

County voters to consider cut version of school budget

By Tom Franks
Tuesday, May 24, county voters will be asked to vote on a significantly altered budget for operation of the Morrow County School District in the coming fiscal year.

Despite the need to seek an increase over the six per cent limitation, the budget being submitted Tuesday is nearly \$188,000 lower than the proposal defeated on April 19. Based on projected valuation, it will cost taxpayers 10 cents per thousand less than the current budget due to a projected county valuation increase of \$25 million and new Federal Forest Fees, just announced, which will bring in \$67,354. The school board voted Monday to apply the fees to reduce the levy by \$60,000.

The tax levy to appear on the ballot will be only ten cents less than last year, but the addition of the new forest fee

money will reduce the levy by 39 cents per thousand over last year. According to current estimates, it would cut about \$16,000 from the total which the owner of a \$40,000 home paid out for school support this year.

The result will be an average tax rate of approximately \$8.33, placing Morrow County in competition with Gilliam County for the cheapest tax rate in northeastern Oregon.

Budget cuts made since voters defeated the first request in April include nearly \$60,000 in supplies, services, equipment, musical instruments, uniforms for band and sports, furniture, and replacement items.

Included in the cuts were \$3,740 for band uniforms, \$2,200 for a proposed evaluation of Heppner High School by the Northwest Accrediting team, \$1,640 for a color video tape machine, \$1,700 planned

to replace carpet at Heppner Elementary School, \$1,600 for painting the elementary school, the shop and a boiler room, \$2,000 for air conditioners at Irrigon; \$1,800 for painting the old Heppner gym; \$2,400 for replacement of cafeteria tables at A.C. Houghton; \$1,000 for an electric piano at Riverside, \$4,000 for outside bleachers at Riverside; \$400 for a biology kit to be used in the science department at lone and numerous other items.

Largest single item was \$17,500 which was earmarked for the purchase of a 54-passenger school bus for the north end of the county. Another \$3,208 was cut from the budget by dropping collision insurance on all school busses. Public liability insurance is being maintained.

The increase in the current budget amounts to \$208,306 over last year for teacher

salaries. This includes \$66,000 for new teachers with the remainder going for salary increases based on recent teacher negotiations with the board.

Another \$34,819 is in the budget to cover full health insurance. Another \$17,000 is earmarked for supplies for the six new teachers in the fields of music, art, physical education and general classroom instruction. The figure also includes increases in other supply costs due to inflation.

The total increase in the proposed budget will be \$366,051. Compared with last year, there will be a \$31,970 increase in unemployment benefits and workmen's compensation. The contingency fund will remain unchanged at \$30,000.

The budget this year for the entire district was \$2,659,540. The increase of \$366,051 brings the budget request for the

coming year to \$3,025,591.00 less forest fees.

The overall result, counting forest fees, is that taxes to be levied under the May 24 election budget are nearly \$188,000 less than the request voted on in April.

Polls for the election May 24 will be open from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m. at school buildings in lone, Irrigon, Lexington, and Boardman. Heppner Elementary School is the designated polling place in Heppner.

The budget for the coming year includes \$84,147 for competitive interscholastic athletics. It was built on an expected enrollment of 1,560, but current projections call for 1,600 students.

Citizens who desire detailed information on the budget or have questions regarding expenditures or taxes may call the office of the superintendent in Lexington at 989-8123.



The music was "short, but sweet," a great lunch on a flimsy paper plate, and "home-fashioned" rain bonnets all added to the fun at last Sunday's HHS band concert in the park. The band, trying to raise money for uniforms, has rescheduled the rained-out concert for next Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. in the school gym.

Future of library remains in doubt

The future of the Heppner City Library remains dim this week despite action proposed by the city budget committee and investigation by library board members into alternatives to full operational funding.

Ed Struthers, chairman of the library board, said the consensus of the board is to close the library on June 30 unless sufficient and sustained financial support can be established.

Last week the Heppner city budget committee recommended that the city consider turning off one-fourth of its street lights in an effort to save an estimated \$1,900 to be earmarked for library use.

Gene Pierce, chairman of the budget committee, volunteered his street light in the proposal, saying he would pick up the monthly charge.

Library board members raised no battle to retain library funding in light of the tight city budget. The con-

sensus appears to remain that anything short of full funding (about \$6,000) would only be a step backward in efforts to keep the library alive.

Pierce suggested that the library board investigate the possibility of a library district comprised of Heppner, Hardman and part of Lexington.

Formation of such a district would give the library a base of operation for several years before the issue would need to be placed before voters in the form of a serial levy.

It was suggested that such a district might merit investigation, since approximately 30 per cent of all library patrons are outside the city limits.

The bare bones library budget of \$5,169 was cut by the city, along with \$500 for books, following two defeats of a budget request slightly more than \$45,000 outside the six per cent limitation.

As of June 30, the library will have an estimated \$540 to operate on in the coming fiscal year. This figure isn't firm. Reports from within the county budget committee that even this much funding might be forthcoming have not been verified to the library board.

Struthers said that the library has received some temporary offers of help from both Kinzua Corporation and from Columbia Basin Electric Co-op.

Even with the county picking up the utility and maintenance tab and approval of the budget committee recommendation to turn off some street lights, the library would remain \$3,000 short of its minimum budget needs.

Struthers said the library board would explore any avenue presented that might insure funding for a solid fiscal year operation of the library at its present level of service.

Struthers stressed that the library will close if adequate funding is not forthcoming. According to Struthers, funds run out June 30, and the board does not consider it wise to operate past that point without dependable funding.

The board has considered the pros and cons of operating the library on reduced hours, the use of all volunteer staff and volunteer janitorial service.

Heppner Council to study budget

A special meeting of the Heppner City Council has been called for 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 18, to consider recommended budget cuts and other proposals from the Heppner Budget Committee. The meeting will be held at City Hall.

The budget committee made several additional cuts in the budget last week to reach the \$45,455 reduction necessary to come within the six per cent limitation.

The effort was helped by the identification of \$11,000 in the General Fund which was not counted as available cash in estimating the new fiscal budget.

Allan C. Langenwalter, certified public accountant, said

the cash amount was inadvertently overlooked in preparing a conservative budget some 60 days in advance of June 30. The time certificate cash was not included in the first entry of available cash and not carried forward in subsequent budget balances.

Langenwalter suggested several changes in interfund loans and paybacks, which left the budget committee with \$11,000 to distribute "wherever they feel most appropriate."

The budget committee also considered the possibility of turning off one-fourth of the city street lights in an effort to obtain about \$1,900 for operation of the city library. (See related library story in this issue.)

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THE GAZETTE-TIMES

Kinzua plywood operations limited by logging slow down

Early May rains have hampered area logging work and forced a closure of plywood mill activity at the Kinzua Mill, according to Harry Kennison, Kinzua operations manager.

The plywood mill shut down May 13 and is expected to remain closed through the week, leaving 110 employees out of work. The stud mill is running on two shifts and the PMI lathe is operating on a one shift basis. The sawmill is continuing on a normal run, Kennison said.

"This is the second year in a row this has happened, but it shouldn't happen at all," Kennison said. "Hopefully, the mill will be back in full operation by Monday."

Kennison called this time of the year a "gambling period" because of the unusual weather conditions. Kennison said mill logging work stops for a two-month period beginning Feb. 15, but this year the rains prevented loggers from cutting after the break.

"Normally, you can go back in the woods May 1 with no problem, but some logs come from Forest Service land and roads are shut down with the rain," Kennison said.

He added that one or two days of good weather will be just what the doctor ordered, as far as Kinzua is concerned. "We all need the rain, but we also need the logs," Kennison said.

The mill is trying to stockpile at least a two-week advance of logs to assure that once the plywood mill reopens, it will be able to stay open. On Tuesday, 150,000 board feet were brought to the

mill—short of the 350,000 board feet per day needed. Kennison said the limited operations would continue until one million board feet are available.

The period of September through February is used as the decking season when logs are accumulated for the rest of the year. Kennison said the decks were built up "pretty

well" this year, but not quite enough for the critical May period.

"We would have been just fine if we weren't rained out," Kennison said.

G-T Staff change

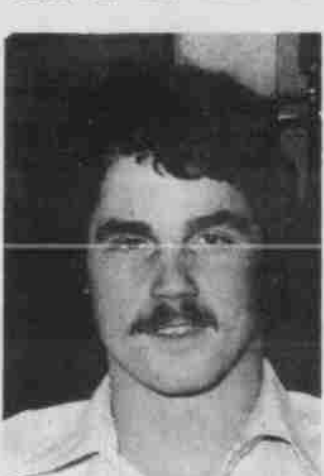
James M. (Jim) Summers, 23, of McLean, Va., has been named editor of the Gazette-Times effective this week. Terry Hager, Times' general manager, said.

Summers comes to the Times from the staff of the Enterprise-Courier in Oregon City. There, he was responsible for police and court news along with general news and features.

He replaces Tom Franks, who served as editor for the past four months. Franks will continue to reside in Heppner and will write for the Times as a columnist, Hager said.

Summers attended McLean High School in Virginia and graduated from the University of Florida, Gainesville, in March 1976 with a B.A. degree in journalism.

While in Florida, Summers worked for the Independent Florida Alligator as copy editor. He also wrote free-



Jim Summers

lance feature articles for the Gainesville Sun.

After graduating from college, Summers moved to San Antonio, Texas, to work for the River City Times, a monthly news magazine. He next moved to Portland and started work with the Courier.

Summers is single and has taken up residence in Lexington. He maintains an active interest in athletics and competed in Amateur Athletic Union swimming for eight years. He also competed in college.

His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Elson Summers, live in Harrisonburg, Va. His father is retired following 30 years in sonar acoustics research and development work for the U.S. Navy.

Weather

	High	Low	Precip.
Wed., May 11	55	39	.15
Thurs., May 12	64	37	
Fri., May 13	67	41	
Sat., May 14	61	43	
Sun., May 15	57	36	.07
Mon., May 16	59	35	
Tues., May 17	64	42	.02
Total measurable precipitation for May to date is 1.85 hundredths of an inch.			

Plea negotiated in Baird homicide case

Attorneys for Leslie Dawn Baird completed plea negotiations with Morrow County District Attorney Dennis Doherty and Circuit Court Judge Jack Olsen Monday approved their request to reduce charges of manslaughter in the first degree and criminal mistreatment in the first degree to a single count of criminally negligent homicide.

Baird, 23, was charged in the Dec. 2 death of her two-year-old son, Lloyd. Following the acceptance of the plea negotiations, Baird pleaded guilty and Judge Olsen pronounced sentence—a

jail term not to exceed three years, which was suspended in lieu of five years' formal probation.

Doctors attributed Lloyd's death to cranial hemorrhaging, which resulted from one to three blows delivered to the boy's head, but they could not determine the time the child had been struck. Lloyd was 18 days short of his third birthday when he died.

Two days prior to his death, the child was vomiting, showing signs of convulsions and lapsing into unconsciousness. "It is my opinion that if Mrs. Baird had sought help at the

time she realized the child was ill, he would be alive today. He isn't," Doherty said.

Doherty said he also intends to institute a termination of parental rights suit against Baird, who is the mother of a 16-month-old baby. The infant is currently under temporary custody of the state through the Juvenile Court and is now in a foster home.

Concerning the plea negotiations, Doherty acquiesced to the reduced charge, saying, "The state has not been able to develop any evidence to attribute the injuries causing death to Mrs. Baird or any

other individual."

Doherty painted an unpleasant picture of Baird's past which, he said, included compulsive habits, use of narcotics and a previous removal of child custody for neglect. Lloyd was taken from Baird for a period of several months by authorities in Oklahoma City and she was being sought by police for possible child abuse at the time of Lloyd's death. Baird has been separated from her husband for several years.

She sat sobbing, head in hands, throughout the court proceedings.

"If you are any kind of a mother at all, you will never get over this. If you are not, there's nothing this court can do to change that," Judge Olsen told her before pronouncing sentence.

Additional terms of the sentence include participation in a mental health counseling program, waiver of the patient-doctor confidential relationship privilege and agreement to a search of her person, home or auto for narcotics at any time by her probation officer.

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