

At Chamber

# State engineer explains gas tax

If Measure 8, the gas tax bill, passes in November, then the city of Heppner should gain \$7,090 and the county should receive \$44,056 during the 1977-79 biennium, state Highway Engineer Pat Schwartz told the Heppner-Morrow County Chamber of Commerce Monday.

Schwartz presented a slide show and answered questions from the chamber patrons at the Monday lunch meeting.

Measure 8, on the November 2 general election ballot, is a referral of a bill passed by the 1975 Oregon Legislature. A yes vote will mean that the state gas tax will be increased a penny a gallon; the weight-mile taxes paid by trucks and buses will be increased by 26 per cent; and the increases will take place on January 1, 1977.

The current seven cents a gallon state gas tax has been in effect since 1967 and the weight-mile rates for trucks and buses has been in since 1963.

Passage of the measure will result in trucks and buses paying a larger share of state road taxes in relation to automobiles. Schwartz said the ideal is a one-third for trucks and buses and a two-thirds for automobiles.

The measure would raise an additional \$49 million during the next biennium, 32 per cent of which will go to Oregon cities and counties for local street and road work.

By law, all revenue must be used for state, city and county road maintenance and reconstruction. No revenue can be used for State Police, State Parks, or other agencies and programs partially or fully funded by the state highway department fund.

Passage of the measure will cost the average Oregon motorist less than \$8 a year and even if it passes, Oregon motorists will still pay the lowest car related taxes in the eleven western states.

Schwartz told the chamber that roads should be resurfaced every 14 to 20 years. In 1969, 140 miles of Oregon roads were repaved at about \$29,000 a mile. In 1975, 55 miles of roads were repaved at \$80,000 a mile.

Schwartz said 500 miles should be repaved each year to keep up with road deterioration.

Schwartz said that the increase from the tax is needed for a combination of reasons. He said inflation, reduced growth in revenue, greater passenger and freight traffic

and increased diversion of highway funds to other agencies were some of the reasons.

The highway department funds the state police for 75

per cent of that agency's total budget. The highway department pays for 100 per cent of the state patrol's traffic control costs, yet it receives none

of the money from traffic fines.

Twelve cents out of every highway fund dollar goes to Oregon cities and 20 cents to the counties if the measure passes. Cities and counties use this money for their own road and street construction and maintenance. If Measure 8 passes, Oregon cities will receive \$5.7 million and counties will receive \$9.6 million in additional road money during the 1977-79 biennium.

A recent highway division study indicated passage of Measure 8 would result in trucks paying their fair share of road taxes. Weight-mile on trucks would increase 26 per cent while the gas tax will increase 14 per cent.



Julie Nelson, right, and Liz Ernst, chairman of the Levi Ball, prepare decorations for the Oct. 9 event. The dance, is set for 9 p.m. with Depot 11



Delvin Matteson, a scaler in the log yard for Kinzua, was presented a gold watch by plant superintendent Harry Kennison, at his retirement dinner Sept. 29. Matteson, a resident of Heppner, had been with Kinzua for 22 years, five months

# City ups water rates, fire insurance goes down

While most Heppner water users have been slapped with another rate increase, the

second since July, some consolation may come in knowing that the city's fire insurance ratings have been bettered.

The Heppner Common Council Monday night, heard from two different persons, complaining about the present water rates and the proposed increase. But, the council agreed to increase water rates, five cents per thousand gallons from 14-90,000 gallons.

For a family of five with a garden, using about 35,000 gallons a month, that nickel increase represents a jump of about \$1.15 a month.

A housewife at the meeting was disgruntled with increasing prices.

"You got your levy, you raised the water and sewer, you approved a garbage increase, you approved a TV increase, the power and phone bill is up . . . I can't see how much more a family can put up with," she said.

When told of the \$1.15 increase, she said that "nickels add up. You can be nickeled so much till the nickels go over the limit."

The rate increase stemmed from the reduction of water rates for senior citizens in the community. Senior Citizen rates will be dropped back to the original \$3 minimum rate, before the \$3 jump approved in July.

(In July, the council approved a base increase of \$2 for water and \$1 for sewer.)

The resolution adopting the nickel increase passed by a 3-2 margin. The majority agreed that it was more equitable to raise the water rates than to go back to the property owners for additional money.

As the water rates went up, the city dwelling fire insurance rates will go down.

A half million dollar project that improved the city's fire protection was paid off this week as the Insurance Services of Oregon revised Heppner's fire rating from 6 to 7 for dwellings and from 6b to 7b for buildings other than dwellings.

The new rating would lower a fire insurance rate from \$128 to \$111 on a home valued at \$32,000. Merchants in commercial buildings will see a higher savings. One merchant picked at random on main street was slated to save over \$100 with the new rating.

Ray Boyce, councilman and insurance salesman, threw a wet rag on the little flame when he said that the rates would end up balancing out anyway. Fire insurance rates went up in March, he said. "Might as well tell it like it is," he said.

In other business, the council

cut to a tenth now. The council said there could be a possible rebate.

still hasn't decided whether to face the state's code on mobile home inspection or pay a fee. Ralph Marlatt of the city has taken his mobile home inspection tests and passed. But, even if Marlatt inspects the homes, the state wants 15 per cent of the inspection fee. The council does not want to give the state a cent. If the state comes in and inspects the homes, they will take 100 per cent of the fee.

Fight the state? "Somebody someday is going to have to do it," Cliff Green, councilman said, "or else give the city government to the state."

The maximum inspection fee is \$25. The council toyed with the idea of charging a \$1 inspection fee and sending the

state 15 cents. It was tabled, however, because the contract could not be found.

agreed to a 20 hour work week for the Heppner City Librarian. At present, the librarian is working a 15 hour week. The county came up with \$1700 to help finance the library and in the \$1700, it called for an extra five hours a week for the librarian. Her base salary will stay the same. The city balked at the county gift last month because they were not sure of dollar explanations. Pauline Winter, a member of the library board, explained the money breakdown and satisfied the council.

confirmed the appointments of Mike Grey to the city planning commission and Bill Rawlins and Pat Lande to the library board.

## THE GAZETTE-TIMES

### Editorial & Viewpoint

#### Is gas tax worth it?

It sounds like a good idea, but is it really?

It will be up to the good old taxpayer on November 2 to decide whether or not he or she wants to shell out another penny toward the state's Measure 8, gas tax.

Morrow County has been bickering and begging and asking and pleading to the state highway department for years . . . please fix our roads. But look at the roads.

As one man put it, some of the roads are cattle trails, designed back at the turn of the century for model Ts. Some look as if they haven't been improved since then, either.

Measure 8 is asking for a penny a gallon increase on the present, seven cents a gallon gas tax. It will accelerate road improvement?

In Morrow County, the tax would produce \$44,000 in the 1977-79 biennium. Heppner itself would gain a little over \$7,000.

According to the state highway department, roads in the area are beyond the patching stage. They need to be totally reconstructed, Pat Schwartz, state highway engineer, told the Heppner-Morrow County Chamber of Commerce.

Schwartz said that in 1975, 55 miles of road were repaved in Oregon at a cost of \$80,000 a mile. Now how far would that \$44,000 go? About a half mile!

Gasoline is taking a pretty big bite out of everyone's pocket these days. An additional penny probably wouldn't hurt too much . . . but how much could it really help?

The average Oregon driver will pay a little less than \$8 a year if the measure passes. How many other \$8 taxes will it take before something gets done?

The measure sounds good. It's probably a decent start. But the channeling of dollars to Morrow County just won't get the job done. It leaves a lot of questions unanswered.

If highways are not adequately maintained, they will quickly deteriorate. If you don't believe it, take a drive some time . . . if you have good shock absorbers.

Everybody depends on roads to get to and from work, school, recreation and even other means of transportation. Oregon's farm-forest-tourist economy is heavily dependent on good roads.

With no rail or bus service, Heppner residents are kind of stuck behind their four wheelers. It is up to the voter. Pay another penny, hoping this new deal is the start of something . . . or don't pay the extra \$8 a year and live with roads that haven't been improved much for the last decade anyway. wcp.

### Standards and measurements

Editor:

"The interview is over!" I heard a public official make that statement when a salesman offered a bribe in relation to a small culvert order on a road job.

The official never got re-elected, but he understood and had a fear of the man he shaved every morning.

This started a chain of questions I have thought about for 50 years. Reduce it to priorities and offer and acceptance in everyday living.

How about arson? As an example and exaggeration—which is worse, the man that starts the fire or the man who

hires him to do it. Are they equal or is one smart and one stupid? To what elevation or breadth? Or do you say this is not relative in today's world.

Such things are included in my standards and my measurements. An election is not a popularity contest, and I will vote for some people that I do not like personally. My prerogative, by the way.

To answer those questions that prompted this letter—I will vote Democratic in the county and state, selections that concern me most. I will, of course, monitor the office seeker's progress, no matter who is elected.

W.W. Weatherford

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## Inadequate jail

(Continued from Page 1)

There is no anteroom for prisoner delivery or for taking a prisoner out of jail.

The booking area of the jail is located in a public reception room: the sheriff's office. There is no fire suppression equipment in the jail; no provisions for special problems such as addicts, alcoholics or diseased prisoners except for a doctor on call.

There is no facility for attorneys to visit prisoners. The attorneys must also "walk in cold" into the jail or have the prisoner brought into the courthouse, a public room, for visitation.

Physically, the plumbing is exposed, pipes and wiring included, that could serve the purpose of hanging or strangling without much problem.

A shower in the jail is accessible to prisoners. However, the temperature control is left to the prisoner's desire. If he wanted to scald himself or another prisoner, he could.

Overhead in the jail, a pair of 220 volt heaters are exposed. Open light bulbs are exposed in the smaller cells, as well as plug ins.

The beds are not bolted down and, Doherty said, they could be "dismantled and used very well as a weapon."

There is no sound monitoring system, either.

"Nobody likes to see luxuries for prisoners," Doherty maintains, "but you can see that this is not adequate."

"It's not a matter of luxurious cells, but the facility should be safe."

Doherty pondered the situation. "Take somebody's husband that's gone over the edge some night," he said. "We want to bring him out the next day a better man."

Doherty said prisoners can be put in the cell for a very short time. There are no windows and it is a substantial risk, Doherty said, for officers to have to go inside.

He said that five out of every ten prisoners are violent. And, there are no other safe places to keep them . . . except through transporting.

Doherty is going to study the problems, including costs and alternatives and come back to the county court. At the least, he'd like to see a lock-up facility. Fetsch doubles up on Doherty's feelings.

Not only is the lack of a jail costing man hours and transportation money, it is costing the entire judicial process.

"Some people are released when they ought to be going to jail," Doherty said. "I do it myself . . . I'm sure the judges do it too."

Why? Because they have to think of total protection. If they think a man should spend a day or two in jail, he has to be transported to at least Hermiston. That's at least two hours out of one of the two officers' working day.

If it's for more than a day or two, then the prisoner must be transported to one of the other two facilities . . . farther away.

If an officer has to transport someone, it leaves the county sheriffless for that time. The duo that is already working overtime can't work 24 hours a day.

"We need lock-up facilities for at least overnight sentences," Doherty said. "Just so we don't have to disrupt police protection too much."

Between a rock and a hard place? A really hard place.