

The Heppner

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Court unable to postpone public hearing on health care districts

The Morrow County Court will appoint a seven-member committee to study health care in Morrow County at its December 3 meeting. Members of the committee will represent both North and South ends of the county and will discuss each area's health care needs. The committee will advise the court of any conclusions it is able to form.

Letters from the Boardman Chamber of Commerce, the Heppner Chamber of Commerce, Lone Community and Agri-Business Organization, City of Lexington, Pioneer Memorial Hospital Board and Administrator, and the Heppner Economic Development Corporation were presented to the Court last Wednesday by Bob Miller, chairman of the North Morrow Medical Clinic Board, and by Larry Mills of the Pioneer Memorial Hospital Foundation Board. The letters asked the court to delay for 30 days a Dec. 9 public hearing regarding the formation of two health care districts in Morrow County. The letters also asked for appointment of a committee to explore alternatives to meet health care needs for the whole county.

The court said that it could not grant the request to postpone the hearing because state law requires 10 days public notice if the date of a hearing is changed. The next possible publication date for a hearing notice was December 3 which would only be six days prior to the hearing.

"The reason for our request is to get people together from both sides of the issue to sit calmly to discuss the problems," Mills said. "December 9 will not provide enough time for this and will force the court to make decisions alone. The postponement is critical because we've been spending too much time arm waving and getting carried away, but I think there is some common ground out there and if we discuss calmly, we can reach some decisions," he said.

Just because the hearing begins on December 9 does not mean that it needs to end that same night, Commissioner Peck pointed out. The hearing will open at 7 p.m. at Riverside High School in Boardman and the Hearings Officer will listen to and record testimony, but if someone at the hearing should request a recess, the hearing could be continued up to 30 days later without further public notice, Peck said. A second hearing 21-50 days after the conclusion of the first hearing is required by law.

"Any request for a delay of the December 9 hearing should be taken as a protest to the formation of a north end health care district," Dr. Steven Zielinski told the court earlier in the day. "The concern is a delaying tactic which could delay a final action," he continued. "The petition was presented to this commission, and should be acted on by this commission. I have been informed that people are taking steps to get the petition already before the court nullified. You recognize that citizens want something done. If the North end wants its own district, it's nobody else's business," he said.

The petition to which Zielinski referred asked the court to consider forming two health care districts within the county, with the Willamette Baseline as the dividing line. Each district would be supported by taxes raised from within its own boundaries the petition said. The petition, Commissioner Peck emphasized was not a legal petition but a letter with 750 signatures which called itself a petition. The Court has responded to the petition as it would only request from that many people, Judge Don McElligott pointed out.

Should the Court receive a legal initiative petition before the hearings

process is complete, it would have to take action on that petition, Peck continued. If the Court receives more than one petition, it must act on the first one it receives, he said.

In other business, the Court: authorized going out for bids for a mapping program including software and hardware for the county's computer system. Purchase of the program was included in this year's budget.

heard from County Architect Bob Smith that construction is continuing at the North Morrow Annex.

accepted a warranty deed from Roff's Construction for two lots on the north side of the annex.

heard a recommendation from Planning Commission Chairman John Bristow that Old Hwy. 730 be closed to through truck traffic between the Irrigon City limits and Patterson Ferry Road.

declared that Dave Cheny's request to remove 100 cu. yards annually from Willow Creek would have no adverse effects on waterflow.

heard a road report from Roadmaster Don Ball.

held an executive session concerning acquisition of property.

authorized Sheriff Roy Drago to purchase three police cars. \$33,980 is allowed for that purpose in this year's budget.

heard that Sheriff Drago received the title for surplus military vehicles purchased by the county in 1974. The vehicles were given to different county agencies, Drago said. He suggested the County also give each agency the title for its vehicle.

heard that the Sheriff has an agreement with Umatilla County to house prisoners at a cost of \$65 per day. This is an overflow agreement, for housing prisoners for \$45 per day

Recount of Irrigon precincts announced

Votes cast November 4 for the Irrigon City Council positions will be recounted, Morrow County Clerk Barbara Bloodsworth has announced. The recount will begin at 10 a.m. Monday at the Morrow County Courthouse.

The Secretary of State's Office has authorized the recount, Bloodsworth said. A write-in candidate for a council position made the request.

The recount will involve only the Irrigon precincts and only the city council positions, the clerk said.

Council sees housing project blueprints

By Avon Melby

Blueprints for remodeling Heppner Hotel into a retirement housing unit were shown to Heppner City Council Monday. Location of the Senior Citizen portion of the building on the ground floor, and of the three studio apartments and 16 one-bedroom apartments were shown on the architect's drawings. There will also be two guest rooms for visiting friends of tenants.

Bill Kuhn, city attorney, said rentals had been estimated at \$355 for the bedroom apartments, and \$290 for the studio apartments, with utilities included.

Estimated construction cost is \$970,000. "It is a low-risk project, and a needed addition to downtown Heppner," he said.

The hotel was originally named "St. Patrick Hotel." It was listed on the National Registry of Historic Sites by that name and will retain the name. By being on the National Registry the tax on the building will be tied in for 15 years at the current rate, thus lessening cost to the city, which will own the building.

has not had enough cell space for the county's sentence prisoners. When Benton County Jail has no room, Umatilla County facility will be used, he said.

heard from Dr. Zielinski that he had completed a trauma and life support course at La Grande. The course is a necessary step for a doctor to qualify as a physician-advisor for ambulance services.



'Tis the Season
Santa and his helper visited with Heather Hughes last Saturday when the Jolly Elf visited Heppner. St. Nick will be back at the Les Schwab showroom at 1 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 13.

Health care in Morrow County

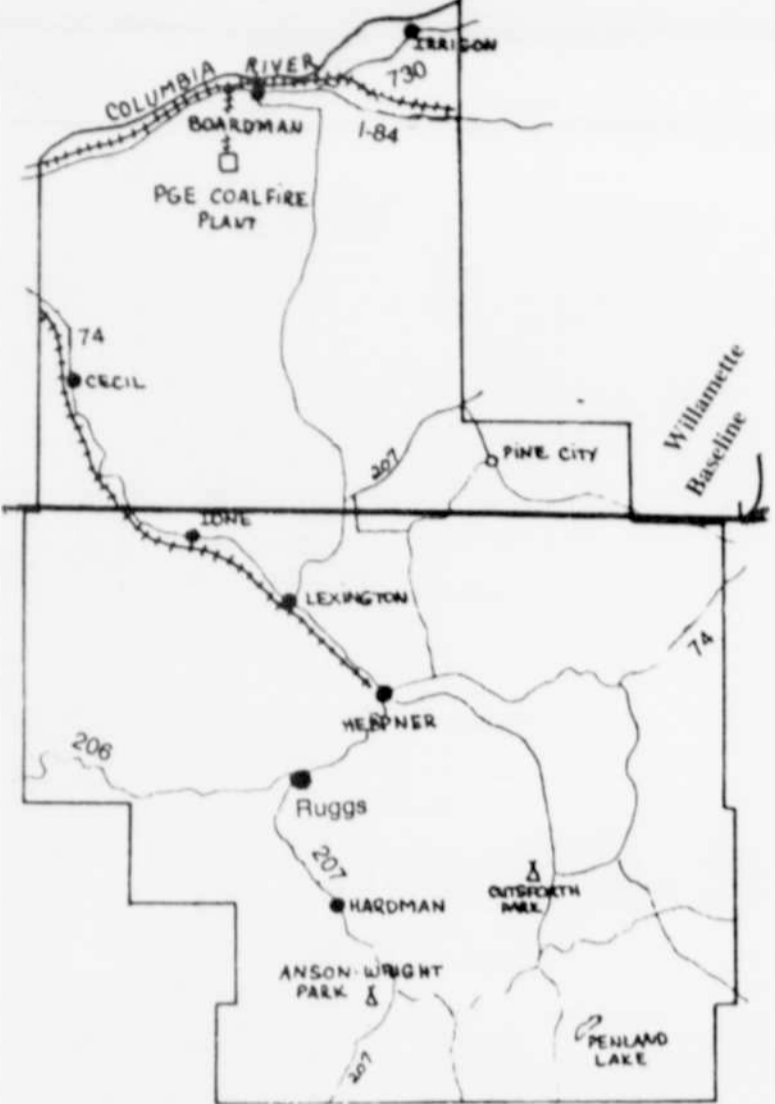
Where North & South differ

Morrow County Court received an informal petition on September 24 requesting the formation of two separate health districts within Morrow County. Each district would be directed by a five-member board and would be funded by taxes collected based on a tax base derived from area within its own boundaries only, the petition said. The Willamette Baseline was named as the dividing line between the North and South districts. North Morrow Medical Center and Boardman Ambulance would be the lead agencies in the North District and the Pioneer Memorial Hospital would be the lead agency for the South District.

The petition was not presented as a legal initiative petition. It was, in fact a letter with 759 signatures calling itself a petition, County Commissioner Jerry Peck said. The informal nature of the petition, Peck has explained, was to allow "the Court some flexibility in working out a system people could live with."

The Court has felt an obligation, moral, if not legal, to hold public hearings concerning the formation of health care districts, Peck said. A hearing has been set for Tuesday, Dec. 9, 7 p.m. at Riverside High School in Boardman.

Since the petition has 756 signatures from North county residents and three signatures from South county residents, it could be considered a petition to form one district at the North end of the county. One area cannot form a district for another area, he said. The legal notice advertising the public hearing indicates that it would address the



formation of two districts. If the hearing were changed, a new notice would have to be published, Peck said.

When a district is formed, any governing body (city council) within that district's boundaries can request that it be excluded from the district. The County Court has the authority to change the boundaries of the district.

"It's a difficult procedure at best," Peck said. "It is my understanding that the December 9 hearing can last up to four weeks, longer if further notice is given. At the end of the hearing, the Court makes a decision and a final hearing is then held within 20-50 days to restate the decision. The purpose of the second hearing is to allow people who might not like the court's decision, a chance to prepare an initiative petition and force an election."

If the court received a legal petition in the meantime, it would take precedence over what the court has chosen to do thus far based on an "illegal" petition and the hearings process would begin again.

Some people are working toward an equitable solution to the problem, Peck said. In the past, the separate boards were protecting their own. Now there is an opportunity for something which can serve the entire county.

It is essential not to delay beyond the time for a March election to vote on formation of health care districts, Peck said. "We cannot afford to delay beyond February 5, to get the issue on the March ballot. It is also important to delay as long as possible before that time in order to give those people working toward a compromise a chance."

Although the original petition proposed the Willamette baseline as the boundary between the two districts, several other boundaries have been proposed, including one which puts the PGE coal plant in the south district, one which splits the plant between the two districts, and one which excludes it from both districts.

The present county-wide tax rate for health care only is 48¢ per \$1000 of assessed valuation, Peck said. If the current levy amounts were divided at the baseline with those raised in the north supporting the North

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Weather Report

By City of Heppner

November 18-24			
	High	Low	Precip
Tues.	52	31	.03
Wed.	56	40	.23
Thurs.	45	38	.33
Fri.	42	37	.09
Sat.	45	29	0
Sun.	43	31	0
Mon.	54	32	0

Total precipitation for the month of November was 2.87 inches. Normal precipitation for November is 1.49 inches.

Market Report

Compliments of the Morrow County Grain Growers

Tuesday, Dec. 2		
Soft White		
Dec.		\$2.88/\$2.90
Jan		\$2.92/\$2.94
Feb		\$2.96/\$2.98
Hard Red Winter		
Ordinaries		\$2.96
Dec./Jan	Barley	\$81
	PIK	
Generic certificates		112% cash

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Housing assistance may be available to hotel residents

People wanting to live in the senior citizen housing project who feel they will be unable to afford the rent may qualify for Section 8 Housing Assistance. A representative of

the Umatilla Housing Authority will be at Heppner City Hall Monday, Dec. 8 to provide information for interested persons.

to council members. Councilman Bob Ployhar said he would like to have time to study them before a decision on how the city should go about controlling pit bulls was made. The council will make a decision next month.

Rathbun said personnel policies agreed on at a three-hour meeting last spring had been changed when they were written up, that things such as smoking regulations had been added. A monthly qualifying for shooting must be made for police. "This would cost too much, the city couldn't afford it," he said. The regular policy called for that twice a year. Kuhn said he did not

Chief Doug Rathbun reported a pit bull dog had killed another dog in the city recently. Since this subject came up last month City attorney Kuhn had looked up ordinances in effect in other areas, and passed them out

Clifford Green, president of Heppner Economic Development Corporation, which spearheaded the work on the project, said "We covered a lot of hurdles to get to this point, the last is to get a contractor interested at the amount estimated." He added, "We think we've got a pretty good project to hand you."

A loan application for the needed \$390,000 to get the project going is being processed at the Bank of Eastern Oregon, and will be asked at First Interstate Bank. A loan for the amount has been approved by the state but those working on it feel they can obtain better interest rates through a local bank.

Kuhn said it is expected that work can begin early enough that the building will be ready for occupancy by January, 1988.

The city agreed to appoint two council members to a committee to be made up of representatives of H.E.D.C. and Senior Citizens. This committee will take care of the day-to-day decisions and make recommendations to the council.

Kuhn talked on a proposal to form