

# County wants to avoid 'stubbed toe' with Amazon

Morrow County commissioners seek help in negotiations over new data centers

By ERICK PETERSON  
Hermiston Herald

Morrow County is looking to hire an attorney for negotiations with Amazon as the company readies for a \$12 billion investment in five new data centers.

Amazon intends to build these five new data centers in the county, adding to its existing four centers, as part of a \$12-billion project. This project stands to create hundreds of jobs in the area, but there are some questions about taxes to which Amazon is subject.

The topic came up in a Wednesday, May 4, Morrow County Board of Commissioners meeting. Commissioners Jim Doherty and Melissa Lindsay spoke of the need to "get it right" when negotiating with Amazon. They said they have begun looking for attorneys for less than \$10,000 worth of services to review agreements and consider options.

District Attorney Justin Nel-

son pulls double duty as the county counsel. He made suggestions for potential attorneys, including lawyers who have experience representing Oregon counties against large tech companies Google and Intel.

The vote to seek and retain counsel was 2-0, with Commissioner Don Russell recusing himself and abstaining due to a conflict of interest.

## Amazon makes \$11M gift after county errs

The day after the board meeting, Doherty and Lindsay discussed the matter further.

"We embarked on a negotiation on a \$12 billion project, frankly one of the largest in Oregon," Doherty said.

He added he and Lindsay realized then this was a "colossal undertaking."

Looking back at previous negotiations, he said, commissioners realized the county had "an \$11 million oops" — the county had not collected \$11 million it could have if it had forged a better deal with Amazon.

For its part, Doherty said, Amazon made an \$11-million gift pay-

ment to the county.

"They didn't certainly have to (make the gift payment), so I appreciate that they did," he said.

He added that Amazon, with all of its economists and lawyers, has a superior understanding of deals with the county.

"They have a fleet of attorneys," he said.

Meanwhile, he added, Nelson's primary responsibilities do not include dealings with Amazon. And Nelson is the lone prosecutor in the county after his deputy, Richard Tovey, left to become Hermiston's city attorney.

With the lack of representation, the county was at a disadvantage, Doherty said, and it was conceivable Morrow County would "stub our toe" in a new deal.

"The potential for a colossal mistake is out there," he said.

Nelson agreed his office has been overworked lately, due to his missing deputy. As such, he said, he has not been handling as many county counsel duties as he had in the past.

He said that a new attorney, contracted for a specific job, can step in and help, where needed.

It will represent the county apart from a local enterprise, which includes Boardman and the Port of Morrow, and has its own counsel.

Doherty said the expense of a new lawyer is worth the \$10,000 or less the county would be spending. He posited this money could pay for up to 20 hours of work from a good attorney.

If it turns out the \$10,000 is not enough, Morrow County will undertake a competitive bid process, he said.

Lindsay said Morrow County is capable. This is not, she said, a "David-versus-Goliath situation" in which a tiny entity is battling an overwhelmingly larger one. With the right counsel, she said, Morrow County can hold its own.

Nor is this a matter of Morrow County "lawyering up," she said. The county's dealings with Amazon, she said, are not confrontational.

"When you say 'lawyering up,' it sounds like doors start to slam, conversations stop happening," she said. "It sounds like a battle. This isn't, in my mind, a battle where we're lawyering up. It's a situation where they have

high-powered economists and lawyers analyzing with their best interests in mind, and I think that we have to do the same so that we come to a similar place at the negotiation table."

She said by May 12 she and Nelson will have selected an attorney. And she has reached out to Oregon economists for additional analysis and advice. These two moves, she said, puts Morrow County in a better position with Amazon.

## A question of bonds

Doherty said he would like to get more out of Amazon in future deals. Amazon, he said, is not contributing to local bonds, thanks to agreements put into contracts since 2017. As such, school, fire and water bonds have missed Amazon contributions.

"I always thought they should have paid into them," Doherty said.

This Election Day, Morrow County voters are weighing a \$138 million school bond. According to the United States Securities And Exchange Commission, Amazon for 2021 reported total revenue of \$469.8 billion.

# Boardman Fire Rescue District breaks ground on a new building

ERICK PETERSON  
Hermiston Herald

Construction of a new fire station is underway for the Boardman Fire Rescue District, and it cannot come soon enough for Fire Chief Mike Hughes.

"I want to thank our communities, industries, businesses and community leaders for supporting us and making this project able to happen," Hughes said.

The station is made possible by a November 2020 \$8.475 million bond, which also is covering the cost of new equipment, the chief said.

Costs, he added, have pushed the budget over the bond amount, which has

caused the district to cut out certain "niceties" and search for sponsorships. The current price tag of the building, being built at the corner of Southwest Willow Fork Drive and Tatone Street, Boardman, is \$7.1 million.

The Port of Morrow is among the sponsors, Hughes said, as it has helped with "dirt work," preparing for construction. Other organizations have assisted, too, he said.

"Anyone who is interested in being part of the fire station, we're going to welcome them," he said.

He said the new station will replace a 50-year-old station that was built for volunteer service. Now, he said, a professional, full-time set

of firefighters works there, and they need something better.

"This new station is going to be our headquarter station, so it's going to house all the apparatus, the firefighters 24 hours a day, the administrative offices and a community room."

He said the plan is for the community room to serve as a training room and board meeting space. Plans also include using the community room as a public classroom.

Hughes added that the dis-

trict plans to maintain ownership of the current building for service and maintenance on district vehicles, then lease part of the building to another tenant. He said that it makes sense to hold onto the building, located at 300 Wilson Road, Boardman, even after it is replaced.

"I believe in years to come, as Boardman continues to grow at the rate it is, we'll end up putting our administrative offices back into those buildings," he said.



Boardman Fire Rescue District/Contributed Photo  
An artist's rendition of a fire station shows what is in the works for the Boardman Fire Rescue District. It is seeking sponsorships to help pay for it.

# Former Boardman mayor remembered for his service

ERICK PETERSON  
Hermiston Herald

Ed Glenn, former Boardman mayor and city councilor, died April 24, at 81.

The city of Boardman's website memorialized Glenn as "a strong community supporter who called the city of Boardman



Glenn

home." It stated that he was on the council 2003 to 2005. He was mayor 2005 to 2008.

"The city of Boardman is grateful for his service, and send our sympathies to his family," the website added.

Paul Keefer, Boardman's current mayor, said Glenn "will be greatly missed in Boardman."

"He was a man of great integrity and called it as it was," Keefer said. "He was a straight shooter and you always knew that Boardman was a very special place for him and his family."

Keefer stated that he met Glenn in 2000, and he remembers Glenn as having been "actively engaged in Boardman's city government."

"His example and leadership are a constant reminder for me as I work to be mayor

of Boardman," Keefer said. "Ed set the example for me and others to be involved within your community."

He added that he will "truly miss this great man who I am honored to call my friend."

Early comments to his obituary, posted at burnsmortuaryhermiston.com, were positive. They included statements about Glenn's professionalism and goodness. One person said she enjoyed time with him at League of Oregon Cities, others stated that they lit candles in remembrance.

"We had many ups and downs over the years, but Ed was certainly never afraid to ask the difficult questions and was steadfastly supportive of the city of Boardman," stated another response, credited to Ray and Carol Michael of San Luis Obispo, California.

Glenn's obituary calls him a "Boardman proponent," born in 1941 in Enterprise, and described him as a "modern-day Renaissance man," who was a public defender, trial lawyer, commercial wine producer and more.

According to his obituary, he is survived by his wife, Francis Glenn, as well as children, grandchildren and other loved ones.

# South Morrow County plans yard sales

Hermiston Herald

The first of two community-wide yard sales is this weekend in South Morrow County.

People can head to Hepner, Lone and Lexington for an opportunity to find bargains and treasures. The official event is 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Friday, May 13, and Saturday, May 14. Fliers with

locations of sales will be available in businesses in the three towns. In addition, many participants will erect signage about their sales.

The second event is planned for June 10-11. For more information, search [www.facebook.com/groups/734380197273578](http://www.facebook.com/groups/734380197273578) or contact Whitney Hague-wood via Facebook/Messenger.

## HIV isn't just a big city issue.

More than half of Oregonians with HIV live outside of Portland, often in suburbs and small towns like this one.

Good neighbors chip in to get the job done. And we've got work to do on HIV prevention. People in rural Oregon are more likely to get a late-stage diagnosis, and a lack of HIV treatment may harm your health, or your partner's. Detected early, HIV is more easily managed and you can live a long, healthy life. Getting tested is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Learn more and find free testing at [endhivoregon.org](http://endhivoregon.org)

