

# Morrow County voters overhaul Health District board

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A major issue was the ambulance service conflict with Morrow County, resolved through a five-year contract signed in August 2024, enabling MCHD to resume operations in the Northeast and Southern Ambulance Service Areas in September and October, respectively. This agreement also allowed Boardman Fire Rescue District to separate from MCHD, operating ambulance services independently.

Community frustration also surfaced in recent public meetings, where employees, former employees, travel nurses and residents criticized perceived declines in care quality, worsened by perceived high turnover of primary care physicians and nurses. In August 2024, the Oregon Nurses Association reported that nurses and technical staff at Pioneer Memorial Hospital were unionizing due to low staffing and inconsistent disciplinary policies.

MCHD facing lawsuit. May 2, 2025, paramedic Samantha Ward filed a \$1.5 million federal lawsuit against MCHD and former CEO Emily Roberts, alleging retaliatory termination.

Leadership transitions added to the challenges. CEO Emily Roberts resigned on March 31, 2025, citing personal priorities and community backlash, including anonymous posters in Heppner accusing her of power abuse and financial mismanagement. COO/CFO Nicole Mahoney also resigned, marking a significant leadership shift. Following Roberts' resignation, MCHD appointed Dennis Burke as interim CEO to ensure a smooth transition.

The election of new board members and the appointment of an interim CEO may offer MCHD an opportunity to address community concerns.

For Position 1, Annetta L. Spicer secured a decisive victory with 62.89 percent (1,537 votes) against Scott Ezell's 36.87 percent (901 votes), with write-ins garnering a negligible 0.25 percent (6 votes).

Position 2, Russel Nichols won with 56.70 percent (1,442 votes), outpacing Molly F. Rhea (31.38 percent, 798 votes), Diane Kilkenny (11.76 percent, 299 votes), and write-

ins (0.16 percent, 4 votes). Notably, Kilkenny was not an active candidate, having attempted to withdraw her candidacy but missing the deadline to remove her name from the ballot, resulting in votes cast for her despite no campaign efforts. Janet Greenup won Position 3 with 65.63 percent (1,623 votes), defeating Donna Rietmann's 33.89 percent (838 votes), while write-ins took 0.49 percent (12 votes).

For Position 4, Jason Hanna won with 56.60 percent (1,406 votes), overcoming Laura Torres (24.76 percent, 615 votes) and Raymond Seastone (18.24 percent, 453 votes), with write-ins at 0.40 percent (10 votes). These results indicate a strong voter mandate for new direction in healthcare governance.

*Port of Morrow: Staying the course*

In contrast, the Port of Morrow Commissioner races showed voters' preference for maintaining the current trajectory of economic and industrial leadership.

Rick Stokoe won Position 1 with 47.11 percent (1,117 votes), fending off J. Fletcher Hobbs (29.82 percent, 707 votes) and Heather Bishop (22.73 percent, 539 votes), with write-ins at 0.34 percent (8 votes).

Danny Kerns secured Position 2 with a commanding 65.75 percent (1,499 votes) against Raymond Seastone's 33.82 percent (771 votes), with write-ins at 0.44 percent (10 votes).

Joel R. Peterson clinched Position 3 with 58.98 percent (1,455 votes), defeating Abe McNamee's 40.78 percent (1,006 votes), with write-ins at 0.24 percent (6 votes). These outcomes suggest confidence in the port's existing leadership and policies.

*Morrow County School District Bond: A divided county*

The Morrow County School District No. 1 Bond (Measure 25-104), aimed at remodeling and replacing schools while improving safety and addressing structural deficiencies, passed by a razor-thin margin of 50.25 percent (1,225 votes) to 49.75 percent (1,213 votes), a mere 12-vote difference. This near 50/50 split underscores deep community divisions over the \$204,400,000 bond's financial implications versus

its educational benefits, reflecting a cautious approach to large-scale investments.

*Other Notable Races*

The Morrow County School District No. 1 Director elections saw minimal competition, with Erin Anderson (Position 2, 99.25 percent, 1,865 votes), Ashley Lindsay (Position 6, 99.20 percent, 1,861 votes) and Rosa Delgado (Position 7, 99.19 percent, 1,722 votes) winning handily against write-in candidates.

The Ione School District No. 2 races were slightly more contested, with Lea Mathieu (Position 1, 92.89 percent, 196 votes), Adam Collin (Position 3, 97.83 percent, 225 votes), Edmund Rietmann (Position 4, 59.20 percent, 148 votes), and Sami Peterson (Position 5, 69.80 percent, 171 votes) securing victories.

Fire and rescue districts also saw strong voter preferences.

In Boardman Fire and Rescue, Lisa Pratt (31.31 percent, 402 votes), Michael Sowa (27.65 percent, 355 votes), and James Ratzlaff (22.04 percent, 283 votes) won at-large positions.

Heppner Rural Fire Protection District elected Eric M. Orem (36.71 percent, 254 votes), Brian S. Thompson (31.94 percent, 221 votes) and Michael P. Mahoney (30.78 percent, 213 votes).

Ione Rural Fire Protection chose Jason Proudfoot (35.49 percent, 252 votes), Tim Holtz (33.24 percent, 236 votes) and Joel R. Peterson (30.85 percent, 219 votes).

Irrigon Rural Fire Protection District's races saw Tom Arbuckle (Position 1, 64.26 percent, 356 votes), Robert Vandecar (Position 3, 64.60 percent, 376 votes), Scott Ezell (Position 4, 98.40 percent, 492 votes) and Paul Martin (Position 5, 56.65 percent, 277 votes) prevail.

*Conclusion*

The May 20, 2025, Morrow County special election highlighted a county balancing change and continuity. Voters reshaped the health district with new faces, reaffirmed trust in the Port of Morrow's direction, and narrowly approved a significant school bond, reflecting both optimism and caution.

**Precinct Breakdown (Unofficial Election Night Results)**

**Boardman**  
(Total Ballots: 723)  
Port of Morrow Commissioner  
Position 1: Rick Stokoe (373), J. Fletcher Hobbs (177), Heather Bishop (108), Write-in (1), Over Votes (6), Under Votes (58)  
Position 2: Danny Kerns (473), Raymond Seastone (142), Write-in (1), Over Votes (2), Under Votes (105)  
Position 3: Joel R. Peterson (326), Abe McNamee (289), Write-in (1), Over Votes (3), Under Votes (104)  
Morrow County Health District  
Position 1: Annetta L. Spicer (396), Scott Ezell (206), Write-in (3), Under Votes (118)  
Position 2: Russel Nichols (305), Diane Kilkenny (147), Molly F. Rhea (146), Write-in (4), Over Votes (5), Under Votes (116)  
Position 3: Janet Greenup (330), Donna Rietmann (239), Write-in (5), Under Votes (149)  
Position 4: Jason Hanna (255), Laura Torres (233), Raymond Seastone (102), Write-in (4), Over Votes (5), Under Votes (124)  
Measure 25-104: Yes (353), No (343), Under Votes (27)

**Heppner**  
(Total Ballots: 857)  
Port of Morrow Commissioner  
Position 1: Rick Stokoe (307), J. Fletcher Hobbs (204), Heather Bishop (162), Write-in (5), Under Votes (179)  
Position 2: Danny Kerns (406), Raymond Seastone (243), Heather Bishop (173), Write-in (1), Over Votes (199)  
Position 3: Joel R. Peterson (562), Abe McNamee (177), Write-in (5), Under Votes (113)  
Morrow County Health District  
Position 1: Annetta L. Spicer (586), Scott Ezell

(195), Write-in (4), Over Votes (1), Under Votes (71)  
Position 2: Russel Nichols (609), Molly F. Rhea (221), Diane Kilkenny (16), Under Votes (10)  
Position 3: Janet Greenup (680), Donna Rietmann (144), Write-in (4), Under Votes (29)  
Position 4: Jason Hanna (617), Laura Torres (120), Raymond Seastone (72), Write-in (6), Over Votes (1), Under Votes (41)

**Ione**  
(Total Ballots: 262)  
Port of Morrow Commissioner  
Position 1: Rick Stokoe (105), Heather Bishop (54), J. Fletcher Hobbs (51), Over Votes (1), Under Votes (51)  
Position 2: Danny Kerns (141), Raymond Seastone (76), Under Votes (45)  
Position 3: Joel R. Peterson (183), Abe McNamee (70), Under Votes (9)  
Morrow County Health District  
Position 1: Annetta L. Spicer (138), Scott Ezell (92), Write-in (1), Under Votes (31)  
Position 2: Russel Nichols (153), Molly F. Rhea (97), Diane Kilkenny (9), Under Votes (3)  
Position 3: Janet Greenup (148), Donna Rietmann (104), Write-in (2), Over Votes (1), Under Votes (7)  
Position 4: Jason Hanna (161), Laura Torres (59), Raymond Seastone (25), Under Votes (17)

**Irrigon**  
(Total Ballots: 711)  
Port of Morrow Commissioner  
Position 1: Rick Stokoe (235), J. Fletcher Hobbs (205), Heather Bishop (173), Write-in (1), Over Votes (1), Under Votes (96)  
Position 2: Danny Kerns (328), Raymond Seastone (261), Write-in (1), Over Votes (1), Under Votes (120)  
Position 3: Abe McNamee (408), Joel R. Peterson

(202), Under Votes (101)  
Morrow County Health District  
Position 1: Scott Ezell (341), Annetta L. Spicer (252), Over Votes (1), Under Votes (117)  
Position 2: Molly F. Rhea (253), Russel Nichols (205), Diane Kilkenny (115), Under Votes (138)  
Position 3: Donna Rietmann (293), Janet Greenup (267), Write-in (1), Under Votes (150)  
Position 4: Raymond Seastone (226), Jason Hanna (185), Laura Torres (163), Under Votes (137)  
Measure 25-104: Yes (330), No (362), Under Votes (19)

**Lexington**  
(Total Ballots: 269)  
Port of Morrow Commissioner  
Position 1: Rick Stokoe (97), J. Fletcher Hobbs (70), Heather Bishop (42), Write-in (1), Over Votes (1), Under Votes (58)  
Position 2: Danny Kerns (151), Raymond Seastone (49), Under Votes (69)  
Position 3: Joel R. Peterson (182), Abe McNamee (62), Under Votes (25)  
Morrow County Health District  
Position 1: Annetta L. Spicer (165), Scott Ezell (67), Under Votes (37)  
Position 2: Russel Nichols (170), Molly F. Rhea (81), Diane Kilkenny (12), Over Votes (1), Under Votes (5)  
Position 3: Janet Greenup (198), Donna Rietmann (58), Over Votes (1), Under Votes (12)  
Position 4: Jason Hanna (188), Laura Torres (40), Raymond Seastone (28), Under Votes (13)  
Measure 25-104: Yes (119), No (127), Under Votes (18)

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# Ione High School Class of 2025



Ariona Looney



Brayden McNeil



Kyle McGill



Michael McElligott



Victoria De La Torre



## GRADUATION:

**Friday, June 6, at 7 p.m**  
**Ione School Gymnasium**

## BACCALAURATE

**Wednesday, June 4, 6pm**  
**Ione Community Church**

**CONGRATULATIONS**  
**CLASS OF 2025!**

**Ione Senior Class**  
**Motto:**  
*“2025 We made it out alive.”*