

Alternative proposed for Dam by County court, local lawyers oppose bill for Value Engineering Team joint Umatilla-Morrow district court

The Morrow County Court and local attorneys went on record this week as opposing a bill to be submitted to the Oregon Legislature that would establish a joint district court for western Umatilla and Morrow counties.

The bill, proposed by Sen. Mike Thorne, D-Pendleton and Rep. Jack Duff, R-Adams, would establish a district court to serve the Hermiston area and all of Morrow County. In the process, justice of the peace courts in Hermiston, Heppner and possibly Irrigon would be abolished.

"It is a poorly written bill; not very well thought out," said Heppner attorney Michael J. Sweeney, "because it leaves Heppner—and possibly Irrigon—without a court to act on bail, arraignments and search warrants during the evening hours, on weekends, and whenever the district court judge is not available.

The bill does not specify how many days a week the district

court judge would sit in Heppner, nor does the bill specify distribution of revenues received by the court.

Hermiston attorney John Smallmon, who was re-elected in November to a six-year term as justice of the peace in Hermiston, would be appointed to the district court judgeship by the bill. Generally when a district court is formed, the Governor appoints a judge, to sit on the bench until the next general election. The bill states that Smallmon would serve out his current six-year term at the district court level before having to seek re-election.

"The County Court is opposed to the bill the way it is stated," Judge D.O. Nelson told the Gazette-Times.

"Originally, we were told the bill wouldn't abolish the justice of the peace court here," said Nelson, "and with the traffic and criminal cases we have it's imperative that a court be located in Heppner."

Sen. Thorne was quoted in a Hermiston Herald story as saying that he doubted whether western Umatilla

County would be able to justify a district court...but by combining the two counties, he expressed certainty that a full caseload would be assured.

In response to that thinking, Sweeney stated, "We don't particularly like the idea of coat-tailing Morrow County to Umatilla County for justification of their expanded services

when it takes away from ours."

Judge Nelson said District Attorney Dennis Doherty was working up caseload figures on the Heppner justice of the peace and circuit courts to determine the feasibility of establishing a separate district court for Morrow County.

"We'd like to have a district court located here—at least part of the time—but we can't support the bill before the Legislature," concluded Nelson.

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we backfill up to the property line, many would actually have more usable flat land."

Maintenance of the channel would be performed by the Heppner Water Control District.

Swensen indicated he believed the alternative plan could be implemented at a cost comparable to the \$25.8 million price tag carried by the proposed Willow Creek Dam.

In addition to studying the

three dam flood channel approach, the value engineering team is studying ways to save money on the dam project as currently proposed. Slight adjustments in the dam's configuration and the rock, rather than earth for fill are being studied as ways to improve the structure and save money, Swensen said.

The Corps of Engineers, however, is not required to follow recommendations by

the value engineering team.

When asked if federal funding would be jeopardized by opting for the alternative project, rather than the single Willow Creek Dam, Swensen noted that the dam "is not in the 1980 budget, anyway. What's everybody excited about?"

Should the community opt to go with the three dam floodway concept, Swensen suggested that the \$500,000 that has been allocated for the dam be put to use for core sampling and charting the course of the concrete flood channel.

"It's been my experience that when you actually start work on a project, eventually it will be funded."

The value engineering team's report on the Willow Creek Dam, including the alternative approach, is due to

be completed in mid-February. The team will be meeting with city and county officials and citizens prior to that time, so that "we can get some indication of how the people feel about this (alternative)," Swensen said.

Ambulance drivers to meet

All current and prospective ambulance drivers and attendants in the Heppner area are encouraged to attend a meeting Tuesday, Feb. 6 at 8 p.m. in the Columbia Basin Electric conference room.

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Cindy Kerr spends time with KATU news crew

Life before the floodlights and cameras of a television news studio is not all that glamorous, a Heppner High School senior found out firsthand this week, but it can be exciting—for an outsider, at least.

Cindy Kerr spent Monday in the newsroom and studios of Portland's KATU-TV, observing how television journalists went about earning their keep. The trip was the high point of Cindy's Career Education project at Heppner High.

"The news director told me that the glamour wears off after 15 minutes, then it's off to work," Cindy said. "And the reporters don't see their jobs as being glamorous... They spend most of their time pounding on typewriters."

Cindy started off the day in the studio audience of the "A.M. Northwest" program, then spent the morning in Channel 2's newsroom, learning the basics of the TV news game from KATU reporters Chris Thomas, Kathy Smith and others. Experiences there included watching the reporters edit their film, watching reporter Thomas apply make-up and tape a "Common Sense" segment from the control room, and seeing former Governor Tom McCall arrive in the studio to tape his commentary spot.

"They were all really helpful," said Cindy, "and they acted like normal, everyday people...It was really exciting for me. It's about the nearest thing I've ever done."

The television reporters "write their own copy," Cindy noted, and appear in the office from time to time between stories to check their assignment board for their next tasks. Anchorman Richard Ross, she noted, is reputed to be a real stickler for correct spelling.

As the daily afternoon deadline draws near, "by 4:30, being in the newsroom is like sitting in a popcorn machine."

Although reporters admitted that television newsbiz is currently a tight job market, Cindy indicated that she wouldn't rule out the possibility of giving it a try. "I've always been interested in work in that field. Now I'm really excited about it," she said.

Back in Heppner, Cindy plans to write a paper on her experience and give talks to the high school's journalism and film and television classes.

No matter what turn her career eventually takes, the KATU experience left Cindy feeling that "I'll never watch news the same way again."

St. Patrick's to screen 'Oh, God!'

The movie "Oh, God!" starring George Burns and John Denver will be shown March 3-4 at St. Patrick's Parish Hall, sponsored by the Adult Discussion Group of that church.

The film will be shown at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, March 3 and again at 1 p.m. on Sunday, March 4. Minimal admission will be charged to cover the cost of the film.

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