Morrow County Seniors Matter, which she says that organization then leveraged into more than \$150,000 dollars in grants.

“And they’re serving nearly 70 people every week at that meal site,” Coil said. South Morrow Seniors Matter has also added veterans’ lunches, exercise classes and social outings. “We’re really proud of what they have done. It’s just incredible,” she said.

WCVEDG also helped with the roof at Willow Creek Terrace and a heating and cooling system at St. Patrick’s Senior Apartments.

As far as childcare, Coil said they put \$250,000

toward a new South Morrow childcare facility this year.

“The day care took that seed money and has successfully raised over \$900,000 to date,” she said.

“That’s what we’re trying to do,” she added. “Take our money and do something with it.”

WCVEDG also provides community enhancement grants every spring. In 2024, WCVEDG granted more than \$260,000 for 12 community projects. Those projects ended up having a total value of more than \$850,000, she said.

Coil said WCVEDG receives administrative funding from the county, which the group has passed on to the Heppner Chamber of Commerce to revitalize that organization.

“And this revitalization of the chamber is having an exciting and significant impact for the chamber and their members,” she said.

One such impact is the new Market 87 on Heppner’s Main Street, which now has more than 30 vendors. To date, they’ve sold more than \$9,500 worth of merchandise, with \$4,000 in local sales in the first month.

“It’s a really neat little store,” she added.

Also at the meeting was Morrow County Commissioner-elect Gus Peterson. He spoke briefly and said that, though he couldn’t get to every single meeting in the county, he wanted to be at a lot of them.

“I want to be somebody that people feel like is involved and active, and that you know where you can find me and talk to me if

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