Morrow County voters reject all 3 budgets

The Morrow County School Budget, the Heppner City Budget and the Blue Mountain Community College Budget all failed in the county election Tuesday.

The school budget failed in Heppner 390 to 194, in Lexington 74 to 37, and in Irrigon 116 to 104 but it passed in Boardman 184 to 59 and in Ione 98 to 73 but lost overall in the county 712 to 617.

Blue Mountain was unsuccessful in Morrow County but passed in Umatilla County by a large margin. BMCC won in Boardman 168 to 72 and in Ione 91 to 76 but lost 124 to 95 in Irrigon, 72 to 38 in Lexington and 363 to 216 in Heppner losing overall 707 to 608.

The City of Heppner lost its A ballot 308 to 140 and the B ballot 316 to 130.

The closest school board race was between Ed Glenn and Pauline Winter as the winner was not known until Heppner's votes were tallied at 2:30 a.m. yesterday morning. Glenn had a lead of 284 to 268 until Winter's hometown votes came in. She received 410 votes in Heppner while Glenn took only 93 as Winter came out on top 678 to 377.

Glenn won in Boardman 146 to 51 for Sharon Hill and 34 for Winter. Winter won in Ione getting 111 votes to 24 for Glenn and 21 for Hill. Glenn won Irrigon with 92 votes compared to 63 for Winter and 34 for Hill. Winter won Lexington with 60 votes to 22 for Glenn and 14 for Hill.

In the closest race in the county, Shane Fritz edged Robin Cooper for a position on the advisory committee 201 to 200. Cooper won in Irrigon 99 to 79 but lost in Boardman 122 to 101.

The two directors for BMCC ran unopposed and Ken Dauble collected 892 votes and Joe Green 1,009.

Of the 3,610 registered voters in the county, 1,329 voted, almost 37 percent.

School Board

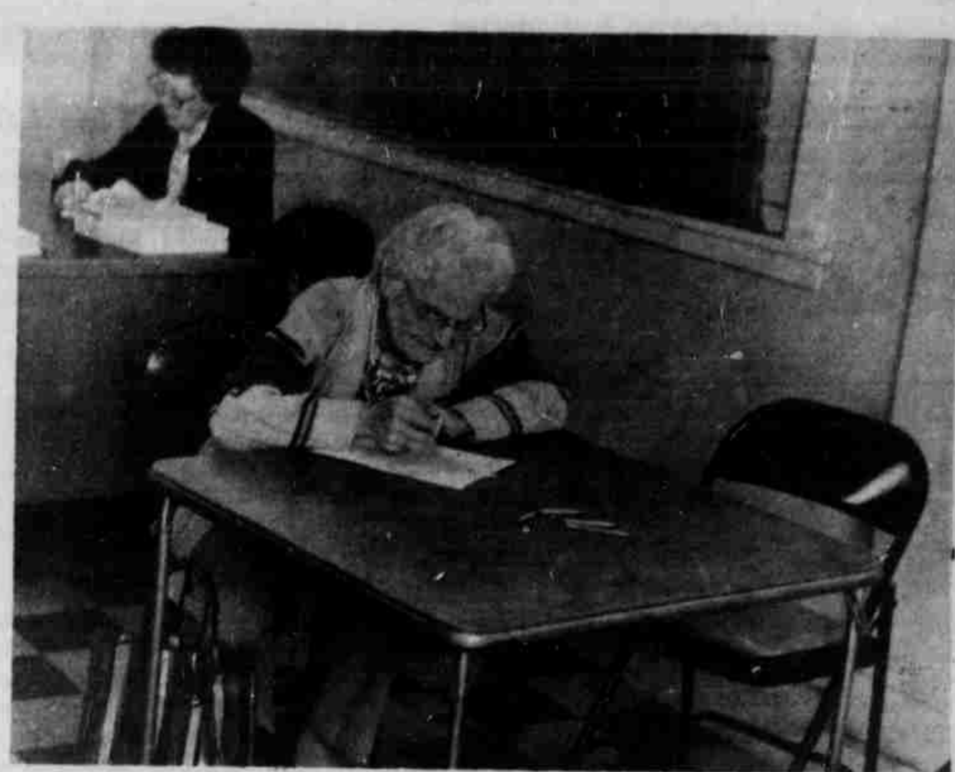
Zone II	Votes
John Matthews	904
Zone V	
Jean Bennett	879
Robert L. Greene	316
Zone VII	
Paul Sumner	816
Monte Stookey	338
At Large	
Sharon Hill	164
Pauline Winter	678
F.E. "Ed" Glenn	377

Advisory Committee

Boardman Position No. 2	
Robin Cooper	200
Shane Fritz	201
Boardman Position No. 1	
M.J. Strege	370
Irrigon Position No. 6	
Louella L. Conboy	375
Irrigon Position No. 5	
Robert Byrd	391
Lexington Position No. 3	
Sharon Harrison	584
Heppner Position No. 5	
Gail Hughes	596
Heppner Position No. 1	
Judy Buschke	393
E. George Koffler	256
Ione Position No. 1	
Paul Tews	156
Ione Position No. 5	
Ed Patton	153

Budget Elections

	Yes	No
Heppner		
School	194	390
City	140	308
Blue Mountain	216	363
Boardman		
School	184	59
Blue Mountain	168	72
Ione		
School	93	73
Blue Mountain	91	76
Lexington		
School	37	74
Blue Mountain	38	72
Irrigon		
School	104	116
Blue Mountain	95	124
Total County		
School	617	712
Blue Mountain	608	707



A voter turns out early Tuesday to "mark" her opinion.

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Weather
by Don Gilliam

	Hi	Low	Pre.
Tues., Mar. 18	52	39	.15
Wed., Mar. 19	56	37	
Thurs., Mar. 20	47	33	.05
Fri., Mar. 21	52	33	.81
Sat., Mar. 22	58	22	
Sun., Mar. 23	50	33	
Mon., Mar. 24	50	32	

Irrigators argue with Columbia Basin over increases

By Steven A. Powell

What irrigators claim has been bad management in past years at Columbia Basin Electric Cooperative in Heppner has come back to haunt the current personnel as recent increases in the irrigation rates have turned neighbor against neighbor.

The major disagreement seems to be that the smaller irrigators (with pumps 30 horsepower and smaller) received up to a 329 percent increase in their February billing while larger irrigators had increases of around 10 to 15 percent.

Larger irrigators say the reason the smaller irrigators are having such a drastic increase is because they were not paying their fair share before the increase. The larger irrigators say they have been paying more than their fair share for years and that is why the percentage of their increase is not as great.

Columbia Basin Manager Fred Toombs is caught in the middle of the disagreement. He said problems have arisen from the recent rate study that was made. The irrigation class must raise almost $723,000 a year to pay for its use of the system. The increases vary according to the size of the installation, he said.

"It (the rate) is a drastic change from prior times," he said. "The small pump irrigators have objected strenuously."

Columbia Basin has had a series of explanatory meetings about the irrigation rate increases in the past two weeks. The CBEC Board of Directors is scheduled to make a decision on the problem this morning at 10 at a meeting at the county fair pavilion in Heppner.

The previous rate for irrigation was $12 per horsepower or a $75 minimum per year. The weak spot in that rate was that the $75 minimum bought electricity, so money that should have been going to Columbia Basin for installation and hook-up costs were instead going to pay for power.

The energy rate was .021 for the first 500 kilowatts, .012 for the next 1,000, .0075 for the next 1,000 and .006 for more than 2,500 kilowatts.

The new rate has an energy charge of .009 per kilowatt for all irrigators. It also has a horsepower charge of $9.80 per horsepower for all irrigators. The fixed charge is where the disagreement begins. It is a new rate that has been made to recover installation costs. A 1½ to 7 horsepower pump cost $250 a year, from 7½ to 100 horsepower is $325 a year, from 101 to 250 is $525 a year, from 251 to 500 is $650 a year and for pumps larger than 500 horsepower, the charge is $950 a year.

The average increase for all of the irrigators is 41.5 percent.

The extremes show that an irrigator with a five horsepower pump who uses 2,500 kilowatt hours a year will have an increase in the annual billing from $75 to $321.50, an increase of 329 percent. An irrigator with a 650 horsepower pump who uses 1,153,600 kwh a year will have an increased annual billing of 10.8 percent from $15,964.50 to $17,702.40.

Because of many complaining letters to Columbia Basin a special meeting took place March 12 to explain the rates to all of the irrigators. As a result of that meeting, two committees were formed (one of small and the other of large irrigators) and they are trying to work out an agreement on the rate hikes.

"If the committees can agree—we (Columbia Basin) will go along with it," Toombs said.

At the first meeting, Columbia Basin director Van Rietmann said the meeting was called to be "responsive to consumers."

He explained that the reason for the increase is because the Bonneville Power Administration raised its wholesale rates, two ice storms in the past three years in the Condon area have cost Columbia Basin more than $700,000, and inflation is another factor.

"We probably should have started gradual rate increases years ago," Rietmann admitted.

Columbia Basin hired Economic Engineer Services Inc. from Bellevue, Wash. to do the original cost of service study. It was the first cost study done at Columbia Basin. Prior to that, rates were formed strictly by educated guesses, according to irrigators.

The object of the rate study is to have each power class—residential, irrigation, general service (small commercial), security and street lighting, and industrial—pay its own way and not be subsidized by another class.

Rietmann said the average increases for all Columbia Basin Electric customers is 37 percent, which should take care of future wholesale increases until 1982.

Rietmann introduced John Springer of R.W. Beck and Associates of Seattle who did a second cost of service study after errors were found in the EES version. The large irrigators got together and hired R.W. Beck and convinced the CBEC Board of Directors that the original study by EES was inaccurate. After examination, the board found that the R.W. Beck study was accurate and so CBEC adopted the rate proposed by those consultants. This caused more dissension among the small irrigators as they have spoken of possible collusion.

Springer said the irrigation load is at its capacity and that part of the increase is to pay for major construction that is now underway to rebuild the system and to reduce line losses.

"The Co-op buys power from BPA and uses transformers to bring the power down to a level you can use," Springer said. "Kinzua does not use any transformers and this is (one reason) why it will not have any increase."

Springer said the Columbia Basin system is lucky because it has a level system year around with heating loads heaviest in the winter and irrigation loads heaviest in the summer so a minimum-sized system can be used. If both loads were at their heaviest at the same time, a much larger system would be needed, he said.

Some small irrigators complained saying they must have paid for the transformers years ago because some have been installed for 30 years.

Springer said this is not true because many small irrigators were only paying the $75 minimum every year and they used most of that in electricity.

In response to all the complaining by the small irrigators, Ken Turner said, "Why don't you put up some bucks for a study like we did?"

Marvin Padberg said, "This thing (the rate study) is fair and I would go before a firing squad and say that—which I already am. I have small pumps too but we should pay what is fair."

Rietmann ended the meeting saying, "We (the CBEC board) should be condemned for not inviting the small irrigators to participate in the rate study. We have to go back to the drawing board and create a livable rate for both classes of irrigators."

Open house planned

Morrow County's School Board made plans for the dedication and open house for the two new schools in the north end, looked at four plans for a tax base election and approved a field trip to Seaside for the Heppner High School band at its monthly meeting last week.

The tentative open house schedule for Sam Boardman Elementary School is April 5.

(Continued on Page 3)

Big irrigators defend study

Eric Anderson and Marvin Padberg are two large irrigators who feel the study made by R.W. Beck and Associates is fair and impartial.

"We (the large irrigators) got screwed by the first rate increase made in November (by Economic Engineer Service Inc.) so we got a hold on the rate change and hired someone of our own," Anderson said. "The small irrigators are where we were four months ago but this rate change is right." It is not just pick a rate and see what happens. It is fair and in black and white."

Anderson said the board of directors at Columbia Basin was reluctant to accept the study made by R.W. Beck because it was paid for by the large irrigators but after looking into the mistakes made in the EES study, the board felt it was correct so Columbia Basin hired the same company to continue investigating the rates.

Padberg said a lack in communication has been the major problem between the small and large irrigators.

He said the large irrigators got together after seeing the tremendous rate increases for them and they started asking questions and found out some things were wrong. So they told Columbia Basin they were going to hire their own consultants and they called Jim Uller, an irrigation engineer in the Tri-Cities. He recommended R.W. Beck.

"We notified some small irrigators but when we told them it was going to cost some money for the professional costs, they weren't interested," Padberg said.

R.W. Beck found mistakes in all classes of the study done by EES.

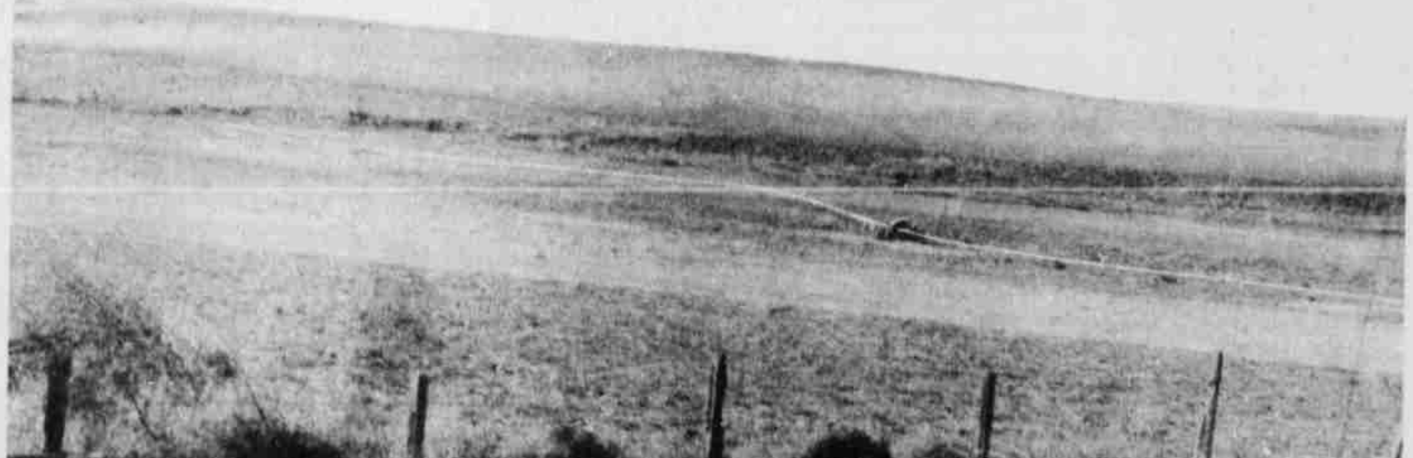
"It was a shoddy job," Padberg said. "R.W. Beck found about $100,000 in mistakes made in the first rate study."

As a result of R.W. Beck's study, Padberg said the large irrigators were proud of themselves because as a result of finding the mistakes, instead of a 37 percent increase, there was only going to be a 25 percent increase for all classes.

"We thought we had really done a public service but then the ice storms hit in Condon causing $300,000 damages and the increase was back up to 37 percent."

Padberg said the new rate has a minimum yearly charge

(Continued on Page 3)



Irrigation pumps like this one taking water out of Willow Creek have been the center of controversy this past week.

Small irrigators upset

Dexter Miles of Heppner and Dana Heidaman of Ione are two members of the small irrigation committee that was formed after the original meeting March 12.

Miles said the larger irrigators paid RW Beck $8,000 to do the rate study and then presented the findings to the board of directors at CBEC, who accepted it and paid the same company more money to continue its investigation into the rate study and develop new rates.

Miles said the first study by Economic Engineer Services Inc. proposed a rate that was $12 a horsepower, a $72 minimum and .0122 per kilowatt hour. He said the larger irrigators did not like that rate because it did not give them a price break for using more energy.

So they had R.W. Beck review the study by EES and if it found some mistakes.

The new rate has "priced us right out of the market," Miles said. "We (the small irrigators) can't raise any crop that will pay."

Miles said Columbia Basin has done everything to help the two committees try and find a solution but, "All we do is get together and argue," he said.

"The new rate does not make a small pump feasible we will have to pull it out," he continued. "It is a crying shame because the land is just going to revert back to sagebrush.

"The Co-op system is for all to be equal," Miles said. "They established that years ago. But the changes are not equal and people are calling in already to disconnet their pumps."

Heidaman said the small irrigation committee has come up with different rates to raise the money needed but, "(large irrigator) Marvin Padberg and company are just not interested. They think their way is the only way to look at it."

Heidamann continued saying that is not Co-op philosophy to charge rates that are not equal.

"That does not sound like Co-op philosophy to charge one guy a 29 percent increase and another a 1.3 percent increase," he said. Heidaman said "what burns me up is that it used to cost $75 to turn my five horsepower pump on and now its going to cost $397."

He said the 7½ horsepower pump he ran last year cost

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