

The Heppner

Morrow County's Home-Owned Newspaper

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County unity recurring theme at town hall meeting

County unity was a recurring theme at a Monday night Town Hall meeting in Ione during which various controversial topics were discussed.

Cliff Green, Heppner, drew the only spontaneous applause of the evening, speaking as one of the nearly 50-member audience. Heppner has taken flack lately for not passing the school budget in our area, he said. I don't have any one answer why it hasn't passed here. The economy has deteriorated with an 18% pay cut at Kinzua, nearly one-fourth of crop land taken out of production with the Conservation Reserve Program, prices of cattle down, and general uncertainty. "Leaner times are ahead and now is the time to evaluate and set new priorities on what to do. But first, we're going to do the best we can to get the school budget passed this time. And then, we're going to sit down and talk, and get this county back together," he said.

The meeting, one of a series of meetings in the county's cities is an attempt by community civic and business leaders to keep people informed of current issues effecting the county and to give them an opportunity to comment about and contribute to the solutions. A similar meeting was held last week in Irri- gion and another is scheduled for January 7 in Heppner.

Three speakers, Assistant Superintendent of Schools Chuck Starr, Port Manager Bob Miller, and Judge-elect Louis Carlson presented information and answered questions on the following issues: the need for passing a \$366,736 serial levy on January 13, the history and future of education in Morrow County, adequate medical care for both ends of the county, new tenants at the Port of Morrow, the port's relationship to south Morrow County, and the possible sale of the Heppner Branch of the Union Pacific rail line to a short line operator.

School Serial Levy
"If the levy is not approved, it will be a deep blow to education which we will not be able to get out of for many years," Starr said. Even if the levy is approved, the district will have to tighten its belt. This year's levy (including the not yet approved serial levy) is actually \$119,604 less than last year's operating levy, he said. (See chart).

School Board Vice Chairman Jerry McElligott said that the board did not cut the budget following the first levy defeat because "we were close and we decided to try harder. We didn't make it. Then we reduced the levy and the yes to no spread was even wider. We began to wonder, 'Are people telling us where we were was closer? Should we have added to the budget?'" Another vote approved the \$5.1 million one-year operating levy. Cutting the budget by the serial levy amount was the only way to go," he said. "The board had to make a decision and everyone knows it was not unanimous. The votes were split on the manner the levy was cut, not the fact that it was cut."

Starr continued that the cost per pupil estimates prepared by the Oregon State Dept. of Education for 1985-86 show that eastern Oregon districts vary with Morrow County neither the highest or lowest. The highest cost per pupil he cited was the Condon district which spends \$6,545 per pupil and the lowest was Hermiston which spends \$2,967 per pupil. The cost per pupil in Morrow County is \$4,254.

The district provides quality education, he said. The signs of a quality program are what happens to students after they graduate. Our students go on to become doctors, lawyers, engineers, farmers, teachers, self-employed entrepreneurs, and quality workers. The small class-size the district enjoys makes it hard for students to slip through the system without their needs being met, he emphasized. Another evidence of the quality of

the system is students high test scores compared with nationwide samples. "We are improving and expect to continue to try to improve; we won't just quit with what we have now."

Health Care

Traveling in Irri- gion and Boardman during the campaign and visiting there for 11 years as a Port of Morrow Commissioner, it is obvious that with a freeway and two large food processing plants, there could be problems with medical care, Judge-elect Louis Carlson said. Two petitions concerning health care have been presented to the County Court: The first came from North Morrow County asking for changes and more money to upgrade their health care; it asked that two districts be formed in the county. The second came from South Morrow County asking for formation of one, county-wide district. Both petitions lacked some of the requirements for a legal petition to the Court. However, the Court reacted to each as if it were a letter signed by over 700 people asking the Court to take action.

Dr. Steve Zielinski of Boardman's North Morrow Medical Clinic said that the reason the petition was presented in the way it was, was to give the county court "an opportunity to find a solution without tying their hands."

The Court began listening to public comment at a December 9 hearing in Boardman which will continue January 6, 1987. The Court also appointed an ad hoc committee composed of two members from both Boardman and Heppner, and one member each from Irri- gion, Lexington, and Ione. "I'm convinced these are good, honest citizens," Carlson said. "They're probably somewhat biased, but I'm convinced that if they see a truth, they will recognize it, and they will compromise and arrive at a solution."

"Everyone on the committee is biased," member Cliff Green said, "yet I'm sure we were chosen because we are open-minded enough to look at the situation and come up with a solution. We must further solve the health care problem in a way which both ends of the county can approve, and which increases understanding between both ends. If we can't do that, both sides will be losers."

Stuart Dick, a pastor who grew up in and has lived in various parts of Morrow County, emphasized "Boardman got the raw end of tax dollars, but to entertain the possibility of splitting off into a separate district will undermine the foundation of the county. Once a precedent is established, any problem whether with agriculture or the schools will

be solved by pulling out of the county."

Zielinski asked Carlson if the county would want to put additional funds toward the inequities in the North county health care which would increase taxes or cut back funds spent at Pioneer Memorial Hospital in Heppner.

"My concern is that whoever loses will have hard feelings," Zielinski continued. "Whatever decision is made, taking \$360,000 from the South and putting it in the North - none of which is spent in Ione - will make the South less likely to support any future budget, and will not make the North more likely to support it. But the North end will continue to grow and what will happen when the day comes that the North end votes down a budget. It's not good to talk about county unity and have a situation where the school budget has not passed. If the levy does not pass January 13, the dissection will only be greater. It's not an issue which can be easily solved by moving money from one end of the county to the other."

The hearings process is not complete, Carlson said; decisions cannot be made until all the testimony is in and all facts are known. One option which may be determined by the input of the hearings is an election, Commissioner Jerry Peck added. If the ad hoc committee is able to come up with a viable option, which pleases the petitioners, an election may not be necessary, Commissioner Peck said.

A concern, Carlson said, is that if the county is divided on the issue of health care and if the school budget is not passed, any industry which might be considering Morrow County will see a county of unrest and decide to locate elsewhere.

With agriculture depressed now, it is necessary to look to something else to boost the economy, Carlson continued. We have to look at tourism and new industry.

Port of Morrow

With the signing of two new tenants at the Port of Morrow, Manager Bob Miller said, some possibilities are opening up. A new product, potato nuggets which is not a processed product but small 1 1/2 inch diameter raw potatoes with the skins still on, has some possibilities.

Another new tenant, Operating Engineers Training School has already set up offices, Miller said. They are looking at moving in equipment and are preparing to begin a training cycle in February. A typical cycle involves 18-25 students for four weeks. The school does not compete with private contractors, he said, but does special community projects where no funds are available to build them.

Nonprofit Neighborhood Council forms

The Heppner Neighborhood Center has filed for status as a non-profit corporation called the Morrow County Neighborhood Council which will provide emergency food and other essential services to those who need them at all locations in the county.

The Center has one paid staff member, Director Pat Scott, and eight regular volunteers who administer government energy assistance, emergency food, commodity distribution, and various other programs which help needy families and the elderly.

The Blue Mt. Economic Development Council which oversees the Heppner center as well as the ones in Pendleton and Hermiston has announced that as of January 9, it will no longer be able to fund the centers and, because of financial problems, Morrow County Commissioner

Jerry Peck who is also a BMEDC board member, said the council had no other choice than to stop the funding. The three centers have been urged to seek funding from other sources.

Morrow County already contributes to its Center, Peck said. At one time the BMEDC wanted to close the center in Heppner, but the county stepped in and offered to contribute funds to keep the Heppner Center open. Umatilla county has not contributed funds for operation of the centers in Hermiston and Pendleton.

Concern has already been expressed by many community members, Mackey said. People have called me and other Center board members at home and stopped us on the street to ask if we will still be open.

The answer is, yes, we will be open and the programs will continue

as long as we can stay open, she continued. BMEDC cut back the director's salary by 20%, but the center volunteers have paid that lost portion of her salary with funds raised by volunteer-sponsored spaghetti feeds, craft sales, etc. It has been necessary, especially with food drives and preparation of Christmas baskets, she said.

As of Tuesday morning, the Center had prepared 88 Christmas baskets, she said. Donations have been coming in very well this year. The Center has received many donations of new toys, clothing, and food for the baskets. All money donated for the baskets stays in the local area, she emphasized. Local donations are used for local center needs, such as emergency medical care for someone who cannot get it any other

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From left: John Bristow, Ione; Port Manager Bob Miller, Larry Lindsay, Lexington, Judge-elect Louis Carlson, and Assist. School Supt. Chuck Starr.

"The possibility exists," Carlson said, "that the heavy construction school could do some of the construction work at the Willow Creek Dam park, if we talk to them right."

The Port helps the county's pocketbook, Miller continued. Sixty percent of every tax dollar is paid by an industry attracted to the county by the Port. The Port has also helped with the tourism project in south county by providing services of their engineers to draw up the plans. The Port has talked with cities on a project by project basis, he continued. When it came to the housing project at the Heppner Hotel, "we referred them to another source which helped them far more than we could," he said.

Branch Line Up for Sale

All four modes of transportation, air, river, highway, and rail are available on at the Port, he said. In addition, the Port's charter will allow it to operate a short line railroad. "We're hesitant to jump into the purchase of the Heppner Branch line," he stated. "We've not completed investigating the public-private entity relationship yet. But we would rather, at this point, see a private owner of the line with the Port helping a short line operator put together lottery proceeds, government programs and other funding sources. We do have a special interest in keeping the rail line open, although it is competition to the Port, because we don't want to see Kinzua with higher shipping costs each month."

"Kinzua has said they might be interested in buying the line," Carlson said. "We have a lot of good people in the county and at a time when the economy is generally depressed, Kinzua is spending \$2.7 million to build a stud mill which will employ an additional 25-30 people. That's good news. The basic reason Kinzua is able to expand is their 10 year plan. They saw the forests as they are today with small logs and dead fir. They have used the latter for hog fuel at their co-generation plant and are ahead of the plan looking at using white fir to make eight foot studs," he said.

It's important to emphasize the positive things in the county and concentrate on turning negatives to positives, Carlson emphasized.



Interested citizens listen to speakers presentations at Monday night meeting.

County approves purchase of North Clinic

The Morrow County Court voted to acquire the North Morrow Medical Clinic at last Wednesday's meeting.

The County owns a half interest in the building already. The other half of the building is owned by a land investment company. Since there is no agreement between the owners concerning building repairs, many items needing repair have gone begging. Neither owner seemed willing to repair the half of the building which the other owned.

In other business the Court: -approved a request from Assessor Greg Sweek to repair plaster, close in a file cabinet, and place partitions in his office. Sweek also requested his office be painted, and that a cabinet for mapping equipment be built. The Court took no action on the latter request.

-agreed to pay \$175 for reinstallation of an FM wire to the offices in the Courthouse. The wire was originally installed at the personal expense of Courthouse employees. During the recent restoration of the Courthouse exterior, the wire was removed. Employees pay the monthly fees.

hospital to the Foundation building where the Justice Court, Juvenile Services Commission, and Morrow County Mental Health will have office space. Sweek was also directed to check into installing county phones at the building for Justice Court and Juvenile Services. Morrow County Mental Health will maintain its own phone lines.

-discussed but took no action concerning the crowded condition of the Courthouse Law Library. -Commissioner Irv Rauch repeated a suggestion he made earlier this month to transfer the responsibility for handling county parks to a separate board or committee. A Park Board responsible for overseeing the parks in 1966 was never formally disbanded, Administrative Assistant LoRayne Bowman informed the Court. Judge Don McElligott encouraged further investigation before taking any action.

-agreed to exchange the pickup which the Weed District replaced

G-T will close Dec. 25-26

The Heppner Gazette-Times office will be closed December 25 and 26 and January 1 and 2. The newspaper will be published and mailed on Wednesday as usual. Regular news and advertising deadlines will be observed.

Weather Report

By City of Heppner

December 17 - 23
High Low Rain Snow

Tues.	28	23	0	0
Wed.	28	26	0	0
Thurs.	28	24	.02	0
Fri.	30	24	0	0
Sat.	29	24	0	0
Sun.	42	24	0	0
Mon.	52	26	0	0

Market Report

Compliments of the Morrow County Grain Elevators

Tuesday, Dec. 9
Soft White

Dec.	\$2.92
Jan.	\$2.94-\$2.96
Feb.	\$2.98-\$3.00

Barley

Dec.	\$72
Jan.	\$73-\$74
Feb.	\$75

Corn

Dec.	\$63
Jan.	\$64

Hard Red Wheat

Dec.	\$2.80
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PIK

Generic certificates	103% cash
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Questions About the Serial Levy

prepared by Morrow County School District

If we approve the serial levy, will my 1986-87 property taxes go up?

Yes, 42¢ per \$1,000 of Assessed valuation, or about \$21.00 on a \$50,000 home.

Does this mean that my 1986-87 property taxes for schools will be 42¢ per \$1,000 higher than my 1985-86 taxes?

No, the total tax rate for 1986-87 (including the serial levy) will be 73¢ per \$1,000 less than 1985-86.

Explanation:

1985-86 Tax Rate/\$1,000 for Operating Budget	\$7.94
Total 1985-86 Tax Rate/\$1,000 for Operating Budget and Bonded Debt	\$8.75

1986-87 Tax Rate/\$1,000 for Operating Budget (Including Serial Levy)	\$7.22*
Total 1986-87 Tax Rate/\$1,000 for Operating Budget and Bonded Debt	\$8.02*

*73¢ Less than 1985-86

OK, the tax rate will be 73¢ per \$1,000 lower than the 1985-86 tax rate, but aren't you really asking for more money this year?

No, the total operating levy for this year (including the serial levy) will be \$119,604 less than what you approved last year.