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District school board prepares for next steps in bond process

Morrow County – The Morrow County School District and its Board of Directors are moving forward to complete the next steps toward the district’s General Obligation Bond.

The district’s Community Bond Advisory Committee (CBAC) presented two bond draft recommendations to the board on January 13, 2025. The board will further discuss the recommendations and get a few more questions answered at a work session on January 29.

Matt Combe, MCSD Superintendent, said the district and the board appreciate all the hard work the CBAC members have completed. The CBAC met for nine months to develop the bond draft recommendations. Comprehensive reviews of all MCSD schools and facilities were conducted by certified assessors from the Oregon

Department of Education. CBAC members reviewed these facility assessments, toured buildings with school principals, reviewed bond financial options, and prioritized projects. The facility assessments indicate that several MCSD schools need to be replaced, while others require important remodels or upgrades, including safety and security improvements.

“Over many months, these community members attended meetings, discussed options, reviewed data, asked questions, and developed detailed bond project recommendations, and we are very grateful for their time, dedication, and work,” Combe said.

The CBAC is composed of 19 community members from Boardman, Irrigon, Heppner, and Lexington who are volunteering to guide this process. The members are: Zac

Acock, Doris Brosnan, Luis Campos, Andrew Cemore, Dave Cooley, Pamela Cutsforth, Jose Dueñas, Frances Glenn, Torrie Griggs, Brett Harrison, Jan Huddleston, Karla Jimenez, Angela Jones, Tia McNamee, Sue Oliver, Brandi Orem, Madison Rosenbalm, George Shimer, and Gina Wilson.

Combe said the district and the board also thank everyone who provided feedback about the bond draft recommendations, which the CBAC reviewed and used while creating the proposed bond projects.

After the board work session at the end of January, the district and board anticipate that the board will approve the bond resolution for the ballot in May 2025.

The district was recently notified that it has qualified for a matching grant of \$6 million from the Oregon School Capital

Improvement Matching Program (OSMIP). This grant will be provided if the proposed bond is approved by Morrow County voters in the spring.

Taxpayers in the Morrow County School District are not currently paying for a school district bond or levy. The last General Obligation Bond was passed in 2001 and expired in 2021. The last operating levy (which was not for facility construction or upgrades) passed in 2012 and expired in 2016.

More information will be communicated in the coming months about the MCSD proposed bond. To view bond draft recommendations or facility reports of MCSD schools, please visit mcsdbond.org for the latest information, email bondinfo@morrowso.org, or contact the District Office at 541-676-5705.

Ione Elementary School reenacts the 60th Presidential Inauguration



(Top) Color Guard – Ione 2nd and 3rd Graders (Bottom) Luke Neiffer portrays President Trump being sworn in by Matthew Bailey as Chief Justice Roberts. - Photos by Chris Sykes.

Ione Elementary School reenacted the 60th Presidential Inauguration, featuring a presentation of colors, an introduction of dignitaries, a flag salute, the Preamble, the oath of office for the Vice President, the oath of office for the President, the President’s speech, a performance of “You’re a Grand Old Flag”, a benediction, the Grand Inaugural Ball. **More pictures**

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County BOC selects general contractor for circuit court project

By Andrea Di Salvo

The Morrow County Board of Commissioners selected Bouten Construction as the Construction Manager/General Contractor (CMGC) for the new circuit court building at its Jan. 22 meeting in Irrigon.

The county had issued a request for proposals (RFP) Dec. 2. Earl Eastman of Alliance told the BOC that they had received nine proposals.

“We attracted some good attention on it,” added Morrow County Administrator Matt Jensen.

All of the proposals had been for the Boardman site, since that was the site the county had selected at the time. After the decision was reversed at the Jan. 8 meeting and the site moved back to Heppner, Eastman said they had checked to make sure every applicant was comfortable with the change, and all were.

The scoring committee—consisting of Eastman, Kelli Stewart of DLR Group, Jensen, Morrow County Assistant Administrator Vincent Guerra and

Morrow County Public Works Director Eric Imes—met on Jan. 10 and scored the proposals.

Eastman said the scoring was “very tight” between Bouten and the committee’s other choices, Kirby Nagelhaut of Pendleton and Chervenell Construction of Kennewick, but that the scoring committee was unanimous in its recommendation.

Eastman said the fees in the proposals ranged from 2.75 percent and five percent, with Bouten at 3.75 percent. The fee gets applied to the total cost of construction.

“So all of the fees are very consistent with what we see in the industry for projects this size,” said Eastman.

Cost wasn’t the only factor, though. Eastman said the committee used eight factors to score the proposals and thoroughly checked references, even for companies they were familiar with.

“The design team and your construction management team had experi-

ence with all three of these contractors, some of them significant experience with working with them, but we still called references,” he told the commissioners.

Based on the committee’s recommendation, the commissioners voted unanimously to issue an intent to award for Bouten

Also at the meeting, the three commissioners discussed the need for a long-range capital improvement plan for the county.

“I’ve been getting quite a few interactions with the public all over the county about different capital projects,” said BOC chair David Sykes. “And I’ve thought for some time we need a long-range plan.”

Commissioners Gus Peterson and Jeff Wenholz agreed that a plan is needed.

“This is something that I don’t know if the county’s had,” said Wenholz. “If there had been something, it’s time to update it.”

The commissioners discussed having a work session to begin work on a plan. Jensen added that it might be good to include

county staff in the conversation in order to delve beyond the obvious projects.

“There’s other projects that even I’m not fully up to speed on, that would be helpful to have facilities, public works, fair and everybody come in that work session just to discuss,” said Jensen. “So I think a work session with the entire BOC and many of the chief staff members would be very helpful.”

Wenholz agreed, and added that he would like to clearly outline project funding so discretionary funding would be used for appropriate projects.

“Personally, how I’d like to see us budget out the dollars having all that information as we start going down this road of a capital improvement plan, I think that’d be helpful,” he said.

The BOC decided to hold a work session regarding a long-range capital improvement plan after the regular board of commissioners meeting Feb. 19.

Lexington council discusses RV permits

By Andrea Di Salvo

The Jan. 14 meeting of the Lexington Town Council was Lexington Mayor Sheila Miller’s first meeting in her new position. She was sworn in at the beginning of the meeting, as was returning council member Will Lemmon. Another returning council member, Bill Beard, was not present, and will be sworn in at later meeting.

Councilor position four is still vacant following Carol Dougherty’s resignation from the council. Lexington Town Recorder Autumn Crumpton said the vacant council position had been in the paper but there had been no interest as of the Jan. 14 meeting.

The council had previously tabled an ordinance

regarding temporary RV permits within Lexington city limits but moved forward with the draft ordinance at January’s meeting.

Permit requirements and how to enforce them were main topics in the discussion. Lemmon said he didn’t have a problem with someone living in an RV for a few weeks.

“But if they’re dumping sewage on the ground, then it becomes an issue,” he said.

Council member Katie Imes said there would always be questions or maintenance issues for anything the town does, but she wanted to move forward with the ordinance.

“We have wind energy projects here, where people are looking for places to

stay, and our residents could make some extra income doing that,” she said. “I feel this is for the good of the community.”

With the draft ordinance accepted, the town will move forward with public hearings before a formal resolution can be adopted.

The ordinance is for a single RV, since two or more would be considered a recreational vehicle park under state rules. Anyone wanting to create an RV park would have to go through the state process and meet all state requirements, regardless of what the town would require.

The council tabled the issue of new gutters for Lexington Fire Hall. The town had already request-

ed bids for the project and received several, but Miller questioned the cost and budget process for the re-

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CREZ II distributes more than \$13 million throughout county

At its Jan. 22 meeting, the Columbia River Enterprise Zone (CREZ) II board determined the recipients of more than \$13 million in enterprise zone agreement revenues.

Nearly half of the \$13,864,965 disbursement went to the CREZ’s three sponsoring agencies. Morrow County, the Port of Morrow and the City of Boardman each received just over \$2 million, for a total of \$6,036,021.

More than \$3.5 million of the funds went to housing and community development funds throughout the county. CREZ records show that those funds were distributed according to population.

Boardman Community Development Association (BCDA) received \$1,986,169, the City of Irrigon received \$859,622 and Willow Creek Valley

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Community seeks donations to help mobile pet groomer stay in business

HEPPNER, OR — Community members are working to support Yolanda Munoz, a local mobile pet groomer, as she faces unexpected mechanical issues with her grooming van. Since her business relies entirely on mobility, these vehicle problems have temporarily halted her operations, prompting a fundraising effort to help her return to serving local pet owners. Munoz’s grooming services are well-regarded

in Heppner, particularly in the rural community where access to pet care options can be limited. However, because she operates as a mobile business, she does not qualify for certain grants that could assist with repairs. A fundraising campaign has been launched, with donations being accepted through GoFundMe and local collection efforts. Supporters have expressed appreciation for Munoz’s

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