

# Flood plain management measures loom for Heppner

## Regulations restricting development, final draft of flood plain expected next week

Flood plain management regulations are expected to go into effect tomorrow, after Federal Insurance Administration (FIA) officials present final flood elevation maps to Morrow County and City of Heppner representatives during a 5:30 p.m. meeting at the Courthouse today.

The move was announced last Thursday by Chuck Steele of the FIA's Seattle office during a public meeting on the proposed Willow Creek Dam.

Flood plain management regulations will require the Heppner City Planning Commission and the Morrow County Planning Commission to prohibit any new construction in floodway designated areas, and to place a number of restrictions on new construction in flood plain designated areas. Among restrictions for building in flood plain areas is the need to elevate new homes above the level of the theoretical "100 year" flood.

Since there is no Willow Creek Dam at this point, roughly three-fourths of Heppner lies in either floodway or floodplain areas, ranging from one to six feet below the level of the 100 year flood. If the dam is not built, these flood zone designations will remain in effect, and to a large degree, govern the

direction of future development in town. If the dam is built, Heppner's floodway area would be contained to the Willow Creek Channel through town, until the channel reaches its confluence with Hinton Creek. The flood plain would be substantially reduced through town, with projected flood depths of no more than two feet existing along Shobe and Willow creek flood plains to the mouth of Hinton Creek. Along Hinton Creek, flood plain depths would drop from six feet to four feet.

Heppner residents will vote on whether they favor the dam on March 28. During last

Thursday's meeting, Mayor Jerry Sweeney told those attending the meeting that if the vote is favorable towards building the dam, the city would reaffirm its support for the project. Should the vote be unfavorable, "we'll do our best to keep it out," Sweeney said.

During Thursday's meeting, Heppner Planning Commission Chairman Terry Hager, speaking on behalf of the Heppner-Morrow County Chamber of Commerce, outlined the Chamber's position "on the real need for the Willow Creek Dam."

Hager summarized the Chamber's position, stating that Heppner "has three basic choices: Construct the Willow Creek Dam and let the town develop pretty much as it has, without major restriction by city, state and federal government regulations; Secondly, Heppner can live with the natural 100 year flood plain, in which case individuals will be severely restricted as to where and how they can build a home or business; or third, to "withdraw from the flood insurance program which in effect, stops any development within the flood plain."

If the dam is built, the lowered flood plain that would result would create "lowered elevations for new residential

construction and lowered floodproofing requirements for new commercial construction," Hager said. "In addition, it would leave many areas in town open for development that would not be open for development with the 100 year natural floodplain."

To illustrate the difference between having the dam and not having it, Hager gave the example of an individual seeking to build a new home on Court Street. "With the natural 100 year flood plain, the house would need a six-foot high foundation. With the dam in place, the individual could build a house on a normal foundation," he said.

City Councilman Cliff Green, formerly a vocal opponent of the dam, noted that "we've got to stop the flood plain somehow...Can you visualize the Post Office on one hill and the grocery on another? That's what I visualize without the dam to help."

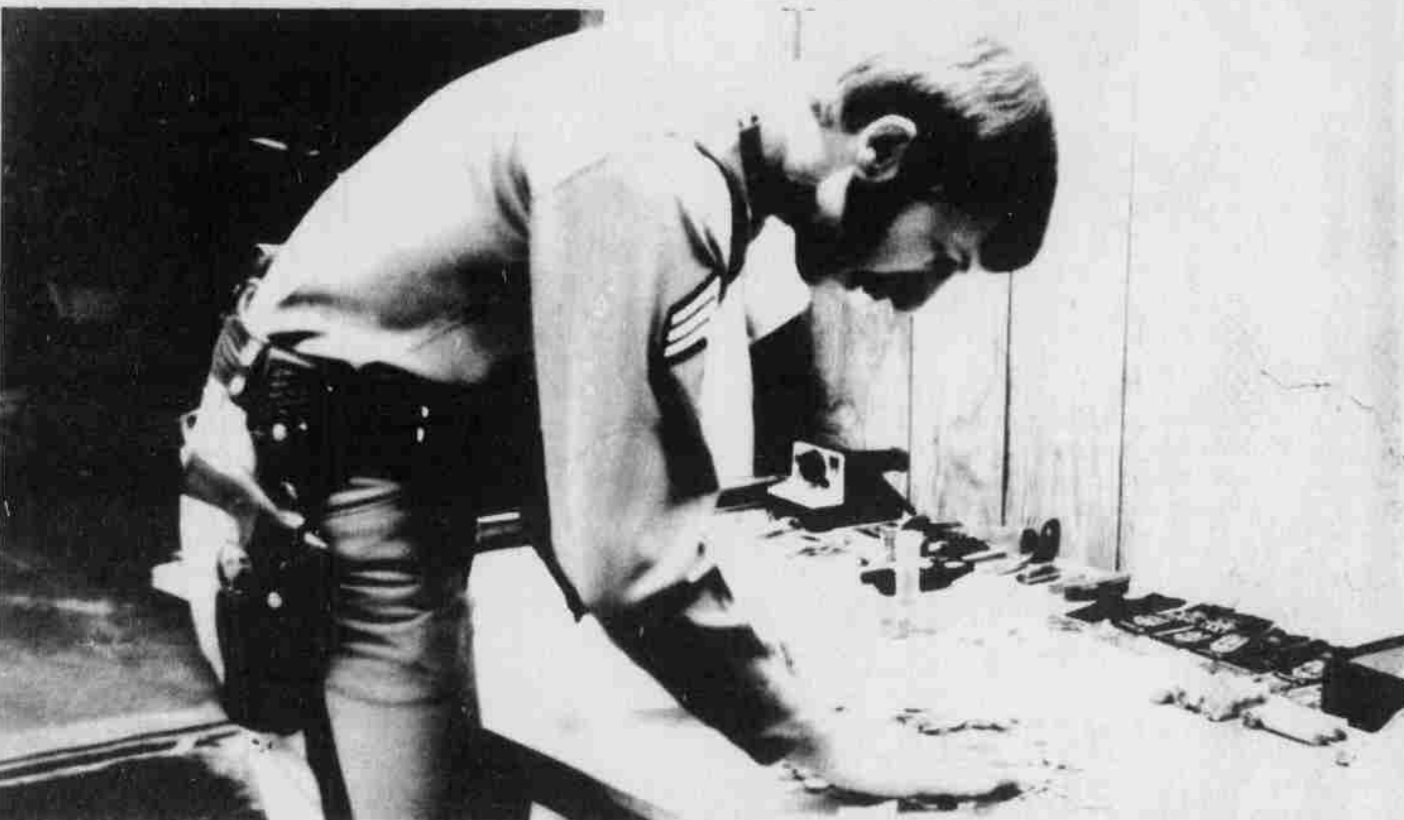
Green said he had been hopeful that the Eagleton Amendment to the Flood Insurance Act would have provided a loophole through which the city might have escaped from its flood plain woes. "But all that does is allow you to pull out of the (flood insurance) program," he said, "and you'd still have restrictions...I was handed a

football by somebody, but I found it didn't have any air in it."

Construction of the dam could also be a plus for the city, Green explained, since the Corps of Engineers has agreed to replace much of a leaky, 1930 vintage water pipe, that would be displaced by the dam. That section of the city water line is being blamed for many of the city's recent water problems. The Corps would also replace an older city water reservoir with a new one.

If the dam project does not come through, Green indicated.

Cont. on page 3



Morrow County Sheriff's Deputy Jim Macomber sorts through an assortment of items stolen during a series of Lexington burglaries during the past several weeks. The stolen goods were recovered earlier this week, and two juvenile boys from Lexington have been picked up for questioning. Most of the booty shown here was taken from the Cliff Williams home, which was broken into last week by forcing open a basement door. The goods include an extensive coin collection, valued at an estimated \$700, an air rifle, a camera, and several pocketknives.

### Hot goods

## Northern Morrow County growth adds to 24% school budget jump

Growth in northern Morrow County accounts for nearly half of a 24.4 per cent increase in the county school system's proposed budget for the coming school year.

Voters will decide whether to approve the budget at the polls on April 3.

The 1979-80 school budget would require \$849,776 over the current rate. Staff, equipment, supplies and utilities to service two new north end schools account for more than \$360,000 of that amount. The new schools—a junior high at Irrigon and an elementary school in Boardman—are expected to open midway through the coming school year.

"The budget anticipates 100 new students next year," said Schools Superintendent Matt Doherty, noting that overcrowding in the county's booming north end has prompted school officials to arrange for temporary classroom space outside existing school buildings while awaiting completion of the new schools. In Irrigon, some classes at the start of the coming year are expected to be held in the outdated and currently vacant Irrigon Elementary building, and in the A.C. Houghton multipurpose room. Other classes may have to be held in a local church.

The two new schools, approved in a bond levy last year, will put an end to the immediate overcrowding situation, and should keep the school system ahead of north Morrow growth for a number of years. While the bond levy funded payment for the building themselves, it did not pay for the teachers, cooks, custodians and administrators to staff them. Nor did it pay for

school supplies, utility bills and much of the equipment the new schools will require. Thus, the staffing and supplies for the new schools account for 10.4 per cent of the 24.4 per cent increase of the proposed 1979-80 budget.

During the coming year, it will require more than \$255,117 to staff the new schools, according to Doherty.

The remaining 14 per cent of the increase, totaling \$488,239, can generally be written off to inflation. Utility rates are expected to increase dramatically in the county during the coming year, and fuel costs have already begun to soar. A tentative agreement with county teachers and a final pact with the school system's non-teaching staff calls for a basic seven per cent wage hike for the coming year.

No new major building

programs or large capital improvements are included in the proposed budget. Aside from the new north end schools situation, it would be fairly much a business-as-usual proposition for the county school district under the proposed budget.

State aid for basic school support, cash carryover from the previous year, interest income and funds gained through the rental of school-owned property and the sale of outdated district equipment combined to reduce the proposed budget requirement by more than \$1.7 million.

Unfortunately, taxpayers will not know the precise dollar and cent value the new budget would cost them, since the total cash value for the county has yet to be computed.

After consultations with the

Morrow County Assessor's office, school district officials have estimated the 1979-80 total cash value of the county at \$400 million—up sharply from the current \$326 million. Most of the expected increase would come from improvements to the Carty coal-fired power plant, now nearing completion near Boardman.

If the \$400 million total cash value holds true, property tax bills for the school system

would actually drop from the current rate of \$9.59 per \$1,000 of property, to \$9.46 per \$1,000.

Thus, the owner of a \$50,000 home would pay \$473 for support of county schools.

Polls for the April 3 election will be open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. at Heppner City Hall, the Morrow County Schools district office in Lexington, Ione High School Riverside High School and the Morrow County office building in Irrigon.

### School District voters will mark ballot for board zone changes

In addition to the proposed 1979-80 school year budget, and the unopposed slate of school board and advisory board members, voters on April 3 will be asked to vote on a proposed change in school board zones.

Essentially, the school zone change would serve to equalize representation on the Morrow County School Board, by giving each attendance area—Heppner, Ione, Irrigon and Boardman—one representative each. The remaining

two positions would represent the county on an at-large basis. The Heppner area currently has three representatives on the panel, making it the only area in the county with more than one school board representative.

If the proposal is approved, the at-large positions would become available when school board terms expire for Dr. Wallace Wolf and Pauline Winter, currently representing Heppner.

## Hospital board hears five management offers

Briefcases and doubleknit suits filled the Morrow County Circuit Courtroom Tuesday night, as representatives from five medical consulting firms made sales pitches for the management of Pioneer Memorial Hospital to the hospital's board of trustees.

Board members heard a wide range of proposals from agents of Health Services Management, Inc., Medical Environments, Northwest Medical Foundation, A.E. Brim & Associates, and Central Oregon Hospitals, Inc. The firms had been asked by the board during a February meeting to submit proposed management or consulting plans regarding the operation of the troubled medical facility.

The board set next Tuesday, March 27, as the date for a meeting to review the proposals. The meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m. in the Columbia Basin Electric Co-op's board room.

Representatives of Health Services Management, Inc. of Pasco were the first to address the board, stating that they felt Pioneer Memorial did not likely require a total management package. Instead, the Health Services agents proposed a management consulting arrangement, in which the firm would spend about 800 hours per year working for the hospital at the rate of \$25 per hour plus traveling expenses.

A separate doctor recruitment package was offered for \$2,000, but that would be included in the \$25 per hour arrangement if the board accepted the management consulting proposal.

Next to appear before the board were representatives of Medical Environments, Inc. of Burbank, Calif., who proposed a more encompassing management plan, including replacing the current administrator with one of their own. Medical Environments per-

sonnel told the board that their firm specialized in the management of small rural hospitals, most of which have experienced problems similar to those in Heppner. Should the firm receive a contract from the board, one of Medical Environments' first steps would be to "recruit a physician acceptable to the hospital board and the medical staff," according to an agent of the company. "We're suggesting the board withhold a portion of our management fee until the doctor gets here," he said. "We have been very successful in recruiting physicians to rural hospitals."

Medical Environments is proposing a two-year contract, with which would include performance commitments, and provide for an annual performance review. "No way do we intend to take over the hospital," the Medical Environments agent said. "The board will continue to set the procedure and direction."

The agent suggested that the firm would pursue grant funds to set up a mobile clinic with a physician and nurse practitioner to serve North Morrow, and later expand service to Wheeler and Gilliam counties.

Cost for the Medical Environments proposal would be \$6,500 per month for the entire management package.

Northwest Medical Foundation was the next firm to appear before the board, seeking a three-year contract with a five-year option to assume management of the hospital. Northwest sought more direct control of the hospital than any other firm appearing at Tuesday's meeting. The firm would answer only to the county court, under terms to be finalized in a formal contract. The hospital board would cease to exist as it now operates, becoming instead a community advisory panel with authority only to make suggestions. Replacing the

local hospital board would be the Northwest Medical Foundation's governing board, consisting of corporate officers, medical staff and other health specialists, who would hold monthly meetings in Heppner.

NorthWest was also the only not-for-profit corporation to present a proposal to the hospital board, which would allow the firm to convert profits made in the hospital system into improvements in the firm's health care program.

NorthWest officials noted that their firm—one of the largest providers of hospital management services in the nation—would offer a number of advantages in terms of expertise in handling planning, applying for grants, designing improvements to physical plants, and recruiting medical staff. The NorthWest system is also the third

Cont. on page 7

## The Heppner GAZETTE-TIMES

Morrow County's Award-Winning Weekly Newspaper

VOL. 97, NO. 12 HEPPNER, OREGON THURSDAY, MARCH 22, 1979 12 PAGES 20 cents

## Heppner levy vote Mar. 28, budget down \$12,000 from last year

Heppner residents will vote Wednesday, March 28 on a \$60,656 operating and maintenance levy in a year where the city "held the line" and actually cut over \$12,000 from last year's total budget needs. The total budget requirement for 79-80 is \$443,258, including bonded indebtedness, a decrease of \$12,062

from last year's budget. While the total budget dropped, the amount to be approved by voters increased \$24,456 due to a significant drop in resources available for the 79-80 year.

City Administrator Marshall Lovgren explained that over the past few years the City of Heppner has used cash surpluses to reduce the amount of the levy Heppner residents have voted on.

"We don't have that extra cash to reduce the levy amount this year," said Lovgren, adding that the City's cash reserve position was precariously low in the event of an emergency expenditure being needed.

Last year the city had \$114,155 in resources other than property taxes while this year only \$75,765 in resources other than property taxes is available. In the current year about \$71,000 was needed in property taxes to balance the budget and for 79-80 about \$95,000 in property tax money will be needed to balance the budget. Of that amount, \$60,656 is outside the six per cent increase in budget needs allowed by law.

A review of departments within the city government shows a drop in the General Fund of \$14,413 for a total of \$170,692 needed for 79-80.

Police and fire budgets showed increases due to higher costs in materials and supplies, personnel and equip-

ment reserves. The Police Department budget went up about \$18,000, due largely to a \$6,250 increase in materials and services, a \$2,500 increase in salary for the police chief, and \$1,500 additional needed to

Cont. on page 3

### Voter opinion asked on Willow Creek Dam

When Heppner voters are handed their operating and maintenance levy ballots, they will also receive a ballot asking their preference on construction of the proposed Willow Creek Dam.

The City of Heppner is faced with adopting a flood plain management ordinance that would—with the City's natural flood plain—severely restrict and modify development and construction in most areas of the town.

The Willow Creek Dam—if constructed—would alleviate most of the flood plain and allow for development and construction much as it has been in the past.

A public meeting was held by the city last Thursday to explain the flood plain issue to voters prior to the election. Details of information dispersed at the public forum is recapitulated in a story at the top of this page.