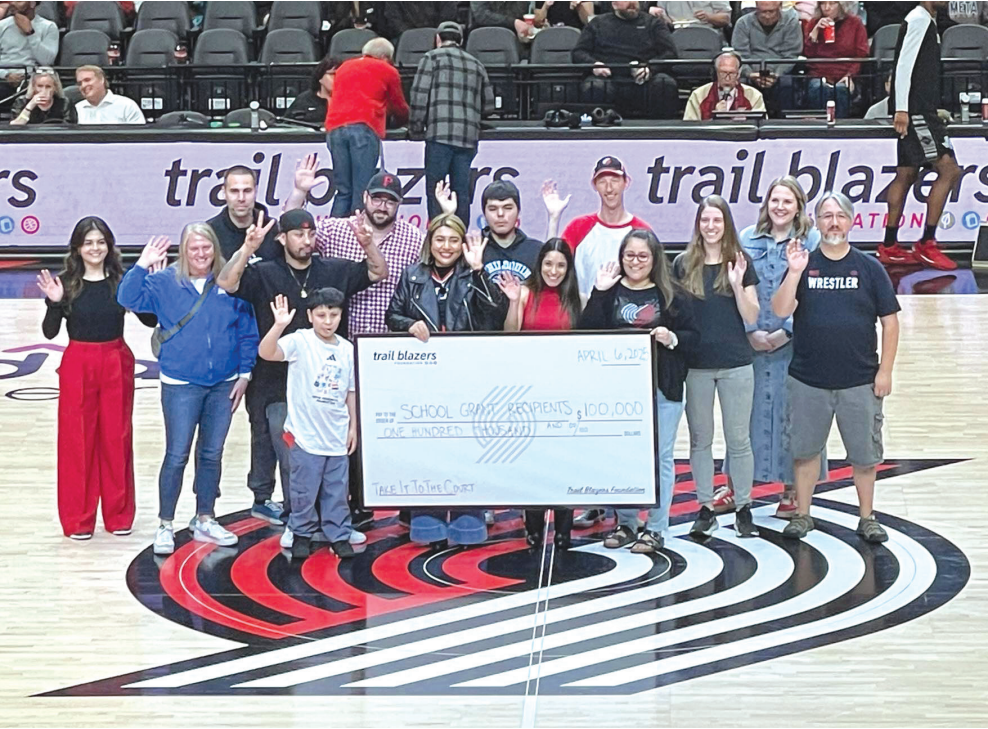




Riverside Pirates score \$10,000 grant from the Portland Trailblazers Foundation



Richard Rockwell stands at center court during the Trailblazers game on April 6th, positioned far right in the photo. - Contributed Photo

The Riverside Pirates wrestling program was awarded a \$10,000 grant from the Portland Trailblazers Foundation, with the grant presented at a Portland Trailblazers game on April 6. Richard Rockwell, the head boys’ coach for Riverside, had applied for the grant to replace the program’s 35-year-old wrestling mats.

“This school year was spent looking for funding for new wrestling mats to replace our 35-year-old mats. I filled out some grants back in December, forgot about them and went

to work locally for donations,” Rockwell said. “After securing some funding from our Booster Club, Dr. Hansen, local supporters, former Pirate wrestlers and classmates, I get a random email last month from the Trailblazers Foundation, stating we were awarded their grant.”

“March 4, 2025, was when we received official notification about receiving the grant,” he noted. “The sixth of April was the day we were awarded the grant that will help finish paying for our new mats. This was 35 years in the making, cov-

ering a span of thousands of Pirate wrestlers, thousands of matches and thousands of hours of practice.

“What makes this even more special was my grandfather was a lifelong Blazers fan and years ago, was honored at halftime for being such a big fan,” Rockwell added.

“It was a grant from their Trailblazers Foundation. Each program that was awarded received \$10,000 each. The money is going towards the purchase of two new wrestling mats for our programs,” Rockwell explained. “Ten thousand

dollars was the max amount awarded to each program that applied, which we were told was over a hundred programs throughout Oregon and Washington.

The mats will benefit the kids club, both junior high boys and girls and high school boys and girls programs at Riverside. The original two mats being replaced are from 1989, when Riverside first began its wrestling program.

“I was an eighth grader that year, and myself and all of my children have been a part of the Riverside program for all those years except one. This year, my grandsons got to practice on them. It’s been a long time coming,” he shared.

“I was a district champion for Riverside in 1994, been coaching here all that time except one year, and all my sons and daughters had wrestled on them,” Rockwell added, joking, “I usually tell people they would bury me under those mats.”

“Thank you to the Portland Trailblazers for allowing us the opportunity to keep our programs going, MCSD and Riverside High School for allowing me to lead such an important program to myself and my family,” Rockwell concluded. “Rip City and Go Pirates!”

CDA searches for a way forward through land disputes, financial uncertainty

By Andrea Di Salvo

The Columbia Development Authority is searching for a path through “the next 30 days” as its government funding has fallen through—leaving the five-party board wondering how to pay its bills going forward.

The CDA’s financial concerns began with an Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (OLDCC) grant compliance review and a subsequent letter the Port of Morrow received from the OLDCC Jan. 13 in its role as the CDA’s fiscal agent.

The CDA is a five-member board comprised of representatives from Morrow and Umatilla counties, the ports of Morrow and Umatilla, and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR).

The letter raised serious financial and management issues regarding a CDA operational grant, including lack of board oversight. The CDA and Port had hoped that, if the Port stepped down as the CDA’s fiscal agent, the OLDCC would reconsider the termination or allow a different entity to apply for the grant in the future.

However, Port of Morrow Executive Director Lisa Mittelsdorf told the CDA board at its March 25 meeting that hopes of the government reconsidering its decision to terminate a crucial grant had been dashed—possibly along with hope of future grants for the development group.

According to a letter from OLDCC Deputy Director for Compliance Michael Wilson, which Mittelsdorf read at the meeting, some of that decision may have been triggered by recent government cutbacks. One of the areas in which the OLDCC is trimming its budget is in the area that provides support for the redevelopment of the Umatilla Army Depot.

“Depending on the results of these potential reductions, it is unlikely that we will be able to consider any future funding requests from any entity in support of ongoing redevelopment efforts at this location,” Mittelsdorf read.

Mittelsdorf also told the CDA board that the Port of Morrow would be submitting a letter the following day to terminate the existing grant. While the CDA may not get more federal funding, the termination will safeguard the Port’s ability to get federal grants on its own behalf.

CTUIR representative JD Tovey, though, was still concerned with the loss of funding for the CDA, especially the current grant funds of nearly a million dollars.

“Everyone seems really calm about the fact that we just lost 800,000, 900,000 dollars, and I don’t like that,” said Tovey.

Tovey said he didn’t blame the Port for the debacle, saying it was the fault of the CDA board’s lack of oversight.

“I just want to be clear

that there are repercussions that have to be felt across the organization,” he added.

Paul Rabb, CDA budget committee chair, told the CDA board that the budget committee had met and moved forward with a basic operating budget, assuming there would be changes to revenue sources.

“So we were waiting to see how those revenue sources would shake out in the regular board meeting today,” said Rabb.

Due to the uncertainty, he said the budget committee had scheduled another meeting for April and hoped to have a budget ready for approval this month.

“I really don’t think that expenses are going to change,” he said. “It’s really about putting in what revenues will be what.”

He also said that he didn’t see a reason the CDA board shouldn’t reach out and seek grant funding itself once the Port had terminated its grant agreement. He suggested that showing the effort to have better internal controls might bear fruit.

“They’re not saying you can’t apply for it. They’re saying they might not fund it,” Rabb said.

Meanwhile, disagreements also arose among board members over how exactly to meet the financial shortfall in the meantime.

A draft resolution to sell 100 acres of the land previously transferred to the Port of Morrow met with resistance, both from CDA board member and

Umatilla County Commissioner John Schafer and from Tovey.

For instance, the issue of whether the Port of Morrow actually owns the land is part of a legal battle between Umatilla County and CTUIR and the three other CDA entities.

Schafer suggested tabling the land sale until Umatilla County and the Port of Morrow could settle their current legal battles, saying they are “close,” but CDA Executive Director Greg Smith reminded the board of its need for funds.

“I think its fabulous that the partners will come together, and I encourage you to,” he said. “But we have cash flow issues.”

However, Port of Umatilla representative and CDA board chair Kim Puzey agreed that no action should be taken while

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Health District Candidates Forum Planned April 23

The Heppner Chamber of Commerce invites the public to attend a candidates forum to hear from those running for positions on the Morrow County Health District Board.

The MCHD candidates forum will take place on

Wednesday, April 23, at 6 p.m. at the Gilliam & Bisbee Building.

Candidates will present their platforms and answer questions. Submit questions in writing at the event, or via Facebook Messenger or livestream.

Port of Morrow candidates forum April 28

The Heppner Chamber of Commerce invites the public to attend a candidates forum to hear from those running for office on the Port of Morrow Commission.

The Port of Morrow candidates forum will take place on Monday, April 28, at 6 p.m. at the Gilliam & Bisbee Building in Heppner.

Heppner Elks to hold Easter Egg Hunt



The Easter Bunny scouting out a spot to hide all his eggs. - Photo by Mrs. Easter Bunny

The Heppner Elks Club will be hosting a community Easter egg hunt on Saturday, April 19, on the grassy areas of the Morrow County Fairgrounds.

The Easter Bunny will be there for photos starting at 8 a.m.

The hunt will start at 9 a.m. with ages zero to three

on the grass between the Wilkinson arena and fair annex building. Once that group has finished, the hunt will move on to subsequent age groups—ages four to six, seven to nine, and 10 and up.

The Easter Bunny will also be available for photos after the hunt.

Committee Vote Opens New Direction for Wildfire Program

Senate bill voids wildfire hazard map and property regulations tied to hazard categories

SALEM, OR – The Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire voted unanimously Tuesday to eliminate the state wildfire hazard map first introduced in 2021’s Senate Bill 762. The policy advanced April 8 also repeals the property maintenance rules that applied to higher-hazard areas on the map.

“Today is a milestone in our wildfire journey. As a whole, SB 762 programs have great support across the state, but the hazard map, which flunked the basic common-sense test for

so many property owners, had Oregonians angry and divided,” said Committee Chair Jeff Golden (D–Ashland). “Repealing the map clears the way to good collaborative programs on the ground. Now the challenge is to fund them at the levels we need.”

“Today, we’re celebrating with the thousands of Oregonians who have fought for this change. Rural Oregonians raised their voices and demanded action, and as a result, we’re finally seeing real progress,” Sen-

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