



# the HEPPNER GAZETTE TIMES

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## Heppner council solidifies water system priorities

By Andrea Di Salvo

The Heppner City Council began its Jan. 13 meeting by swearing in newly elected members. Mayor Corey Sweeney and council members Ralph Klock and Ian Murray are continuing in their positions, while councilor Joe Armato is a new face on the city's governing body.

The Heppner City Council also started the new year with a focus on goals, especially the city's water and related priorities. The council voted unanimously last week to move forward with engineering firm Anderson Perry's recommendations for the city's water system master plan.

Prior to its regular meeting, the council continued a Jan. 10 work session with Anderson Perry. The work session had been continued to last week when the council asked the firm to trim the proposed work scope for high-priority projects to a smaller budget. The work had originally been projected at more than \$14 million.

Project engineer Dane Maben was back at the Jan. 13 meeting to discuss the council's priorities and their price tags.

Those priorities included new flow meters at wells

two and three, a new well (well six) and new water storage reservoir, well one pump building replacement, recoating the interior of well three, rehabbing the pressure-reducing valve station on all five existing wells, and four areas of distribution piping.

The design phase of the project will take 12-15 months, Maben said, with another 18 to 24 months on construction. The total project cost in 2027 dollars is projected at \$10.4 million.

Included in that was a new reservoir of welded steel at \$1.3 million. An equivalent concrete reservoir would cost about \$1.9 million, Maben said, adding that cost was for the "Cadillac version" of concrete tanks.

"I could talk to other companies to see if we can get that down to kind of a middle-of-the-road concrete tank," he said.

However, he said the high-end tank would require no recoating, only basic cleaning. Welded-steel reservoirs require coating, which will have to be redone every 30 to 40 years, though Maben said coatings are getting better and lasting longer.

The recoating for well three in this project will cost

about \$180,000. This is the first recoating of reservoir three in about 50 years. Reservoir three is about half the size of the reservoir at the proposed new well.

The council had originally considered a trailer mounted generator and manual transfer switches at the various well pumps. However, the city ended up going with permanent generators at well one and the planned well six.

Maben said his understanding of Oregon law was that backup power was only required at one location, but he recommended also installing it on the new well.

"So if something happens up here with your transmission line or something, you have a well with backup power at the other end of the system as well," Maben said.

He also said the well pump station at the new well would be more expensive because the state requires chlorination. The existing wells are already chlorinated.

Maben said the council's selection of project priorities didn't lock the city into completing an of the projects, but that it helped in creating the city's water system master plan. After that, the city could pursue

funding for the project.

"And if the funding package isn't right to do that big of a project, we can go through your list and start scratching things off the bottom," said Maben, "and work our way up to a project you guys can do and feel comfortable about doing."

At the same time, he said, that didn't remove any projects from the master plan. While the \$10.4 million is for high priority projects, the cost for the entire master plan would climb to about \$30 million.

"Everything we've talked about since we started doing this is in the master plan," Maben said. "Seven years down the road, you can pull this master plan off the shelf and say, 'Oh, hey, we talked about doing this, but it wasn't a high priority at the time.'"

Then, he said, the plan could be amended with updated costs and the city could pursue funding for that project.

On the matter of funding, Maben had some suggestions. Safe Drinking Water is a program funded through Business Oregon. The city would have until Feb. 15 to submit a letter of interest.

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## St. Pat's button contest now open



The Heppner St. Patrick's Day button contest is open for entries, the Heppner Chamber of Commerce announced last week. A \$100 prize awaits the winning artist.

Artwork must fit inside the button circle and include the following information: Heppner 1887, 42nd Annual Wee Bit O' Ireland Celebration, March 13-16, 2025. Button design pages can be obtained from the Heppner Chamber of Commerce office.

The contest is open to local entrants only. Button designs are due Feb. 8.

For more information, contact the Heppner Chamber of Commerce at 541-676-5536.

## Ione fire department receives donation



Ione Rural Fire Protection District (IRFPD) received a sizable donation from Brookfield Renewable recently. Steve Dumler, Site Facility Manager of Shepherd Flats for Brookfield Renewable, applied for and was granted the award in the amount of \$5,000. Steve presented the award at the regular meeting of the IRFPD Board on Jan. 13. Pictured are Steve Dumler (left) and Ione Fire Chief Virgil Morgan (right). -Contributed photo

## Heppner team assigned to Palisades Fire



An Oregon fire truck sits side-by-side with a truck from Los Angeles County during the response to the wildfires raging in Southern California. -Photo courtesy of OSFM

Morrow County firefighters are on the front lines of the California fires, with firefighters from Heppner and Boardman answering the call.

According to John Hendricks of the Oregon State Fire Marshal's Office, the Heppner Fire Department is with Oregon Strike Team 21, which is assigned to the Palisades Fire. Umatilla Co. Fire District #1 is also with Strike Team 21.

Meanwhile, Boardman Fire Rescue District (BFRD) personnel and equipment are part of Strike Team 19, currently assigned to the Eaton Fire.

The Morrow County fire teams are part of six water tender strike teams mobilized to California on Jan. 11. A water tender is a standard response tool to wildfires and is a specialized truck designed to carry and deliver large amounts of water.

Some of the water tenders mobilizing to California, like the truck from Heppner, are Oregon's new tactical tenders that were

delivered to local fire agencies through the OSFM Engine Program in 2024.

Over the weekend, Oregon State Fire Marshal Mariana Ruiz-Temple was in Southern California, where she met with CAL FIRE officials, toured the fire-affected areas, and spoke with Oregon firefighters to learn about their experiences and work.

"Firefighters from across the country are working around the clock to support these communities," Ruiz-Temple said. "I thank them, their communities, and their families who support their efforts during this deployment. The ability to share resources across state lines ensures states have the extra capacity needed during critical times."

In total, the Oregon State Fire Marshal has sent 21 strike teams, 370 firefighters, and 105 apparatus to support California's response to historic wildfires in the southern part of the state. This is the largest out-of-state deployment for the agency.

## Elks receives donation in honor of long-time member



Ione Martin made a donation to the local Elks lodge in memory of her late husband, Jerry Martin. Pictured at his celebration of life are Ione Martin with children Scott Martin of Roseville, CA (front left), Lisa Mort of Richland, WA (back left) and Cindi Doherty of Heppner (back right). -Contributed photo

Ione Martin of Hermiston donated \$1,000 to the Heppner Elks Lodge #358 in memory of her late husband, Jerry Martin. She presented the check to Elks Chaplain Tim Dickenson at the celebration of life held at the Elks last week.

Martin was a member of Lodge #358 for 57 years, and his family says the Elks was always dear to his heart. He was also a long-time Morrow County teacher with a passion for education and coaching.

The donation will be split, with \$500 going toward the Elks youth night and the other \$500 going to a scholarship in Martin's name. The scholarship will

go toward someone seeking to become a teacher.

## Smith pushes for more Port commissioners



Greg Smith

State Rep. Greg Smith of Heppner wants to add two commissioners to the Port of Morrow Commission.

Smith's House Bill 2797 would expand the port from five commissioners to seven. In some ways, that makes sense. The Port of Morrow is the second-largest port in Oregon. The Port's annual budget is nearly half a billion dollars.

However, Morrow County voters would not be able to select the two new commissioners.

Rather, HB 2797 calls for the governor to appoint two new commissioners who "have knowledge or

experience in the trade sector." That's not all—the bill also states that the governor will appoint successors when the four-year terms end, with commissioners eligible for reappointment.

The other five commissioners would still be elected.

The proposal is among 21 bills Smith filed ahead of the 2025 legislative session. Others include barring members of the Legislative Assembly from serving on juries, ensuring a person with a concealed handgun license is automatically qualified to get a gun purchase permit, and creating a new tax credit for volunteer firefighters, among others.

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