



Last stand

Three members of an owl family have taken up residence in the leaky 75 year-old barn on the property of Fred Hoskins, Jr. at the outskirts of Heppner. They will soon be out of a home, however, as the round structure is slated for destruction in the near future. See Justine Weatherford's column in Section Two of this week's Gazette-Times.

Voters to decide June 27

Putting 'house in order' takes county budget outside six percent

After the auditor had made a few technical changes, one item reduced and another increased, and \$51,000 been figured into Morrow County's general fund budget for estimated taxes not to be received, the finalized budget went to the county clerk's office on Monday standing at \$232,655 over the six per cent limitation. Voters decide whether or not to approve this amount at the polls on June 27.

Two line items in the non-departmental budget underwent changes at last Wednesday's County Court meeting—a tax roll machine item shrunk from \$18,000 to \$7,628 and vacation pay and contingency salary grew from \$1,500 to \$8,000.

The big jump from the \$185,229 budget reported last week is accounted for by the hefty estimated taxes not to be received figure, which needs to be included in any final budget. "We knew this item would have to be added on," commented Judge D.O. Nelson, "but we didn't know what the amount would be".

The tax money required to balance the general fund budget is \$509,164 including the \$327,509 tax base for fiscal year 1978-79. The total general fund budget adds up to \$849,357, with \$340,193 of that amount to be provided by sources other than tax revenue.

"I really don't consider this budget unreasonable, especially considering the large inflation rate and the fact that we haven't asked for anything over the six per cent limitation for many years," Judge Nelson said. He said the inflation rate for the county has actually been closer to 10 per cent than six per cent.

The judge pointed out that this year revenue sharing money would not be used for operating expenses, a practice which has yearly reduced the amount of revenue sharing money received by the county.

Judge Nelson commented on the substantial increase in the Sheriff's Office budget: "Unless Hermiston and Pendleton completely cut us off, the two new deputies will be able to transport prisoners

and take the pressure off of us as far as a new jail is concerned."

Many hours of work and effort on the part of the Budget Committee and the County Court over the past few weeks has gone into preparing a general fund budget for fiscal year 1978-79. A public hearing on the budget will be held by the County Court in the Judge's Office on Friday, May 26. A copy of the entire budget may be inspected or obtained free of charge at the courthouse.

It is now up to the voters of Morrow County to consider all the facts and make their decision at the polls on June 27.

NEWS BRIEF

Black Mt. Repair buys dealership, to expand

Bud Englert, owner of Black Mountain Repair in Heppner, announced this week the firm has purchased the Homelite dealership from Jerry Samples' Mobile Service.

Homelite parts and service, as well as chain filing, are

available at the present time through Black Mountain.

Englert said he plans to start extensive remodeling of the existing Black Mountain Repair sales and service area to accommodate a complete line of Homelite chain saws and power appliances. Black Mountain is also the area dealer for Arctic Cat snowmobiles, which will occupy a section of the new facility.

Remodeling plans also include landscaping of the area in front of the sales and service building and fencing of the car wash located across the highway, which was recently constructed by Englert.

Forest roads to close

Some 90 to 100 infrequently used roads and jeep tracks are proposed to be closed in the Umatilla National Forest, U.S. Forest Service officials announced last week.

According to Ben Siminoo of the Heppner Ranger District Office, none of the roads proposed for closure are major access routes. Most are old logging roads, short dead-end routes, and four-wheel drive tracks that have been minimally maintained, or not maintained at all, some of which have already been replaced by higher quality roads, he said.

Most areas of the forest will still be easily accessible by roads remaining in the National Forest System. The roads to be closed would remain open to hikers and foot-borne hunters, Siminoo said.

The roads tentatively set to be closed and reclaimed to the forest had been posing water quality problems, by draining silty storm runoff into area streams.

If the road closure program is given final approval, work on constructing barricades could possibly start in six weeks, and would be completed before Oct. 1.

A map showing the roads and tracks to be affected is available in the Heppner Ranger District Office. Any public comments should be sent in writing to H.B. Rudolph, Forest Supervisor, Umatilla National Forest, 2517 S.W. Hailey Ave., Pendleton, 97801. Comments to be considered should be postmarked no later than May 26.

Creamer write-in campaign started

A group of northern Morrow County residents has started a write-in campaign for County Budget Committee member Dan Creamer for County Commissioner on the Democratic ballot.

"Dan's well acquainted with county government," said Irrigon Businessman Earl Trudeau, one of his write-in supporters. Besides serving on the budget committee, Creamer has been active on the county planning commission and road department, Trudeau noted.

In 1976, Creamer lost by a narrow margin in his campaign against Judge Paul Jones on the Republican ticket.

Creamer, who retired as project manager for Inland Pacific Navigation Co. shortly after his bid for the judge's position, lives in Irrigon.

Although Creamer's name will not be on the ballot for the upcoming primary election, he apparently is the only Democratic candidate seeking the commission seat. If his write-in campaign proves successful, he would face Republican Homer Hughes in the general election.

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Hospital budget requires voter approval of \$190,082; requires special levy election date

The Pioneer Memorial Hospital Board of Trustees decided last week to ask Morrow County residents to approve a \$190,082 one-year operating levy for the hospital at the polls in June. On the same day, the County Court will submit the county's \$232,655 general fund budget to the voters on a separate ballot.

The \$190,082 figure was arrived at by adding \$17,000 in estimated taxes not to be received and a small hike in pay for personnel to the \$167,153 first requested by the Hospital Board.

The Board's one-year levy request is actually a stalling tactic to gain time necessary to go through all the steps required to form a county-wide Health Care District, according to vice-chairman Larry Mills. He said the envisioned district would take over from the County Court ownership and responsibility of the hospital, ambulance service, medical clinics and other health related services.

Discussion of the Health District and the decision to place the hospital and county budgets on separate ballots was made at the County Court last Wednesday. Mills argued for putting both budgets together saying "the money all comes from the same pocket", but the Court decided that separate ballots would give the people more of a choice, and if either budget was defeated it would be easier to know where to start cutting.

The Board then decided to try for a one-year, rather than two-year, levy, as was also discussed. Mills explained: "The main reason we went for a one-year levy is that we want to get the district formed immediately. This will make us get up and get to work on it."

The county's \$190,082 share of hospital operation, goes into a total budget of \$1,095,419, with other resources, including increases in hospital and nursing home charges, providing an estimated \$926,266.

Included in the budget for fiscal year 1978-79 is \$52,391 for capital outlay, with most of the money earmarked for equipment replacement throughout the hospital. Mills said that in past years funds have not been used for that purpose and equipment replacement is now absolutely necessary. "From an equipment standpoint we have cut back as far as we can," he commented.

Also included in the Pioneer Memorial Hospital budget is \$537,912, personnel; \$345,987, supplies and expense; \$30,000, excess reimbursement of Medicare; \$35,000 contingency fund; free care and allowance, \$64,806; and respiratory therapy, \$32,952.

Until last year, taxpayers provided around \$55,000 annually through three-year levies for hospital operation.

Mills said that the hospital depended upon three-year serial levies of approximately \$55,000 to balance the hospital

budget, until last year when the Board decided to try to get through the year with no tax money. A deficit of \$40,000 resulted from that experiment. "We just don't have enough admissions," Mills commented. "Average bed occupancy is now 38 per cent and we need 48 per cent just to break even."

Mills explained why he felt a health care district would benefit the entire county: "The chief goals of the district would be to give responsibility to an elected board of directors (the Hospital Board is appointed), to provide a vehicle for people from both

ends of the county to use to get their health needs taken care of and to provide a much better system of administration.

Mills emphasized that Pioneer Memorial Hospital is not the only small, rural hospital having financial trouble and many health districts have been formed throughout the state. He said there were only a few county-operated hospitals left.

Steps necessary to form a district include getting a petition for the formation signed by 10 per cent of registered voters in the county. The petition then must be certified by the county clerk, and submitted to the County Court, which will either vote to form the district after public hearings or call for a special election, the district will try to get a tax base through a county-wide vote, and call for the election of a board of directors. It will also negotiate with the County Court for control of assets, such as hospital and medical clinics.

The Hospital Board must, however, first get its one-year operating budget passed, before it can concentrate on its primary goal of getting a health care district formed.



Special recognition

A special plaque of recognition was awarded to Hazel Mahoney of Heppner for her many years of service on the Pioneer Memorial Board of Trustees at the hospital's open house last Friday afternoon. The presentation was made by Larry Mills, representing the Board, who thanked her for all her efforts over the years. Hazel's husband, the late P.W. Mahoney, was the hospital Board's first president, serving for 15 years from the time the hospital was first dedicated in 1950.

Port of Morrow budget remains within six percent

The new budget for the Port of Morrow for fiscal year 1978-79 will be within the six per cent increase limitation established by state law.

The port authority's budget committee met in Heppner last week to tentatively agree to a new general fund budget of nearly \$33,000. The general fund figure may have to be adjusted upward to \$37,000 in order to compensate for taxes estimated not to be received.

Port commissioners indicated they would eventually like to see the construction of a public dock and airport for the

port facility, but felt such improvements would best be financed through general obligation bond issues, rather than through yearly budget tax levies. Since significant increases in budget tax levies are anticipated from Morrow County government and the county school district, commissioners felt it more prudent to fund the dock and airport improvements through bonding and possible grants.

Budget figures of \$178,780 and \$97,500 were approved for the Port of Morrow's utility

system and port facilities expenditures. These two items are expected to be self-supporting through port revenues.

In other action, the port commissioners voted to authorize a survey of an 89-acre port-owned parcel near the HWY. 730-80 intersection, with an eye toward installing roads and utilities on five-acre lots.

Frank Anderson of Heppner was sworn in as a new port commissioner, filling a vacancy created by the resignation of long-time commissioner Oscar Peterson.