

The Heppner
GAZETTE-TIMES
VIEWPOINT

**Tuesday levy election
requires yes vote**

Morrow County residents should flock to the polls next Tuesday in support of two special levy requests that have a dramatic impact on their lifestyles.

Both the Morrow County general fund and Pioneer Memorial Hospital budget levy requests are needed to insure services and health care that we expect and enjoy.

The Hospital administration and board of directors have come under fire recently for a number of reasons considered important by the public and although not all the problems have been answered or solved, much progress can be noted.

Voters used the ballot box as their mouthpiece on June 27 when the hospital budget was defeated and the county budget ended in a tie vote. Since that time the County Court, Hospital Board and Hospital Administrator Bob Byrnes have been trying to get to the root of the problem, and voters should voice their approval of the positive steps taken.

In addition, more than \$43,000 was cut from the hospital budget. The County budget is being re-submitted to voters at the same levy figure.

Officials from both are concerned that if the levy requests do not receive voter approval this time, substantial cuts will have to be made in services provided by the county and health care provided by the hospital.

In regards to the county budget voters must look at the sharp decline in federal revenue enjoyed by the county over the past decade. Because that money was used to prevent going outside the six per cent limitation, the amount received each year has been on the decline. Now the only way to balance the budget and still maintain essential services such as police protection, roads, and the Courthouse staff is to ask voter approval of tax money outside the six per cent annual increase allowed automatically by Oregon law.

At the hospital the situation is much the same. Escalating costs in materials, supplies and personnel coupled with the fact that cash reserves were depleted last year instead of asking the voters for additional tax money, have left the hospital in dire need of finances.

More than \$50,000 is needed to replace equipment and make capital improvements that anyone would expect a hospital to have. Many of these improvements and pieces of equipment are further mandated by state and federal agencies to retain a "hospital" status.

Then there is \$20,000 in the hospital budget for recruiting doctors to Heppner and Boardman. Without doctors in the communities there would be few patients using Pioneer Memorial Hospital, cutting back much needed patient revenues.

Further, everyone realizes the need for doctors in Heppner and Boardman and it appears the most economical way to obtain them is through a recruiter. It is the most economical way because it is quicker, which means less revenue losses for the hospital and secondly, because through a recruiter many of the problems experienced here in recent months with medical staffing may be avoided.

Both the general fund budget and the Pioneer Memorial Hospital budget deserve the support of voters next Tuesday, August 8. "Yes" vote will insure sustained county government, health care and local control over both.



LETTERS

**Byrnes should not
be made scapegoat**

Editor:

I attended the open Hospital Board meeting. I heard some people who had decided Bob Byrnes must go. I heard some say that voting down the budget was how to get what they wanted. I saw that some people had their minds made up and weren't interested in changing no matter what occurred.

I think that attitude is unnecessarily destructive and that using the budget as a vehicle of power is wrong. The reason for passing the budget is to keep our hospital open and functioning. Why put the livelihood of the employees and the lives of the patients in jeopardy because some want to get the administrator? There are other ways they can do that if that's their intent.

I think the "get rid of him" attitude is discouraging. Three different times I heard Mr. Byrnes say that he realized part of his behavior toward employees and patient families was wrong and that he was going to do his best to correct the error. People aren't allowed a chance to right their wrongs?

And what of the responsibility of the Board? They're Mr. Byrnes' boss. They state that the administrator's activities reflect their wishes. Some accused the Board of unresponsive behavior—much more directly than Mr. Byrnes was accused. But no one demanded their resignations. Their promise to try and do better was accepted—even if suspiciously so. But not so Mr. Byrnes' promise. Someone has decided that he's the villain, so he must go.

It's easiest, when anger rises, to single out one person as the cause of everything. But it's almost always wrong and the problems remain. It's harder to be part of a healing process, to take a man at his word, to give a second chance. But it's much more productive—for the hospital, for the community, for each individual involved.

John S. Maas
Heppner

**Hospital meeting raises
several questions**

Editor:

Since the open meeting with the Hospital Board some questions have come to mind and we wondered if there are any answers.

No. 1—Why did one member of the Board state, "There's

no plans for a new hospital." Different architectural firms have submitted plans for a new hospital or remodeling the old one. Wasn't this brought before the Board or did the Administrator do this on his own? The plans were shown to us at the hospital. They did or do exist! Even land on where to build has been checked into, this was told by a reliable person. These plans might be in the distant future but they do exist.

No. 2—Why didn't Mr. Martin, chairman of the Board, make more comments or answer questions? Isn't he informed enough to answer questions put before the Board? He couldn't have answered more than three questions. The other members did all the commenting.

No. 3—Mr. Byrnes stated and is quoted in the Gazette—"plans to retain Emergency Room facilities, keep the current level of 20 acute care beds intact". Where are these 20 acute care beds? After our years of working on the hill, we can't count that many. Downstairs there are 19 beds plus eight beds upstairs for nursing home care, there's a "holding room" with one bed for mental health, a cardiac room with one bed, and that leaves two labor room beds, two maternity room beds, one big bed and four cribs in pediatrics and that leaves four rooms with two beds each open for general care patients! With that count, too many people better not get sick at the same time! And we do have patients from the other areas.

We do not want to lose the hospital, like it's losing all the "old time help."

Ruby Munkers
Anna Schwarzin

Hospital woes recounted

Editor:

I was at the hospital meeting Monday July 24 and am still concerned.

First of all Mrs. Melby did not quote me right in the East Oregonian paper. I was directing my question to Karmon Bjella about why he wasn't out on the floor more. Which he did answer.

Having had an uncle and a mother still up there I was concerned way before any of this all got out.

Being up there every day for the last five months I personally could feel the tension and knew things were not good up there.

This is when I first went to a board meeting and was not satisfied with the answers I received. After going to that board meeting I received quite a reaction from all the help. That's when I decided to put in my two cents worth.

My mother has been up at the hospital for almost five months and Mr. Byrnes has yet to help our family in any way, let alone say hello to us.

I feel that being administrator this would be first on his list. Getting to know the doctors and staff, patients and their families.

The hospital has been in trouble for quite a few years but at least the tension was not there and the help could talk to Irene Wyman any time they needed. She cared! And in a small town like this, we need a head administrator who cares and can relate to the help.

I also blame the board for not getting down to the real problem. Mr. Byrnes should have left the meeting when he was asked and more of the help would have voiced their opinions, and maybe something would be more settled.

People think it will be bad with only one doctor in town. How is it going to be with no help up there?

I also want to personally thank everyone from the doctors to the RNs, aides, cleaning ladies, lab techs for being so good to our family.

The doctors have been so good that we could talk to them any time of day or night.

I'm up there every day and they put in hours that you would not believe. And if one doctor was gone the other one would always fill in.

**Sifting through
the TIMES**



Pioneer Memorial Hospital was in the news 25 years ago in a matter involving money, much as it is today.

during the first week of August in 1953, County Judge Garnet Barratt went to Portland to present the county's request for \$44,000 from the Oregon Board of Health to be used in building a new wing on the then-overcrowded hospital.

County voters had earlier approved a 5 mill levy to be used for matching funds for the addition to the hospital.

During the same week in 1953, a tooth from a prehistoric variety of elephant was unearthed at the Bill Morgan place near Monument. The tooth measured 4 inches high and six inches across. It was then estimated to be 400,000 years old.

Brand new 1953 Willys sedans were selling for 1,499.50 at Farley Motors in Heppner.

The wheat harvest was averaging 15 bushels per acre in Morrow County 50 years ago.

Prices for hard red winter wheat were at the 1.08 per bushel mark in Heppner.

Barley fared even worse during the 1928 harvest. Although a significant number of acres was planted in barley, not a stand in the county was worth harvesting. According to the Gazette-Times account of the harvest, the barley stand "in many places is good, and the heads appeared healthy. But it was found when starting to cut that there were but a very few kernels in each head."

During the same week in 1928, more than 20,000 acres in the Heppner District of the Umatilla National Forest went up in flames, after a severe thunderstorm swept through the area.

Receiving the brunt of the blaze were the Bull Prairie, Wilson Creek, Morphine Canyon and Camas Prairie areas. Firefighters were shipped in from Portland, Pendleton, and LaGrande to battle the blaze. Wheat trucks were side tracked to haul in the firefighters and their equipment.

Sixty years ago in Morrow County, John J. Kelly of Heppner was closing the deal to purchase the 3,500 acre George Perry sheep ranch on Rock Creek, including a band of 2,000 sheep.

The Joe Batty family of Eightmile was placed under quarantine, when it was discovered that all family members were suffering from smallpox.

The City of Heppner bought a four-cylinder chemical and water pumper truck for the fire department for \$4,375.

Ten years ago this week, U.S. Rep. Al Ullman sent a telegram to the Morrow County Court stating that "in my judgement, the Willow Creek dam ranks number one in priority for funding in the next fiscal year. You may be sure of my strongest efforts to get Congressional approval."

Ten year later, the project remains a dream.

Picture Credit

Irene Ahorn cuddles pet pygmy goat, while reading "Billy Goat Gruff" to children during a special story hour held outside the Heppner Public Library earlier this week.

Trish Toll

I hope there is a meeting like was promised between the board, help, and everyone concerned, without Mr. Byrnes. Then maybe everything will get out in the open and we'll have our hospital back, maybe our doctors and hospital help, and will all have learned by this.

Seniors seek discount

Editor:

We, the undersigned—Morrow County Senior Citizens Advisory Council, are a group of older citizens of this county who meet regularly to get our (input) needs and thoughts to the legislative bodies of our state and also to the national level.

Now, we are coming to you on the county and city level with a concern of ours—that is discounts for Senior Citizens. Many who are trying very hard to make-do on a very low fixed-income could use this help. We have a long list of stores and other services from Pendleton and Hermiston (Umatilla county) that are doing this. The question is—Are there any stores or services that are willing to do the same in Morrow county? There are many ways that this is accomplished; food outlets—a discount during the slack hours of the day—food stores also practice this. Another way—once a year—your anniversary or once a month or once a week—or something special. You have your right to choose. Since the State has issued Senior Citizen identification cards it is easy to know who is a senior.

I have lived in this county many years and for quite a few of those years I have been aware of two groups that have practiced the policy of discounts to older citizens; the Athletic program of the School system and the Morrow County Fair Board. If you think this practice might be too earth-shaking you might contact these groups for their reactions.

Too, we are mailing this same letter to the Chamber of Commerce-Merchants Committee—of both Heppner and Boardman, hoping to get a reply from them. Also an open letter to the Gazette-Times for those professional and services that might not belong to an organization such as a chamber of Commerce. Thank you Murray's Drug Stores for answering our question before we asked.

We will be happy to hear from you, send replies—any kind regarding this matter to Morrow County Senior Citizens Advisory Council.

Theta Lowe, acting secretary
Rt. 2 Box 2459
Heppner 97836

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Thursday, August 3 Soroptomists, noon, West of Willow

Heppner City Council, 8 p.m., City Hall

Tuesday, August 8 Special Levy Elections, 8 a.m.-8 p.m., Elections for Morrow County budget and Pioneer Memorial Hospital budget

Monday, August 7 Chamber of Commerce, noon, West of Willow

 **THE GAZETTE-TIMES** 

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