

# Three levy elections face voters Tuesday

## The Heppner GAZETTE-TIMES

Morrow County's Award-Winning Weekly Newspaper

VOL. 96 NO. 25

HEPPNER, OREGON

THURSDAY, JUNE 22, 1978

12 PAGES

20c

## Heppner MD's pulling out; doctors sought for clinic

The health care outlook for Morrow County took a plunge this week, when it was learned that two of the county's three physicians plan to leave the area in August.

According to county officials, Dr. Richard Carpenter and Dr. Joseph Diehl have announced their intentions to vacate their county leased offices at Heppner Medical Clinic in August, and end their association with Pioneer Memorial Hospital.

Their departure would make Dr. Wallace Wolff of Heppner Morrow County's lone practicing physician.

A spokesman for the doctors would neither confirm nor deny that the move was imminent, stating that the doctors did not want to influence the upcoming hospital levy ballot measure by saying whether or not they

would remain in Morrow County. The doctors refused to speak with reporters.

However, county court and hospital board members confirmed that they had been informed of the doctor's decision to leave. A meeting was held Monday in Judge D.O. Nelson's office, with county court members, hospital board members, and representatives from local industry and health care services to discuss what to do about the physicians' departure.

As a result of the meeting, a committee consisting of community leaders from all areas of the county, industry representatives, and hospital board members was appointed to begin a search effort to locate physicians to replace the departing doctors.

Several of those attending

the meeting said they hoped to attract a team of two to three doctors, which would be able to man the Heppner Medical Clinic, serve on the hospital staff, and hold office hours at the now-vacant county-owned clinic at Boardman.

There was also discussion about what consequences the county would face should it not succeed in finding replacement doctors by the August pullout date.

Needless to say, such a situation "would have a tremendous effect on the income of the hospital," said hospital administrator Bob Byrnes. "...It may mean a lot of ambulance trips to other towns."

If the vacancies are not filled by August, the home health services program would be "disastrously" affected, said program coordinator

Sheridan Tarnasky. The home health service requires a medical advisor who is readily available for consultations, a role that Dr. Carpenter has been filling.

Mrs. Tarnasky added that a physical therapist's services at the hospital would also be jeopardized, since there would be no point in having a physical therapist if there were no physicians to make referrals.

The thought of an unstaffed Pioneer Hospital "gives me a nervous stomach," said Dan Sweeney, personnel manager for Kinzua Corp. Since the wood processing industry has traditionally been a relatively high-risk area for worker injuries, "an hour trip to Hermiston or Pendleton could mean the difference between life and death," he said.

Several of those attending the meeting, who had been involved with the effort to bring doctors Carpenter and Diehl to Morrow County several years ago, expressed bitterness over their planned departure.

"We feel like we played godfather, but got kicked in the chops," said hospital board member Larry Mills.

A number of those attending

Monday's meeting stated that in order to attract doctors to the area, a need exists for establishing a clear plan for the county court and hospital board's intentions for health care in Morrow County. Questions need to be answered regarding whether Pioneer Memorial will eventually be rebuilt or replaced, whether it will continue to retain both its surgical and emergency room capabilities, and whether both county clinics will be staffed.

The questions remain unresolved.

"You're at a real decision point for health care in Morrow County," said Byrnes.

Despite the doctor's wishes to keep their decision to leave a secret until after the June 27 hospital bond election, Judge Nelson said he thought it best to "bring the situation out in the open," especially in light of the fact that the medical exodus has been making the Heppner rumor circuit for the past week.

Talk on the local rumor mill had expanded to include unfounded gossip that the hospital would be closed, he said, noting that "no thought by anyone has even been made towards attempting to close down the hospital."

## Pioneer Memorial asks \$190,082 for operations

In light of the departure of two of Morrow County's three practicing physicians, "it is more important than ever" that Pioneer Memorial Hospital's operating levy be passed on June 27, Judge D.O. Nelson said.

"We've got to have the budget funded if we want to attract doctors to the area," he said.

The \$190,082 operating levy is being sought to keep the hospital running at its current level of services for one year, giving the hospital board time to form a health care district, which could allow for a funding base independent of the county court. The proposed health care district would also provide for elected hospital board members, rather than the current practice of appointing persons to the board.

Hospital administration officials have stated that the

health care district, through its elected board members, would provide a fairer method for residents of both ends of the county to see that their health care needs are met. The health district would require voter approval before it is formed.

The proposed \$190,082 budget includes \$52,391 worth of new equipment, nearly half of which will go for a new ambulance. Property owners could expect to pay about 54 cents per thousand dollars of taxable property to fund the operating levy, according to hospital administrator Bob Byrnes.

The hospital expects to collect just over \$900,000 in fees during the coming fiscal year, but needs just over \$1.09 million to cover its 1978-79 budget. The \$190,082 levy would make up the difference.

In order to reduce the amount taxpayers are being

asked to pay to finance the coming year's budget, the hospital instituted rate increases of 10 per cent for acute care and 8 per cent for ancillary care.

Byrnes said that the average daily room fee will rise from \$95 to \$105—compatible with, or perhaps a bit less than other eastern Oregon hospital room rates.

The hospital has been experiencing an average 38 per cent occupancy rate, with about 48 per cent occupancy needed to reach the break-even mark.

Hospital officials note that cutting back on beds will not result in a reduction in costs, since the same basic staff and equipment would be needed to treat those using the hospital.

Inflation and government regulations have been blamed by hospital officials as the main reasons for increased costs.

## County budget needs more than 6%

In order for county government to carry on business and services comparable to recent years, Morrow County voters must approve the special levy request next Tuesday according to Judge D.O. Nelson.

Noting that Morrow County has not asked voters for tax money beyond the six per cent limitation in more than a decade, Nelson said, "The county needs the additional money to cover inflation."

A bare bones budget, there

are no new programs or major construction projects included. Nelson said a decline in federal revenue sharing funds received by the county has made a substantial difference as did a state tax court ruling that counties must refund a portion of tax money collected on pivot irrigation systems. For Morrow County, that means a payment of \$125,000 to farmers in the county.

If the \$246,655 levy is approved, the total tax rate

for 1978-79 would reflect an approximate 68-cent per \$1,000 increase over last year's \$1.55 per \$1,000 assessed valuation. Including the road serial levy already approved by voters,

the new tax rate would be about \$2.23 per \$1,000.

"The budget committee and County Court have worked hard to bring before the people a budget and levy request that is fair without jeopardizing county services," said Nelson.



Mary Kincaid belts a hit against Inland Empire. Mary is the only girl player on the Morrow County Babe Ruth Team.

## School Board selects new attendance policy

The Morrow County School Board Monday night passed by a unanimous vote a revised student transfer policy, after scrapping a transfer policy drafted in April that would have prohibited transferring students from participating in school athletics for up to one year.

Under the new policy, no reference is made to curtailing athletic eligibility of county transfer students. The new policy does state, however, that transfers will not be allowed solely for participation in extracurricular activities.

According to the wording of the new policy, students "may be assigned to a school other

than the one where their parents or guardians reside upon written application for a variance in attendance assignment." The same wording was included in the April transfer policy draft.

It will be up to the school superintendent to decide whether or not variances will be granted to allow transfers from one county school to another.

In order for the superintendent to approve a transfer, parents must prove to the superintendent that their student has "a legitimate need for an educational program which is not available in their

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## BMCC levy request up for third time

A tax levy for the operating budget of Blue Mountain Community College that reflects an increase over the preceding year of 2.6 per cent will be resubmitted to the voters on Tuesday, June 27.

Following two earlier budget defeats the operating levy was reduced by a total of \$86,879.

The college has no tax base and voters will therefore be asked to approve the total levy for operating purposes which is proposed at \$1,906,673, an increase of \$48,306 over the 1977 levy.

The combined tax levy for the operating budget and bonded indebtedness, as proposed, is \$37,772 less than the combined levies for 1977 and

the rate per \$1,000 of true cash value for the combined levy would be \$1.84 compared to \$1.88 in 1977. This rate is based on 1977 property valuations. Any increase in property valuations would result in a reduction of the \$1.84 figure.

College President Ron Daniels voiced a strong concern regarding the outcome of the election on June 27. "A positive vote on June 27, is critical to the future of the college," Daniels said. "While we would have the opportunity to vote again on August 8, the uncertainty of the college operating next year would result in many students enrolling at other colleges where they could be assured a full year of education."

Daniels said that substantial budget cuts would result in a loss of classes or total programs which would jeopardize special accreditation for programs such as Nursing and Engineering.

A loss of students due to program changes or late budget approval also results in a loss of tuition funds and state reimbursement, Daniels said.

Daniels pointed out that a \$100,000 reduction in the college levy is necessary to reduce the tax rate by 10c per \$1,000 of true cash value. Thus a levy reduction of \$100,000 results in an annual savings of \$5.00 to the owner of a \$50,000 home.

# Mary plays Babe Ruth baseball with the best of them

The rightfielder for Morrow County's first-place Babe Ruth League baseball team stepped to the plate during a game with a Hermiston club last week in Ione.

The Hermiston coach gauged the batter's size—a bit slight, but not unusually so compared with other teammates—and eyed the batter's longish sandy hair. Misjudging the batter to be a weak stick, he ordered his fielders to move closer to the plate.

Crowding the plate, the Morrow County batter waited

for the right pitch—then connected with the ball, punching a two-base hit over the heads of the drawn-in fielders.

It was a moment of glory—perhaps laced with a trace of vengeance—for the batter, Mary Kincaid, 14-year-old first-stringer for the Morrow County club, and the only female in the region to take part in Babe Ruth action this season.

Mary, daughter of Lindsay and Diane Kincaid of Ione, drilled in two runs during that

contest last week, which ended in a Morrow County victory. In addition, she made a first-rate running catch of a Hermiston fly ball. At midseason, she was holding down a respectable .330 batting average.

"I wouldn't start her if she didn't deserve it," commented Morrow County manager Jim Swanson, who admits, if pressed, that he was a bit skeptical when Mary first showed up for tryouts. "She's proved that she can play ball with the best of them."

Mary has competed in team sports for five years. She was shortstop this season on the Ione Junior High team, after the coaches "asked me to play, because they thought I was good enough."

It's not hard to understand why. At age 12, she made the Little League All-Star team, then began her first season of Babe Ruth play last summer. Prior to that, she played two years of girls' softball. She said she plans to continue her

Babe Ruth career next season. She's been playing on male dominated teams long enough that she receives a minimum of static from macho teammates, but does confess to a certain amount of razzing from competing ballplayers. "Some of the other teams will give me a bad time," she said, "but it doesn't bother me. I'm used to it."

One aspect of male-oriented sports that she appreciates is that the boys, like herself, tend to "take the games seriously." On certain girls'

teams, she said, players "laugh when they make mistakes. I don't like to see them (girls teammates) go out and act dingy...It gives girls' sports a bad name."

But being the lone representative of her gender on an all-male team can have its drawbacks. For instance, "when I have my uniform on and go into a ladies' restroom, I get funny looks."

During one such uniformed trip to the powder room in Hood River, "one lady screamed and ran out to get

[the manager." Mary was told in no uncertain terms that "this is the ladies' room."

"I hope so," she responded. Mary's athletic interests are not confined to baseball. She qualified for the state junior olympics, where she compe-

ted in the 440, and placed eighth out of 45 in the high jump.

But basketball is her favorite sport, and she has competed on the boards for the Ione Junior High team.

Bill Walton, look out.

## Weather by Don Gilliam

	Hi	Low	Pre.
Wed., June 14	70	44	T
Thurs., June 15	68	39	
Fri., June 16	75	43	
Sat., June 17	83	44	
Sun., June 18	83	50	
Mon., June 19	80	51	
Tues., June 20	85	48	