

What to do?

Heppner merchants show concern about recent bad check cases

Morrow County District Attorney, Dennis Doherty, told the Heppner Merchants Association that the new community atmosphere will affect the merchants ability to accept checks and open new charge accounts. In recent weeks several bad checks have been passed in Heppner and the merchants are becoming aware of future possibilities that more checks will be passed.

At the regular noon luncheon of the Merchants Association, state police, sheriff, city police and the district attorney presented their views on the course of action the merchants should take to prevent getting "stuck".

Oregon law states that it is a crime for a person to make, pass or draw a check knowing that it will not be honored. It becomes difficult trying to prove that the person knowingly passed the check as the law also states a person is innocent until his guilt is proven beyond a reasonable doubt.

Doherty stated further that to help prosecute and prove beyond a reasonable doubt, the merchants assistance is needed. When accepting checks from persons new to the area, four simple steps should be taken. In the upper left corner of the check have the employee or owner accepting the check put his or her initials, the drivers license number of the person cashing the check, address or other identification of the individual and if any change was given over the purchase price. A drivers license number when run through the computer will give enforcement agencies the information necessary to identify the person and perhaps where to locate the offender.

A merchant receiving a NSF check should notify the writer by registered mail of the NSF check and allow 10 days for payment. In the meantime however, the district attorney should be notified. If after 10 days restitution is not made, further action may be then be taken.

Doherty and the other law enforcement officers in attendance, stressed that merchants take extreme care in accepting 3rd party checks, out of state checks and checks from strangers unless they carry a bank courtesy card or other suitable evidence of competency. If suspicious of an individual, try to obtain his car license and then notify the city police or other enforcement people and they can stop

them for a routine check. If an individual doesn't give the needed information freely, the merchant can be sure that something is amiss.

It is difficult, costly and often a waste of time to try to prosecute unless the merchant has obtained the above mentioned information, stated Doherty. A person who has passed a bad check and moved to another state can only be extradited if the necessary information is available. If the check amount was for less than \$200 it is a misdemeanor and the offender cannot be extradited.

Other pitfalls facing the merchants are shoplifters and proving who may have the right of possession in a conditional sales contract. Apprehending a shoplifter may prove very costly as in many suits the defendants have been awarded large sums of money for his "embarrassment" for being stopped and accused.

Right of possession in a conditional sales contract depends upon a determination of a specific agreement to the contrary, a person in lawful possession of property shall be deemed to have a superior right of possession to that of a person having only a security interest, even if legal title to the property lies with the holder of the security interest pursuant to a conditional sales contract or other security agreement.

Ken Belcher, Manager of the Heppner Branch, First National Bank of Oregon expressed concern with the use of counter checks. He stated that this branch is the only one in the State of Oregon that still issues counter checks. He recommended the use of counter checks be discontinued here also. It may cause some inconvenience for a short period of time but in the long run would be well worth it. He further stated that when in doubt, the use of a bank charge card would be better than accepting a doubtful check.

The merchants are presently studying a proposal to unite and have a standard form for new people in the area to fill out when writing checks. This form would contain all the information needed by law enforcement agencies to start proceedings if necessary.

When in doubt, contact the law enforcement agencies or the district attorney for assistance.



BLOOMING TREES herald the arrival of spring. Area residents are anxiously awaiting warmer weather and blossoming trees that will soon appear locally.

May get costly

New city reservoir location in doubt

Over a period of time the city attorney's office and the City Engineer have tried to negotiate with the Parker Hosmit Corporation for the reservoir site near the high school, and we have now reached an impasse," said Mayor Sweeney, speaking before the Heppner Common Council on Monday night.

"We talk about deadlines once in a while and this is a deadline," continued Mayor Sweeney, as the newly formed negotiation committee composed of Robert Jones, Ray Boyce and Jim Rogers will have to submit firm figures to the council by April 14. The committee is to meet with representatives of the Parker Hosmit Corporation in an effort to negotiate the terms of the reservoir site.

"On April 16, the bid for the reservoir has to be awarded, and if it is not awarded it will cost the community thousands of dollars, with the possibility of never getting a reservoir," said Sweeney.

The contractor who submitted the low bid was \$6,500 lower than the next low bidder for the project and if the project has to be resubmitted, he will probably raise his price \$6,500.

Sweeney continued, "To resubmit the bids, Mr. Anderson tells me will conservatively cost the city \$3,000, this includes the necessary advertising and to revise the job." So if it goes beyond the April 16 deadline, we have lost \$10,000 plus we have lost 30 days of work time.

Sweeney continued, "There is also the possibility of never receiving another bid as this one, for the time element would make it impossible to get the same type of bid."

"Whether we get the reservoir or not depends on reaching a negotiated agreement with this corporation by April 15, and it would have to be signed by them," said Sweeney.

"If neither party can reach an agreement that is fair and equitable to the City as well as the Parker Hosmit corporation, then under the judicial system of the State of Oregon, a judge would decide the case, and you will be bound by what he tells you," said Sweeney.

"We are spending the taxpayers money and the council should bear in mind that their duty is to the taxpayer first. All we can do is hope a

decision is reached prior to the special meeting of April 14. At that time everything must be signed by both parties," said Sweeney.

Council members met with representatives of the corporation last night (Wednesday) to negotiate the terms. They were represented by Steve Anderson, city engineer and by counsel at that time.

Three alteration and repair permits were approved by the council: (1) alteration to place steel siding on home of Arnold Springer, 545, Jones St., estimated cost when completed \$3,000; (2) alteration of Masonic building for the expansion of Gardner's Mens Store, estimated cost when completed \$3,000; (3) construct and replace roof on dwelling of Robert Schuman, 315 Linden Way, estimated cost \$3,500.

County Planner David Moon appeared before the council and told the council that failure to present the City Planning Commission with plans for the new clinic site was an oversight on his part. He thought the approval of the building site by the common council with the recommendation of the planning commission was sufficient. However, the city gave their approval with the stipulation that plans for the proposed building site be approved by the planning commission. The plans were presented recently to the planning commission and they plan to meet this week to approve the plans. Construction has started on the new clinic site.

City Engineer, Steve Anderson commented on the possible reconstruction of a new

bridge on Morgan Street, and gave an estimated cost of \$3,000 for the construction of a new concrete bridge if federal funds are available to pay the remainder of the costs. Federal funds will pay for 90 per cent of the construction and the cost to the city for the remaining 10 per cent will amount to \$5,000. Anderson also pointed out that the existing bridge could possibly be repaired by the city crews, however, the bridge is narrow and perhaps in another three years would require more expense and maintenance.

A letter of assurance was read to the council from Pacific Northwest Bell stating that they and their contractors are bonded and they see no reason why they should have to post an additional \$1,000 bond for the work they are planning to complete in the area.

City Attorney, Robert Abrams, informed the council that quick results were achieved when Pacific Northwest Bell had been notified they would be required to post bonds for work within the city limits. He also recommended the council accept the letter of assurance and forego the posting of the \$1,000 bond.

The Chief of Police report for the month of March consisted of the following: arrests, 1; reckless driving, 1; minor in possession, 1; disorderly conduct, 4. Money collected from parking meters \$217.45.

Robert Lowe, representing Pioneer Memorial Hospital, asked the council for a stop sign to be placed near the vicinity of Thompson St., and the road to the subdivision, as some of the residents are driving at excessive speeds. Lowe also requested a sign with the words "Slow" and "Quiet" be placed near the hospital zone. He also requested the city investigate the possibility of widening the road near the hospital adjacent to the Rev. Godin's house to help alleviate the traffic problem. Lowe recommended the city widen the street on the hospital side four feet. He further asked that the new pavement be sealed as there are many cracks and a seal coat would prevent any further damage to the roadway. Lowe further recommended the city locate and identify all city water valves within the

homes increased in assessed value a little more than the average, whereas the older homes increased a little less than the average. In some instances greater increases in assessed value reflected extensive remodeling or additions to the dwelling. Kletzer and Phillips each express their appreciation of the peoples cooperation in the re-inspection of their homes. The incidence of superficial inspections is less than 5 per cent. The complete records of the Morrow County Assessors office were of special benefit as well as the cooperation of the assessor and his personnel.

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THE GAZETTE-TIMES

Vol. 92, No. 8

Heppner, OR., Apr. 10, 1975

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County earns interest

Due to the unusually high interest rates during the latter part of fiscal year 1973-74 and the early part of 1974-75, the County Treasurer has been able to earn extra income for the county.

Sylvia McDaniel reports that the total interest earnings during 1973-74 was \$18,274. This amount was surpassed between July 1, 1974 and April 1, 1975 when the interest income amounted to \$21,827. She explained that the funds benefiting from the interest income are: the county general fund, the county road fund, the revenue sharing fund and the county fair fund. By investing some of the funds early at the higher rates the county gained extra interest before the lower rates. "Rapidly falling interest rates are great for borrowers, but the county treasury will feel the difference," Mrs. McDaniel points out.

Wine tasting Saturday

Saturday this area's first wine-tasting party will be held from 2 until 8 p.m. at the Elk's Club. Seven different varieties of Oregon wine and eight varieties of Bandon, Oregon cheeses will be offered to those who attend.

The Seroptomist members have been selling tickets in person and through the mail for several weeks. Tickets will be on sale at the door also. Joseph Coulombe is the evening's wine master. The proceeds are slated for the club's scholarship program.

During and after the party bottles of the various wines and one-half pound loaves of the Bandon cheese may be purchased.

Wine expert Coulombe is a member of both the Oregon Wine Grower's Association and the Wine Grower's Council of Oregon and is helping promote grape growing and winemaking on a commercial basis in Oregon. He teaches winemaking and winetasting at several colleges and at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry.

Pickets halt completion of Gourmet Food plant

Carpenters of Local 933, Hermiston went on strike against Techbuilt Corporation last Friday at noon and shortly afterwards pickets were placed at the scene of Gourmet Foods new plant in Boardman.

The dispute arose over the payroll checks the men are receiving and the refusal of the local banks to cash them. Presently the checks must be deposited for collection only and are sent either to Bellevue or Seattle, Wa., for collection. The present process takes from seven to nine days before the carpenters receive their wages.

Normally a week's wages are withheld from the carpenters as a waiting period, however, with the added delay the men feel they have to wait at least three weeks before they can cash their checks. Other crafts working in the area completed their work day although the carpenters formed a picket line. Plumbers and fitters shifted to work the swing shift Friday honored the carpenters picket line and refused to cross the line.

Presently there are two shifts of plumbers and fitters working on the completion of

the plant, which according to estimates should be completed in another two to three weeks.

Until a settlement is reached, and negotiations are completed the other crafts working on the project will honor the picket line.

According to reports Techbuilt Corporation is suffering financial difficulties and the payroll money is deposited with the local bank by the Unigard Bonding Company.

Spokesmen for either firm could not be reached for comment.



PICKETS OF CARPENTERS LOCAL 933 stand in front of the Gourmet Food Plant in Boardman. The pickets are striking against Techbuilt Corporation, builders of the new plant. The men are, from the left, Leo Lytle, Buck Sullivan, business agent of the local and Ira Bozarth. The sign held by Bozarth reads, "On Strike Carpenters L-933, Techbuilt Corp. checks not cashable."