



the HEPPNER GAZETTE TIMES

50¢



VOL. 145 NO.26 8 Pages Wednesday, June 25, 2025 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

Taylor retires as Port commissioner

By Andrea Di Salvo

Outgoing Port of Morrow Commission President Joe Taylor was recognized for his service at the Port's regular meeting earlier this month. Taylor is retiring after 20 years on the Port commission.

POM Commission Vice-President John Murray presented a plaque to Taylor at the Port's June 11 meeting.

"I've come to appreciate in Morrow County what I call 'country gentlemen,'" said Murray. "People that are generally softspoken, kind and generous, thoughtful, and they speak after they think. I've really appreciated that about Joe, and I consider him a very country gentleman."

Danny Kearns of Boardman was elected to fill the commission vacancy left by Taylor's retirement.

Also at the meeting, the POM Commission held a public budget hearing. There was no public comment, and the five-member board voted unanimously to adopt and appropriate the budget for the coming fiscal year. The total budget amount is \$713,795,193.

In that budget are the general fund at \$5,316,595, freshwater fund at \$144,478,338, water discharge fund at \$493,467,286, site development and maintenance fund at \$49,132,274, motor pool fund at \$3,306,000, SAGE Center fund at \$2,309,700 and warehousing fund at 15,785,000.

The Port commission also approved resolutions on budget appropriation transfers, utility rates and raising the rail tariff from



Joe Taylor (right) with John Murray at the Port of Morrow's June 11 meeting. Taylor is retiring from the POM Commission after 20 years. -Contributed photo

\$30 to \$33. Port HR Manager/Executive Assistant Brandy Warburton also told the commissioners that the staff had created a series of videos to help familiarize staff with the Port of Morrow and how it functions.

"I just don't think a lot of them understand all of that, and some of them are born and raised here," she said.

"That's the first question I ask during an interview, 'Tell me what you know about the Port of Morrow,'" she added. "And they don't know anything."

Warburton said they already had videos on the website about the story of the Port of Morrow, human resources, safety, etc. The final video, still under production, will present the organizational structure, beginning with the Port Commission.

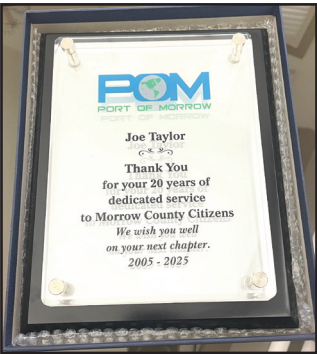
Murray suggested that some of the general videos would also be useful to teach the public about the Port and its operations

"It's a good way to get the word out there," said

Kirby Garrett and Ryann Gleason of CFM Advocates gave the commissioners updates on the federal and state legislative scene. Specifically, Gleason addressed state legislation like HB 2025, a proposed transportation package now in committee, and SB 1154, which addresses problems with groundwater quality.

During the update, Port Commissioner Kelly Doherty questioned why the Port would remain neutral on bills that affect water quality, such as SB 1154, saying the Port plays a large role in the area's groundwater management.

Murray echoed her sentiments.



A picture of the plaque given to Taylor. -Contributed Photo

timents.

"The Port's kind of turning out that to be a leader in trying to deal with the water issue, whether it's through the consortium or our own efforts and spending money to treat our water," he said, "so our opinion might carry some weight over issues, especially if we're successful moving forward, which I wholeheartedly expect."

Also at the meeting, the POM commissioners heard an update on the Columbia Development Authority from CDA Executive Director Greg Smith.

Smith said the CDA budget committee approved a draft budget, which was presented to the CDA board for review at its last meeting. The CDA board members agreed to present the budget to their respective boards and bring back any suggestions for budget adoption, which was on the agenda for June 24.

Smith also reported that the CDA was finalizing an agreement for road construction.

"In very short order, you're going to start seeing dozers and backhoes out there for the construction of an approximately \$12 million road," he said.

He added that he directed IRZ and Anderson Perry to hold back 30 percent of the funding to ensure the project doesn't go over budget.

"As we get closer to needing that 30 percent, we'll make a decision on how best to proceed," said Smith, "but at the end of the day, I'd rather have a

-Continued to PAGE SEVEN

Heppner athletes compete in first-ever 2A nine-man all-star game



(L-R) Zack Brown, Jamie Cavan and Nick Wenberg. -Photo by Susan Hisler

Heppner High School athletes Nick Wenberg (#23), Jaime Cavan (#50), and Zack Brown (#42) represented their school in the inaugural 2A East-West Nine-Man All-Star Football Game on Saturday, June 21, at Community Stadium on the campus of Eastern

Oregon University in La Grande.

The game was part of the Oregon Athletic Coaches Association's annual all-star football event, which also featured the 34th annual eight-man and fourth annual six-man all-star games.

-Continued to PAGE EIGHT

MCHD severance figures remain unclear amid public dispute

In response to Jimmy Wimer's letter to the editor last week, former Morrow County Health District CEO Emily Roberts and former MCHD CFO/COO Nicole Mahoney contacted the Heppner Gazette-Times to state that the figures he claimed were incorrect and to request a correction.

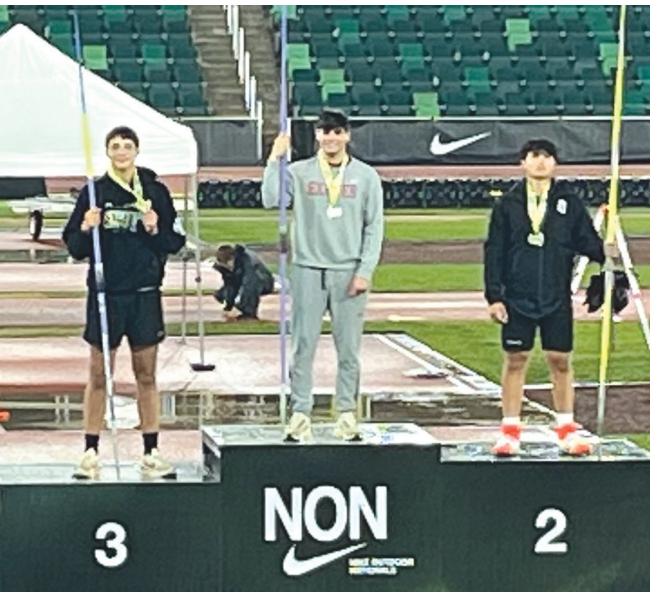
Wimer, who works in diagnostic imaging at Pioneer Memorial Hospital, stated in his letter,

"Emily Roberts resigned on March 30, and Nicole Mahoney's last day was June 13. Despite resigning, they were rewarded with severance packages totaling \$440,000 for Ms. Roberts and \$370,000 for Ms. Mahoney."

Roberts and Mahoney claimed the actual amounts are inaccurate and substantially lower. The Ga-

-Continued to PAGE SIX

Humphreys takes third at Nike Outdoor Nationals



(L) Chris Humphreys of Heppner placed third in javelin at the Nike Outdoor Nationals June 21 in Eugene. -Contributed photo

Heppner athlete Christopher Humphreys continued his competitive summer when he represented his town and state this past weekend at the prestigious Nike Outdoor Nationals, held June 21 in Eugene, OR.

Competing in the Emerging Elite division for javelin, Humphreys went up against some of the top

high school throwers from across the country.

Out of a competitive field of 53 athletes, Humphreys earned an impressive third-place finish with a throw of 178 feet, 8 inches. The event's top mark came from a thrower out of New Hampshire, who took first place with a throw of 182 feet, 5 inches.

Rep. Smith facilitates funding for clean water in West Glen neighborhood



Rep. Greg Smith

SALEM, OR. – Tuesday, Rep. Gregory Smith (R-Heppner), Co-Vice Chair of the Joint Ways and Means Committee, voted to approve critical funding for the West Glen Subdivision located in Boardman, OR.

The Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction passed HB 5006, which appropriates \$2,861,000 to the Morrow Clean Water Consortium Nitrate Water Project in West Glen.

The Morrow County Clean Water Consortium is an intergovernmental agreement between the Port of Morrow and Morrow County dedicated to funding, developing and building projects that serve residences affected by the elevated nitrate levels in

the Lower Umatilla Basin.

This funding will be used to connect West Glen to the City of Boardman, reducing reliance on unregulated and unreliable domestic wells.

"Everyone has the right to clean air and safe, accessible water. This funding allocation marks a vital step toward ensuring that residents of West Glen and the Greater Lower-Umatilla Basin have reliable access to clean water," said Smith.

As a member of the same committee, House Republican Leader Christine Drazan (R-Canby) stated, "Representative Smith has been a tireless advocate for our shared Republican priorities, and his leadership on HB 5006 is a clear example of that commitment. He spearheaded efforts to ensure that critical investments reflect the values of our communities, chief among them, access to clean and safe water for every Oregonian."

"His work has made a real difference for rural families across the Umatilla Basin and beyond," Drazan said.

Representatives of Morrow County were pleased to learn of the fund-

ing package.

"Representative Greg Smith has been a steadfast advocate for Morrow County and our ongoing efforts to address water quality challenges. His leadership on this issue has brought critical resources to the table and reflects a deep commitment to the health and well-being of our communities," said Morrow County Commissioner Jeff Wenholtz.

"I am very happy this money has been awarded. As chairman of the Morrow County Clean Water Consortium, I can say we are looking forward to using these funds for actual infrastructure projects to help alleviate the nitrate drinking water problems in the county," said Morrow County Commission Chair David Sykes.

Smith is a Republican budget leader who represents the entirety of Morrow, Gilliam, Sherman, Wheeler and Wasco counties, as well as portions of Clackamas, Jefferson, Marion and Umatilla Counties.

Smith was elected to serve his 13th term as a State Representative, making him the longest-serving member in the Oregon

Legislature, as well as the fourth longest-serving state representative in Oregon history. He holds a gavel as the Co-Chair of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on General Government. Representative Smith also serves as the Co-Vice Chair of the full Joint Ways and Means Committee. Additionally, he is the ranking member of the House Revenue Committee.

To reach out, visit Rep Smith's Facebook Page or send him an email at rep.gregsmith@oregonlegislature.gov.

START THE YEAR
OFF ROAD
SALES EVENT

\$2,000 OFF
UP TO **\$2,000 OFF** SELECT POLARIS XPEDITION MODELS
OR
FINANCING AS LOW AS 0.99% APR FOR 36 MOS

POLARIS

Morrow County Grain Growers Inc.

CALL
541-989-8221
ext 204
for more
information

WARNINGS: Polaris® off-road vehicles can be hazardous to operate and are not intended for on-road use. Driver must be at least 16 years old with a valid driver's license to operate. Passengers, if permitted, must be at least 12 years old. All riders should always wear helmets, eye protection, and protective clothing. Always use seat belts and call belts or doors (as equipped). Never engage in stunt driving, and avoid excessive speeds and sharp turns. Riding and accessories don't mix. All riders should take a safety training course. Call 800-342-5764 for additional information. Check local laws before riding on trails. ©2022 Polaris Inc.

POLARIS | OFF ROAD