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Weather

by the City of Heppner

March 11-17			
	High	Low	Precip
Tues.	57	36	.09
Wed.	55	37	
Thurs.	55	30	.22
Fri.	51	30	.01
Sat.	45	34	.24
Sun.	49	35	.02
Mon.	52	34	

Westerling pleads guilty



Sheriff Roy Drago (left) escorts LeRoy Westerling following guilty plea

LeRoy Roice Westerling pleaded guilty by reason of insanity Tuesday morning to the November 30 murder of Son Vinh. His former plea was not guilty of murder by reason of insanity. The change of plea was entered before Judge Bob Abrams in Morrow County Circuit Court.

The mandatory minimum sentence for the plea is ten years for murder and five years for possession of a firearm under the jurisdiction of the Psychiatric Security Review Board (PSRB) at the Forensic (maximum security) Unit of the State Mental Hospital. The sentences to run consecutively. Judge Abrams ordered a pre-sentencing investigation and advised both attorneys that he would consider the plea bargaining recommendations, but would not be bound by them.

Morrow County District Attorney Richard McNeerney said he had intended "to go to trial no matter what," for the criminal murder charge, because there was evidence that Westerling had done some sane things before allegedly shooting Vinh who was working in the service area of his Heppner Chevron station. Westerling's attorney Wally Terry of Pendleton had requested the guilty but insane compromise all along. "We're doing all we can to protect society and get my client the help he needs," Terry said.

"It was a tough decision," McNeerney said about agreeing to go for the guilty by reason of insanity plea, but after an investigator talked with key witnesses, additional evidence of Westerling's insanity came up. Westerling was also diagnosed "schizophrenic with paranoid delusions," by Alice Shannon, M.D. of the Forensic Unit of the State Mental Hospital. Three behaviors had to be considered: 1) Westerling's ability to help in his own defense, 2) his ability to understand the criminality of his own actions, and 3) his ability to conform to standards of behavior accepted by society.

McNeerney made the decision, he says, because "the evidence of his (Westerling's) insanity is overwhelming. It's also the option which will keep him off the streets for the longest period of time (because) 15 years is at least five years longer than the best scenario I can envision off a criminal conviction."

McNeerney said he was skeptical about the parole board's ability to keep Westerling in jail if convicted criminally, but expects the nature of Westerling's crime will make the PSRB "real reluctant" to let him out.

A third concern McNeerney mentioned was Westerling himself. "In prison, he gets no help at all"; in the maximum security mental facility under control of the PSRB, however,

"if there is any way to help him, at least these people will be able to do this."

Westerling, 24, of Heppner, is not married and had been unemployed for three-four weeks prior to the alleged shooting of his former employer. Evidence in the case, says McNeerney, will not be released until after the sentencing April 22.

Roughness at basketball games not widespread, board hears

Excessive roughness in basketball games this year is apparently not widespread, the Morrow County school board was told Monday night.

The board heard a complaint from board member Jerry McElligott, who said he had witnessed games at lone that seemed to be a little on the rough side.

"There was one game I saw that had a lot more contact than I had ever seen, and I wondered if there was a rule change allowing no fouls on contact," McElligott said.

McElligott and others from lone have said that this season seemed to be especially bad, with referees not calling enough fouls and at times letting games get out of hand.

Riverside Principal Dan Daltonso checked out the charges, and said he hasn't found widespread roughness throughout the state.

"I don't think it's common; I think it's when teams are exasperated with no other way to win that they tend to be more physical," he said.

Daltonso said he called the Oregon Schools Athletic Assoc. and was told that organization had not received one letter throughout the year on roughness. "It usually happens when you have one weak team, and weak officials," he said.

In other business, the board: -voted unanimously to ratify the teacher-district contract.

-agreed that the district will pay between \$700 and \$800 toward a trip by the Riverside baseball team to California this summer. Previously the district was not to pay any money except providing a bus, however, because of the high cost of liability insurance for out of state travel by a school bus, agreed to give the money for train or bus fair. Fifteen baseball players, two chaperones, the coach his wife, and two children will go on the week-long trip.

-signed an agreement with the Morrow County Fair Board for use of the rodeo arena by the schools for baseball, football games and other activities. The board and the fair board have been working for quite some time to come up with a contract agreeable to both sides.

Budget levies, school board and advisory positions go to voters Tuesday

Voters will decide the fate of the county school levy, the county hospital and operating levies, and the city of Heppner operating levy next Tuesday. Also on the March 25 Special Election ballot are two school board positions and several advisory committee positions. (See related stories inside).

Polls will be open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the following locations: Combined Boardman precincts one and two will vote at the Greenfield Grange Hall;

lone precinct No. 4 will vote at lone City Hall;

Combined Irrigon precincts No. 5 and 6 will mark their ballots at the North Morrow Annex;

Lexington precinct No. 7 will vote at the Mormon Church; and

Combined Hardman-Heppner precincts No. 3, 8, 9, 10, and 11 at the Neighborhood Center.

School levy up \$282,631 over this year

The proposed school budget levy is up \$282,631 or 4.79 percent over this year (not \$47,252 as reported in last week's newspaper.) The proposed operating levy for next is \$6,180,808; the levy approved for this year's operation of the district was 5,898,177.

The \$47,252 or six percent increase is in the district's tax base which is \$787,566 this year and will be \$834,908 next year. No election is required for approval of the tax base.

We regret the error and hope that it has not caused voters or the district any inconvenience.

(See related story in elections section.)

County hires services of crushing consultants

Morrow County has hired United Crushing Consultants to operate the county's rock crusher, Judge Don McElligott announced Tuesday. The county has signed a "personal services" contract which means that they will buy the rock produced from the crusher at \$1 per yard. The crushed rock will be run over the county's belt scales and paid for accordingly. "They made us an offer," the judge said and people tell us our plant is good. United Crushing has successfully operated a similar plant in Alaska.

The county will maintain ownership of the crusher and be responsible for all major overhaul work. United Crushing will operate the crusher and do minor maintenance. The county will furnish a tractor, truck and driver to move the equipment from one set to another, the Judge said.

The minimum production the county is asking them to meet is 65,000 yards of crushed rock per year. "If the quantity and quality and maintenance is satisfactory and meets all requirements, the county will agree to extend the contract,"

County road patching begins

County road crews have most of the work done cleaning up recent washouts of county roads, County Judge Don McElligott said Tuesday.

Crews have also started patching some of the badly damaged roads and three trucks are expected to be working on the patching by next week.

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City budget is down

The budget request by the City of Heppner on the ballot at next week's election is for \$25,309. An approximate tax rate of \$9.99 per \$1,000 of assessed property value is required to support the budget.

The budget includes \$71,737 for a water bond retirement payment to be made during the year. The tax rate of approximately \$2.71 to raise that amount is included in the total rate of \$9.95, which is 28 cents less than the rate supporting the current year's budget.

The city's tax base is \$167,277. The original request for the new budget presented the budget committee was for a tax levy of \$72,479. Budget officer Marshall Lovgren said that was a conservative amount and would provide a lean budget because costs of everything were up.

George Koffler, a member of the committee, said he thought it would be difficult to pass any budget this year and asked that it be trimmed to within the tax base. That didn't

happen, but in two lengthy sessions the committee managed to more than cut the requested amount in half.

In their effort to reduce the amount of property taxes needed, they transferred \$3,000 from the Revenue Sharing fund to the general fund. It was recommended that the city increase the sewer service charge from \$5 to \$6 per month. The city adopted the recommendation and the new charge will go into effect July 1.

A copy machine costing \$1,500 was listed in the budget for the city office. The city has been trying to get this for several years, but it was one of the first things cut out. A shed to cover the gravel piled by the city, at a cost of \$500, was also eliminated.

Street repair is one of the things the budget committee has cut each year. Members admitted it was becoming a big problem, and that something would have to be done about raising the money, but they still cut \$20,000 from that account.

Mayor Cara Costa has appointed a committee from the council to see if a bond should be issued to raise funding for street repair. She told the budget committee the city was looking into that course, and if it seemed feasible, a vote on bonds would be held.

An amount of \$2,500 was taken from the street department supplies such as street paint, rock and asphalt. In the police department, the car expense fund was reduced by \$2,500 and \$2,000 was taken from police reserve car fund.

In addition, \$2,000 was cut from the amount needed for an audit because of a lower than expected bid.

Materials for water supplies was reduced by \$4,500.

Requested increased salaries for employees was trimmed to a 2.5 percent cost of living increase. This merely matched a 2.5 percent incentive pay increase which employees had been receiving for several years, but which had been eliminated by the council.

Koffler was not satisfied when all the cutting was done and still made a motion that a final cut, should be made to bring the total within the tax base. He lost when he was outvoted by the other five members present. Councilman Marvin Lane said he would like to see the voters have a chance to express their feelings on what they want of the city. "If it doesn't go services will have to be cut," he said.

"No more than that, I can't see cutting services," said budget committee member Jacki Ailstott.

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Fillies claim championship!



Left to Right— Coach Mike Royer, Missy Eubanks, Lana Reid, Cindy Stroeber, Penny Connor, Theresa Lindsay, Cathy Martin, Sandy Turner, Tina Davidson, Dana Reid, Missy Turner and Andrea Ball celebrate Fillies first place finish in state tournament

More sports second section