

The Heppner
GAZETTE-TIMES
VIEWPOINT

Editorials • Columns
Letters From Readers

County, medical facility levies in voters hands

Morrow County voters go to the polls again Tuesday, June 26 to determine the fate of the Pioneer Memorial Hospital-North Morrow Medical Clinic and county budget levy requests.

Both levies are being resubmitted basically intact. The hospital levy has been reduced by \$45,000

EDITORIAL COMMENT

since its defeat May 22; there has been no change in the general county levy request.

Why are the levies being submitted for voter approval again—without any cuts—after being defeated at the polls once?

Two reasons stand out. First, those citizens—the budget committee members and hospital board—who have spent countless hours putting both budgets together feel the tax monies asked for are the minimum needed to operate and maintain basic county services and the medical facilities in Heppner and Boardman.

Secondly, it was a mere 24 percent of the county's registered voters who defeated the county levy on May 22; about 27 percent defeated the PMH levy.

Neither of the levy requests are outlandish when one develops a

basic understanding of the proposed budgets. Both provide for services used by everyone in the county, whether you're young or old, living

in Boardman or living in Heppner. Those services include primary and acute medical care, roads on which we travel, law enforcement through

the sheriff's and district attorney's offices, and those services we take for granted but are necessary to run county government.

Hospital budget is solid

The Gazette-Times endorses the Pioneer Memorial-NMMC budget and urges a "yes" vote on the levy.

The PMH board of trustees has undertaken a firm and logical planning process—both short term and long range in nature. Some basics stand out front: the need for improved facilities and updated equipment; the need for doctors (and in this day and age that means

guaranteeing a minimum salary, even though the money will—in all probability—never be spent because doctors generally make more than the guarantee asked for in the PMH-NMMC budget); and the need for citizen involvement in the planning process.

Right out front the planning consultant hired by the hospital board set forth the need to establish

a 15-member citizens planning committee to work hand-in-hand with the board. In addition, three other sub-committees would feed information into the system.

It is through the board planning committee that changes can and should be effected at Pioneer Memorial, but without the funds necessary to upgrade the facility and attract doctors, there will be no need for the planning committee.

County services require levy

Morrow County residents aren't accustomed to approving funds outside the six percent increase allowed by law to operate everyday county services; the first time outside the six percent limitation for county government was last year.

There are a number of reasons for this and foremost is a growing population, inflation and the need for increased services due to a number of conditions.

County roads were hit with extreme frost and flood damage last winter; county employees received a deserved raise; the criminal case

load and legal services required by all county departments has created the need for an enlarged district attorney's staff; a substantial amount of funds received from the federal government in years past have been cut; and more.

Providing \$100,000 for road repair and maintenance through a few cents per \$1,000 true cash value of your property is smarter than buying new shock absorbers, tires and wheel alignments; increasing the district attorney's staff at \$35,000 is going to be less expensive than sending various county departments

to attorneys in private practice for advice; paying our own way maintains local control, rather than feeding the federal bureaucracy and getting back only a thin slice of what's sent in.

The county is operating with an unrealistic tax base to boot, thus requiring voter approval of operating and maintenance funds.

Tax dollars collected and spent by your county government are a bargain in comparison with other taxes you pay.

The Gazette-Times endorses the county budget and recommends a "yes" vote.

Sifting through the TIMES



Fifty years ago, C.W. Smith, county agent, returned home Sunday from Corvallis to which place he accompanied the Morrow County delegation of 4-H club workers to the Oregon State College convention. He said the boys are having the time of their lives.

The Hudson automobile of Fred Hoskins was completely ruined by fire Sunday evening on Heppner Hill. Mr. Hoskins had recently had the car overhauled and thought it to be in good condition. However he had noticed it was shooting fire from the exhaust. He reported a small amount of insurance carried but not sufficient to replace his loss.

Buster Keaton's The Cameraman, was playing at the Star Theater.

L.V. Van Marter has received word of his appointment to an historical presentation to be presented in an all-state Pioneer Parade in Eugene.

C.L. Sweek was elected director to succeed S.E. Notson and Vawter Crawford named clerk to succeed Mrs. Claud Cox in the district school board elections.

The Gazette-Times editorialized that the farm relief bill had passed and noted, "It looks indeed like better times are ahead for agriculture but the ultimate success of the venture still depends on the cooperation, intelligence and industry of the American farmer." Oregon's own senator, Charles McNary, headed the agricultural relief program since its inception and the bill which finally passed bears his name.

A large number of Heppner people attended the water regatta above the McKay Creek dam Sunday and many report it an enjoyable occasion.

What amounted to a near cloudburst caused the water to run in streams down Blackhorse and Sourdough canyons on Saturday and considerable difficulty was encountered in navigating the roads in the vicinity.

Twenty-five years ago, Leslie E. Grant, county school supt. for the past three years, announced early this week that he has asked the rural school board to release him from the 1954-55 contract and that he has purchased the Columbia Basin Insurance agency at Arlington which he will operate after July 1.

Grant took over from Henry Tetz in 1951.

Heppner's new basketball coach, Larry Downen and his wife, who visited here the first of the week, has been coaching at Sultan, Washington.

Al Lamb, manager of the Morrow County Grain Growers, said the heavy rains which fell on the wheat and barley crop would assure a good crop.

Albert Ullmann, Democratic nominee for Congress and president of the national Hells Canyon association will be the featured speaker at the Pomona Grange Hall in Lexington June 26.

County Judge Garnet Barratt left Monday for Salem following word that his mother, Mrs. W.B. Barratt is ill at a Salem Hospital.

Gene Rietmann's Orchestra will play at the annual Ione American Legion dance, July 3.

Lexington Scouts spent an enjoyable outing at Lehman Springs, collecting merit badges and going swimming in a snow storm. Scouts going were Larry and Laddie Henderson, Bobby Davidson, Vern Nolan, Gerry and Carroll Messenger, and Carl Marquardt, scoutmaster.

The wedding of Miss Betty Messenger to Carl Marquardt, both of Lexington was held in the Christian Church at 8 p.m., Saturday evening June 12.

Five years ago, Morrow County's Fair and Rodeo Queen Sherry Kemp and her four princesses, Mickey Hoskins, Cassy Chapel, Patricia Van Schojaeck and Michele Evans were guests at the noon luncheon of the Chamber of Commerce.

Pioneer Hospital Administrator Ilene Wyman trimmed \$8,427 Wednesday from the proposed \$65,000 a year budget; cut from the budget were funds for a part-time janitor, State of Oregon accident insurance, Blue Cross medical benefits, now to be absorbed by employees, state unemployment on gross earnings of employees, free means for employees who can leave the hospital.

Mrs. John Edmundson attended the Oregon Small School Conference at Willamette University. She was accompanied by her children, Vicki, Kristi and Jeff, who visited friends in Salem.

Tim Hedman of the Giants leaves the ground before, crashing into Indian catcher Dennis Stefani in Monday night's Little League action at the Fairgrounds. Stefani's tag was good for the out and the Indians won it, 7-6.

LETTERS... FROM OUR READERS

Family supports hospital levy;

Editor: As a family, we Abrams would like to voice our support of the Pioneer Memorial Hospital levy to be voted upon June 26.

Having been in this area for 26 years and having used the hospital many times, we have good reason to know that it is an important part of this community's life.

We first used Pioneer Memorial in January 1954 for the birth of our third child; we lived in Fossil and were grateful the hospital was available. (It was a great improvement over the old and crowded hospital facility in Eugene.) The hospital has been a life-saving part of our lives, and we think that its continued operation is vitally important to our community.

We would rather pay extra local taxes than see all our tax monies go to Salem and Washington. At least with the hospital and with our county taxes we can see where and how they are being used and we can affect their use if we make the effort to attend local meetings, serve on local committees and participate in the nomination and election of local officials.

With the energy shortage, we think that keeping Pioneer Memorial Hospital open is, if anything, more important than in the past. The clinic in the north end of the county also takes on more importance. Having once lived in a remote area without a hospital we feel the need of

keeping this area's hospital open and of developing the clinic in Boardman. We urge that everyone get out and vote for the hospital levy.

Bob and Marion Abrams and Family

When needed... hospital is there

Editor: I remember attending the Pioneer Memorial Hospital dedication some 30 years ago. Before 1949, medical services in the community were minimal. During this 30 years our family has seldom needed to use the hospital.

Last Friday night we found out first hand how wonderful it is to have a hospital. My husband suffered a heart attack and needed immediate medical attention. He probably could not have made it to Hermiston or Pendleton.

The prompt efficient treatment he received at the hospital Friday night and the caring attention during this week cannot be underestimated.

We have taken the hospital for granted all these years, but no more. We urge you to support the hospital and pray you won't learn the hard way—as we have—how much we need this institution in our community.

Lucille Peck

Writer claims 'budget used'

Editor: Yesterday, in a question and answer period conducted by this County Commissioner, it became apparent the hospital budget is being used as a device

to pressure resignations from hospital board members and the hospital administrator. The movement is to vote "no", thinking the action will bring the desired result.

Before you enter into this scheme, I hope and pray you will examine your conscience very closely. Are you reacting to actual fact or hearsay? Have your opinions been shaped and molded by "Letters to the Editor" or by conversation or involvement with the people involved?

I have asked for specific reasons why these people should step down. The reasons given to me have not yet been made sufficient in my mind to warrant any changes.

Do you really want to participate in a plan such as this with such far reaching

consequences? Before you vote "no", make sure your reasons justify your actions.

Dorothy Krebs Ione

Seperation of powers lauded

Editor: County Commissioner Dorothy Krebs has been "accused" of being, and I quote from a letter in last week's paper, "so outspoken that she will not even consider a church affiliated group running the hospital."

Commissioner Krebs, if that is so then hooray for you! One of the most basic principles of the U.S. Constitution is the separation of church and state. That means no church or church affiliate shall run a governmental agency.

No man dare accuse me of being anti-church or anti-hospital, but Pioneer Memorial is a county hospital—a governmental agency. No church or church affiliated group (including the Lutheran Hospital Assn.) has any business running a county hospital; not until the Constitution is changed, anyway.

John S. Maas, Pastor Hope-Valby Lutheran Parish

Former Judge endorses levy

Editor: At no time have I felt that we should be more supportive of our county budget and that additional revenues over and above the 6 percent limitation than now.

Costs are high in all departments. This is particularly true in the road department. We are more dependent on good roads in our sparsely settle area and in a county with its many resources.

We need to bolster our resources not only for those living in town but in the sparsely settled areas. Our potential is great. Let's pass the county budget and help make it still more livable right here at home.

Oscar E. Peterson Ione Former County Judge

Writer feels 'there's another way'

Editor: Yes, there is a way to get another vote on the hospital budget. If it is turned down by the voters on June 26, on the morning of the 27th the county court can ask for an extension for filing their budget with the county assessor for an election dated 35 days from then. This would be August 1.

The remainder of the procedure is unknown at this time.

If the public passes the budget there are a few things that must be remembered.

For the last two years, ever since the new administrator took over the hospital, we have had a problem. And since July, 1977, it has cost the taxpayers a bundle of money. When he took over, the former administrator informs me that when she left there was \$45,000 in SCD (Savings Certificate Deposits) in the Bank of Eastern Oregon. The first year the information in the minutes of the meeting of July 25, 1978, the net loss from hospital activities was \$83,000. These were unaudited figures.

According to the May 15, 1979 minutes, as of April 30, 1979, the operating loss because of the use of

facilities and expenses resulted in an operating loss of \$97,204 and the year has not ended.

The question is how long can the taxpayers be expected to pick up the tab?

They say they have a product to sell. The prior administrator had a waiting list for nursing home beds. We now have quite a few vacancies and the board has submitted a letter to the state, their intent to make more.

Whenever you overcharge the public for something you have to sell, they don't come back. In 1977, a bed for a private individual cost only one cent for welfare patients. The rates for our nursing home were then the highest of five checked in the surrounding communities. The nursing home can pay its way, but not with empty beds. If you have a product to sell and can't sell it, you better become competitive.

True, we need a doctor. The north end clinic is sitting empty with no hope at the present time of getting one. The hospital board is pitting the new addition against the one doctor we have at the present time. At the time the grant was asked for, it was thought of as needed and relieving crowded conditions, not to rid

us of one doctor.

I have been one against many. I have felt you the public need to know the facts or I wouldn't have continued on.

You now have the facts, I feel, and my case rests.

Vote no and I feel that someone should then realize the public wants a fair shake for their dollar and something should be done about it.

Vote yes and your dollar will not give you the things I feel you want and can have.



We cannot continue pouring tax dollars down the rat hole because the administrator and the hospital board have decided not to listen to the public and hired a consulting firm that may take up to 2 years to tell them what to do.

The employees, I feel, also need your support, (those who are left). Three were fired and approximately 28 quit.

Let's go out and get the job done. Absentee ballots are available at the courthouse and anyone wanting more information, please feel free to call or catch me on the street, 676-5834.

Merle Cantin

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