

School Board has not addressed issues

To the Editor:
A neighbor brought the "RESQ" flyer by our house last night and it prompted us to write the following letter to the Morrow County School Board. We have mailed the original to the School Board.

A copy of the letter follows:
Dear School Board,
We voted against the school tax levies and intend to do so again. The School Board has not addressed issues which we consider basic to the financial stability of Morrow County schools.

You must face the fact that times are changing in Morrow County and will never be the same again. The North County is growing, the South County is shrinking. We can no longer afford the luxury of high schools at both Lone and Heppner. It is our understanding that Lone High will have 50-55 students this year. Even if it had 100 as it did when our children attended, it still would not be large enough to provide the quality and variety of education that our children deserve. Consolidation of Heppner and Lone High Schools are long overdue.

In your "RESQ" flyer you state that the new school budget is \$12,554 less than last year's budget. That is about a 0.2% cut and you are proud of that? Our ranch produces alfalfa hay (down 15-20% from last year), wheat (down 20-25% from last year), and feeder cattle (which are now about the same as last year but were down about 20% from last year in June when dry pastures forced the sale of ours.) What makes you think that this ranch or any other ranch can afford to pay any amount outside the tax base? Most of us are getting by with drastically reduced cash income this year and very little decrease in expense.

We need tax relief, not tax increase. This, of course, is a state-wide issue which could be solved by an iron clad California Proposition 13 type property tax reduction and a state sales tax dedicated solely to elementary and high school education. We haven't heard any clarion calls for such a proposal coming from the Morrow County School Board. We really do need property tax relief.

You state that all educational and extracurricular programs are being maintained at a quality level. It would seem to us that extracurricular activities—no matter how desirable—should be reduced, or even eliminated, under the present circumstances.

You state that "the system is working well throughout the county." We don't really believe that. If it were we wouldn't be in the situation we are in.

We have just read the "Gazette-Times" September 3 editorial page and believe that nearly every statement in the "Voted Against" section makes a valid point. You simply have not addressed economic realities either long term or short term.

We also feel that the Board's stated threat to run the schools on the proposed budget until the end of the year and then close them if the levies fail is ill-advised and will certainly be counter productive in the long run. What you are in effect saying to the people is, "Vote our way or we'll fix you." Certainly there are

other choices.

As voters and taxpayers we have only one weapon available to try to force a change in the situation and protect our economic future. That is a "no" vote and we intend to use it.

Please do not feel that we have no interest in Morrow County schools. Wilma served on the Lone Advisory Committee; four of our seven children graduated from Lone High School; we will have grandchildren at Lone Elementary in two years. We hope that when the grandchildren reach high school they will be able to attend a high school in Morrow County that will give them the challenges and quality of education that they need and deserve.

The changes need to start right now with the closing of Lone High School. During this emergency period we should also eliminate "away" sports activities and things like paid cheerleader advisors. We suppose the time is past when teachers considered such activities a normal extension of the duties of their job, but the community could be asked for volunteers to do this kind of job. There are a great many very talented and skilled people out here who would really enjoy teaching their skills to kids without salary.

Sincerely yours,
(s/s) David and Wilma Cheney
Cecil Star Route
Lone, Oregon 97843

Lone supports its school

To the Editor:
After reading the Gazette-Times last week, I am very concerned about what is happening between our communities. Comments are being made with no facts to back them up. Many people are new to the area, or have moved into this area and have accepted what their neighbors have told them as fact, without checking with the proper agencies to make sure it is true.

The people of the Lone area are very supportive of our schools, not just when there is a budget issue, but consistently on all school issues and for many years. Heppner and Irrigon have not supported these issues consistently. (Records prove this.) If Lone were to be consolidated with other Morrow County schools, I am positive there are many people from Lone, who would never vote "yes" on another school issue—ever again. Ask many people in Lexington why they do not vote for the budget, and they will tell you this is the reason. Do you think that there are enough people who would support each issue without help from Lone? Lone has many things going for our schools that are not seen in some of the other schools...such as Cardinal club, student fund raisers (such as Deena Hams trip to China), money raising projects to purchase things needed in our schools and have not been included in the school budget.

The statement was made that Lone has a plush school. The facilities at Lone do include a swimming pool—which was paid for by donations from people from the lone area, and not from taxpayers in Morrow county. This and the cafeteria, kitchen, band room, and gym complex were built and paid for by the people of Lone before the school was a part of the Morrow county school District. Since the merging of the schools, lone people have helped pay for: 1. An addition to the elementary building and a new middle school at

Irrigon. 2. A new elementary and new high school at Boardman. 3. A high school, remodeling of the old high school and a new shop at Heppner. Lone has received a new shop building, the addition of six classrooms, bathroom facilities and an office for the high school. I don't feel as though anyone can honestly say that we have not footed our share of the bills.

There are drawbacks to every budget. We all have our pet peeves...whether it is sports, personnel, or busing. One of the main concerns that would have to be faced if there was to be a merging of schools is busing. I would like for each taxpayer to stop and ask themselves these questions: 1. Would I be willing to have my child ride a bus 36 miles each way—every day? That is the most direct route (without any diverting to pick up other students) for students to be bused to Heppner.

Remember that there would have to be two buses on each route due to students being either high school or elementary age. Or, if all Lone students were to ride the same buses to the school in lone, there would have to be some kind of program worked out to care for these children to fill the time before and after school. 2. Would I be willing for my child to do that? This makes a long day for young elementary school students. Extra curricular scheduling and busing would need to be considered, since our students would have the same right as Heppner students to participate in sports and other school activities. 3. Would I be willing to take time off from my work to allow for extra driving time, as some lone families would have to do, to be able to watch their child participate in school activities? (Boardman could also be considered an option where ever Heppner is mentioned.) A second concern to consider is that if lone high school were to be closed, the teachers with tenure would be allowed to fill positions in other Morrow county schools and teachers without tenure would be terminated.

It is my understanding that the Morrow County School Board has to give the lone people a notice of six months before they can close the school. It would take at least that long to be able to obtain a study to determine most economical way to merge the students into the other schools in Morrow County. Voting no is not going to solve the problems for this year.

Drug and Alcohol usage in Lone, was mentioned as "free for all". There may be some students in lone who do use alcohol or drugs...but I feel it is a minority of students who do this in every school in Morrow County...not just in lone.

Our school board members and administrators are citizens of our community who willingly donate many, many hours of time. These people do this without any training, or reimbursement for the time, gas, long distance phone calls, time away from their jobs or businesses. Would you be willing to give that? Have you thought to give them a word of thanks lately? These people need to know they are appreciated once in awhile. It is hard to agree with them on all issues. Maybe there is a personality conflict...but, are you big enough to try to work with them anyway? Remember that they must consider the legality of the issues, the concerns of all people, state and federal regulations, as well as considerations to all people including teachers, parents, all taxpayers, and administrators.

Most of our teachers are dedicated people who enjoy teaching and want the best for our students, and our communities. There are a few people who give less than is needed to do a good job in every profession...not just teachers. Sure, they want fringe benefits...don't you? We are all here trying to make a decent living...and teachers are no exception. We, as taxpayers, need to work with them to get the best teachers for the amount of money we feel we can give. This is where negotiations come in. Again, have you thought to give a teacher a pat on the back lately?

We all want the best for our students. Let us be adult enough to try to work together, to get this issue settled, our children are the ones who will suffer if we do not work together to get the best education possible for the dollars we can give. Morrow County has the lowest tax base of any county around us. Thank goodness we don't live in a county where it is three times that amount. When you see these young people growing and becoming well educated adults, only then will we realize what a plus that will be for our county. Seriously stop and think about voting, and your real reasons for doing it. I personally feel that the students of Morrow County deserve the best, don't you?

Sincerely,
(s) Jean Jepsen.

Closing lone schools won't save money

To The Editor:
"What are the pros and cons for keeping the lone High School Open?" was a question asked in last week's Gazette Times. While not an easy question to answer, it is certainly one which must be addressed. The following paragraphs contain brief statements about the impacts of closure on the county, community, and students as well as presenting information on taxes and quality of education in small schools.

It is felt in some quarters that large savings will accrue to the citizens of Morrow County if the lone High School is closed. It must be realized that closing the high school does not translate into a direct reduction of dollars in the budget equal to the present cost of operating the high school in lone. Transportation costs, for example, would increase substantially, not only because of distance but also because all lone High School students would have to be bused, not just those that live out of lone. It should be noted, also, that many students would have a daily bus travel time exceeding three hours. The school receiving the high school students would, of necessity, have to augment its teaching staff to accommodate the influx. It is certain that the budget of the receiving school would increase the following year for expansion of facilities made necessary by the increased student load. The high school facilities, cafeteria, and gym are shared by the entire student population in the lone schools. Since the junior high and grade school students would continue to use the facilities whether the high school students were present or not, no savings would be realized after moving the high school pupils. It is difficult to determine what amount of dollars would be a realistic estimate of savings. However, after evaluation, it is doubtful that over the first year 80 thousand dollars could be saved out of a 7 million dollar total budget (slightly more than one tenth of 1%). That equates to less than five dollars in taxes per year on a property valued at 50,000 dollars.

While the dollar savings on a county-wide basis is minimal, the economic impact on the losing community and county would be significant. The high school is the center of activity in the lone area. It is absolutely vital to our existence as a viable community and essential to our plans for growth. On a county-wide basis it can only be viewed as a loss when prospective residents have only a choice of two high schools in the county. With so many organizations in Morrow County dedicated to growth (the Morrow County Court, Port of Morrow, Chambers of Commerce in Boardman and Heppner, Heppner Economic Development Corp. and the lone Community Agri-Business Organization), a school closure has to be seen as a drastic step in the wrong direction.

The political ramifications of closing the lone High School could be significant. Such an action against the will of the losing community most certainly would result in long term resentment. The bad feeling could only be detrimental to the county overall.

The lone students, themselves, would be adversely affected. No matter how large the school, there still will be only one football team, one student body president, one vice-president, one track team and one cheerleading team, etc. While most of lone High School's 42 students now participate in more than one extra curricular function, many would be deprived of engaging in these character-building activities following a move to another location. Because of the time and distance involved, it would be extremely difficult for lone students to participate in extra curricular events at any other school in Morrow County.

Following are some additional facts that should be separately highlighted. 1. The total lone School Budget for 86-87 was \$950,000 (12 grades). The assessed evaluation for the lone area produces \$640,000. This, added to the state subsidies and

other revenue sources, exceeds our budgeted figure. The idea that we are financially subsidized by tax dollars from another area is simply not true. 2. Data reveal that during the 16 year period of lone history, 1965-1981, 80% of lone High School graduates went on to Post Secondary Education, with 48.9% completing their degree. This tends to disprove the belief that students from small schools do not get an adequate education. 3. Voting no on the budget will not immediately close lone High School. The board has a policy on school closure that the process takes 6 months.

In summary we believe the answer to our problems lies in a joint effort for growth, not in reducing our capacity to attract residents and industry. We believe growth can be achieved with a spirit of cooperation, not resentment and we want to grow in harmony, not isolation.

Respectfully submitted,
ICABO
John Bristow,
Chairman
lone-Lexington Advisory Committee
Marvin Padberg
Julie Nelson
Keith Rea

Gold plated system

To the Editor:
Morrow County voters are being asked why they are voting "no" on the school budget. The following are some of my personal reasons:

1. Taxes (for schools) on my home in Boardman:
1983-84 - \$716.00
1984-85 - \$803.00 (up 12 percent).
1985-86 - \$1,004.00 (up 12 percent).
1986-87-???

2. The per-student cost of education in Morrow County has increased from \$1,915.25 in 1980-81 to \$3,788.90 for the 1985-86 year; up 98 percent in five years. The economy of Morrow County has not kept pace-it is down, not up.

I feel that the School Board has failed to do its job. The voters have three times said "no" to the gold-plated system we have; they have said "cut the cost." The Board has responded by saying we will either pay for the gold-plate, or we will have no system at all.

Morrow County tax payers are entitled to a better job. We can have a good system at an acceptable cost—this "shotgun to the head" tactic being used by the Board is wrong.

Sincerely,
(s) Bruce O. Nicholes
P.O. Box 347
Boardman, OR 97818

Vote 'yes' for high school seniors

TO THE EDITOR:
I am a senior at Heppner High School. I have gone through almost all 11 years of school with the same people, the class of 87. As everyone knows, the school budget is having trouble passing, and it has been announced that if the budget does not pass this time, school will close December 31. This means that all we seniors will be forced to graduate somewhere other than Heppner. From talking to only about five members of my class, I can see that if this happens, it is doubtful that more than three of us will graduate from the same place.

I cannot imagine graduating, walking down that aisle on what's supposed to be one of the greatest moments of my life, without the rest of my class here at Heppner walking with me. We all would, instead, be receiving our diplomas with a bunch of strangers. What kind of graduation is that? Graduation is something we wait for, plan for, prepare for all our lives. To have to share that with a group of people I don't know, in a town I never lived in, in a school I shouldn't have had to go to, would take all the importance out of it. Please, for the sake of us seniors, vote yes on the school budget. It means more to you than you could ever imagine.

(s)Sofi Struthers

Births

Kelsie Ann Longway-Vince - a daughter, Kelsie Ann, was born September 2 to Lori and Peter Longway-Vince of lone at St. Anthony Hospital in Pendleton. The baby weighed 7 lbs. 10 1/2 oz.

Grandparents are Robert Vince of Yuma, Arizona, and Pearl and Leslie Longway of Sherwood.

Sarah Renee Peck - a daughter, Sara, was born September 4 at Good Shepherd Hospital in Hermiston to Camille and Stephen Peck of lone. The baby weighed 9 lbs. 4 oz.

Grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. Lyle Peck of Heppner.

Great grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. H. G. Peck, Lexington, Mrs. Dolly Allstott, Pendleton and Mrs. Ida Hamilton of Puyallup, Washington.

Sara joins a sister, Amelia, 2 1/2, at home.

Bristow reports

Reagan says lone schools to remain open



According to a report by Don Bristow of lone, the President declared today that the hunting season for the red Cardinal, which nests in the lone-Lexington area, should be closed indefinitely. Mr. Reagan also said the taking of "pot shots" by careless hunters can only lead to festering wounds that never heal. Mr. Reagan further stated that he felt the lack of accurate information has contributed greatly to the reckless and un-ending pursuit of this fine bird.

The President closed his remarks by saying he believed the people of Morrow County should all be working together toward harmony, good will, and peace with their feathered friends.

A White House spokesperson reported that first lady Nancy Reagan was appalled when she learned of this situation. Mrs. Reagan was quoted as saying, "My Goodness!!, they have blown the Irrigon Comets out of orbit, clubbed the Lexington Jackrabbits, and now, they've got the lone Cardinals in their gun-sights! Good Grief, what's next!!!"

She concluded her remarks by giving this advice to the hunters of the Cardinals. "Remember, hunters, a red feather in your cap is nothing to be proud of - instead, you people out there should take pride in having three fine species residing in your county, the friendly Pirate, the spirited Mustang, and the proud Cardinal.

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