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Torres named new MCHD board member

Health district board discusses public comment changes

By Andrea Di Salvo

The Morrow County Health District Board selected Laura Torres as Boardman to fill a vacant board position at its regular meeting Monday night in Boardman.

During discussion at the meeting, the board members said it was a difficult decision, with four qualified applicants to choose from.

"They're not making this easy," said board member Scott Ezell. "I think they're all going to have the ability to bring our board some unique abilities and insights."

"I see four qualified candidates," agreed board member Stephen Munkers.

However, Ezell said Torres's application stood out to him, while board chair Diane Kilkenny called her "highly qualified, highly dedicated."

Torres currently works as associate director of workforce engagement and diverse talent sourcing for Blue Star Families. She has also worked as a training facilitator for The Rosie Network and a career coach for Recruitment Solutions.

She has served on the Veterans Chamber of Commerce board and currently leads Latinas Leading Northwest.

Torres also has experi-

ence in healthcare, having served as a home visitor with the Morrow County Health Department. She is currently involved as a caregiver with the VA Caregiver Program.

She also holds a master's degree in business administration with a human resources specialization.

"As a former home visitor with the Morrow County Health Department, I gained valuable insights into our community's health needs and the importance of accessible, preventative care. My experience as a caregiver with the VA Caregiver Program further underscores my dedication to serving diverse populations with compassion," Torres said in her letter of interest.

"I am passionate about community involvement and enhancing healthcare access, fostering community partnerships, and supporting the District's mission to provide exceptional care. I would be honored to contribute my skills and collaborate with the Board to ensure our District continues to grow and adapt to meet the evolving needs of our community."

The board voted unanimously to appoint Torres to the board vacancy Trista Seastone left when she resigned for work reasons

late last year. Other applicants were Lea Mathieu of Ione, Janet Greenup of Heppner and Jason Hanna of Heppner.

Also at Monday's meeting, the board took on the issue of how public comments should be handled at MCHD board meetings. The board had received a recommendation that it move public comment to the end of the board meetings and have a sign-up sheet for those who want to speak.

Kilkenny also said the health district had received a grievance in December regarding the way public comment was recorded in the meeting minutes and had consulted legal counsel on the topic.

"The board is not required to hear off-topic public comments, and such comments are not material," Kilkenny said, reading a summary from the MCHD counsel. "The public comment period is not a time for dialogue between the board members and members of the public."

"The ultimate decision about how to record public comment is up to the board," she added.

She also noted that publishing "unvetted documents from the public" or allowing certain comments could create legal liability

for defamation.

In addition, a series of contentious public comment sessions has the board concerned about the content of public comment. Kilkenny said she would like to limit public comment to items on the agenda, saying that it would be more productive.

"I think it's a fairer way to do that," Kilkenny said.

Munkers and Ezell didn't agree.

"If we're limiting them to items we've already picked, then if we never put it on the agenda, how are they ever going to get to comment on it?" Ezell asked. "I don't know that we want to go down that route at all."

"If the public needs to come in and speak their minds on something that maybe isn't on the agenda, that's their right," he added.

"Actually, if you go according to the rules, it's the board's decision about what the public is able to comment on," Kilkenny responded, adding that there had been many health district meetings where public comment had been derogatory toward the board and staff.

"I don't find that productive," she said. "I find that demoralizing."

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Anderson selected as fair and rodeo queen



Kathryn "KC" Anderson

The Morrow County Fair and Oregon Trail Pro Rodeo have announced that KC (Kathryn) Anderson has been selected as the 2025 Morrow County Fair and Oregon Trail Pro Rodeo Queen.

KC is the daughter of Colin and Erin Anderson of Heppner. The Andersons operate a family wheat farm in Morrow County.

KC came with high

recommendations. The selection committee said her public speaking abilities, skilled horsemanship and knowledge of the county made her an ideal applicant for the position.

KC attends Heppner High School. She is an honor roll student and an active 4-H and FFA member. She has also held officer positions in school, as well as in FFA and 4-H.

Through 4-H, KC has raised a dairy heifer for the last five years. She has also exhibited and shown her horse at the Morrow County Fair. She says she loves barrel racing, and she has been a contestant at the Morrow County jackpot rodeo. KC has also received the Threemile Canyon Farms Dairy Heifer Herdsmanship and Mentorship awards.

KC is also very in-

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Over \$500,000 in community contributions announced at annual chamber luncheon



Alita Nelson received the Heppner Chamber Volunteer of the Year Award. - Photo by Heppner Chamber

The Heppner Chamber of Commerce hosted its annual luncheon in collaboration with Willow Creek Economic Development Group (WCVEDG) last week.

WCVEDG Board Chair Kim Coil provided updates on more than \$500,000 in contributions made by WC-

VEDG to the Heppner community throughout 2024.

Representatives from grant recipients shared insights into their projects and expressed their gratitude for the funds they received.

Updates were also shared regarding WCVEDG's two tiny home housing projects currently under construction at the corner of Chase and Center streets.

The Heppner chamber also presented highlights from 2024, including community events, business workshops, and Market 87 vendor sales, which generated more than \$20,000 from October to December.

Plans for 2025 were unveiled, with notable upcoming events including the 2025 Town & Country awards banquet on Feb. 6

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Success of second Barney Lindsay Scholarship dinner auction exceeds expectations

Raises more than \$42,000 for Morrow County high schools



2024 scholarship recipient Kelly Doherty of Ione shares how the scholarship is impacting her as a elementary education student at Eastern Oregon University. -Photo by Tiah Devin



A packed crowd attended the second annual Barney Lindsay Scholarship dinner last Saturday. - Tiah Devin

Heppner—The second Barney Lindsay Scholarship Dinner Auction, held this past Saturday, Jan. 25, was once again an overwhelming success, grossing \$42,000 to support scholarships in each of the four high schools in Morrow County.

The event, organized in memory of Barney Lindsay, a long-time farmer in the Heppner/Lexington area and a Morrow County School Board member, saw tremendous support from the community, showcasing the power of unity in fostering education.

The event was made possible through the dedicated efforts of the organizing committee, whose hard work and commitment played a crucial role in the success of the evening. The committee members in-

clude Erin Heideman, Beth Dickenson, Ashley Lindsay, Tiah Devin and Kimberly Lindsay. Their passion for the cause and meticulous planning ensured a memorable and impactful event.

Kimberly Lindsay, expressing gratitude on behalf of the Lindsay family,



A table decorated and ready for the big event. -Photo by Tiah Devin

said, "Our family is overwhelmed by the generosity of our community in the support of this endeavor. It is something that will help remind my children why giving back to your com-

munity is so valuable. I cannot thank everyone enough for their donations, sponsorship, and help. There was a tremendous crew of people jumping in to fill roles, and I am so grateful."

The funds raised from the auction will be used to continue scholarships in each of the four Morrow County high schools— Ione, Riverside, Heppner and Irrigon. These scholarships will honor the memory of Barney Lindsay and provide support to deserving students pursuing their education in some capacity beyond high school.

Future efforts and opportunities to be involved, in addition to highlighting scholarship recipients, can be found at the newly created website, <https://barneylindsay.com/>.

Kimberly and her com-

mittee said they are especially grateful to Ken Grieb for auctioneering, Dale and Sheryll Bates for sound and audio support, and Ty Snyder for developing the website, in addition to the numerous friends and family who assisted with food preparation, set up, take down, ticket/activity sales, auction management and everything in between.

"The community support and help has been so generous," said Lindsay.

The success of this event reflects the community's commitment to education and the enduring impact of Barney Lindsay's legacy. Scholarship applications are available now in each school's guidance and counseling offices and are due May 1, 2025, to school counselors.

Ione issues update on city wastewater project

The City of Ione has announced that the drain field for the city's wastewater project is nearly complete.

In a progress report released Jan. 22, the city said all 17 cells with drainage material have been installed and backfilled. Additionally, the feed lines to the 17 cells have also been completely plumbed and backfilled.

The three dosing tanks are all installed and plumbed. Concrete pads for the generator and control room have been poured and

the control room structure is on order. Six inches of gravel now surrounds the dosing tank area, including the pads.

The city also reports that the four-inch sewer line to the drain field has been installed on Johnson Grade Rd. There remains about 100 feet in the area of the dosing tanks that still requires installation.

Numerous areas of Johnson Grade Rd. were also widened with excess

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