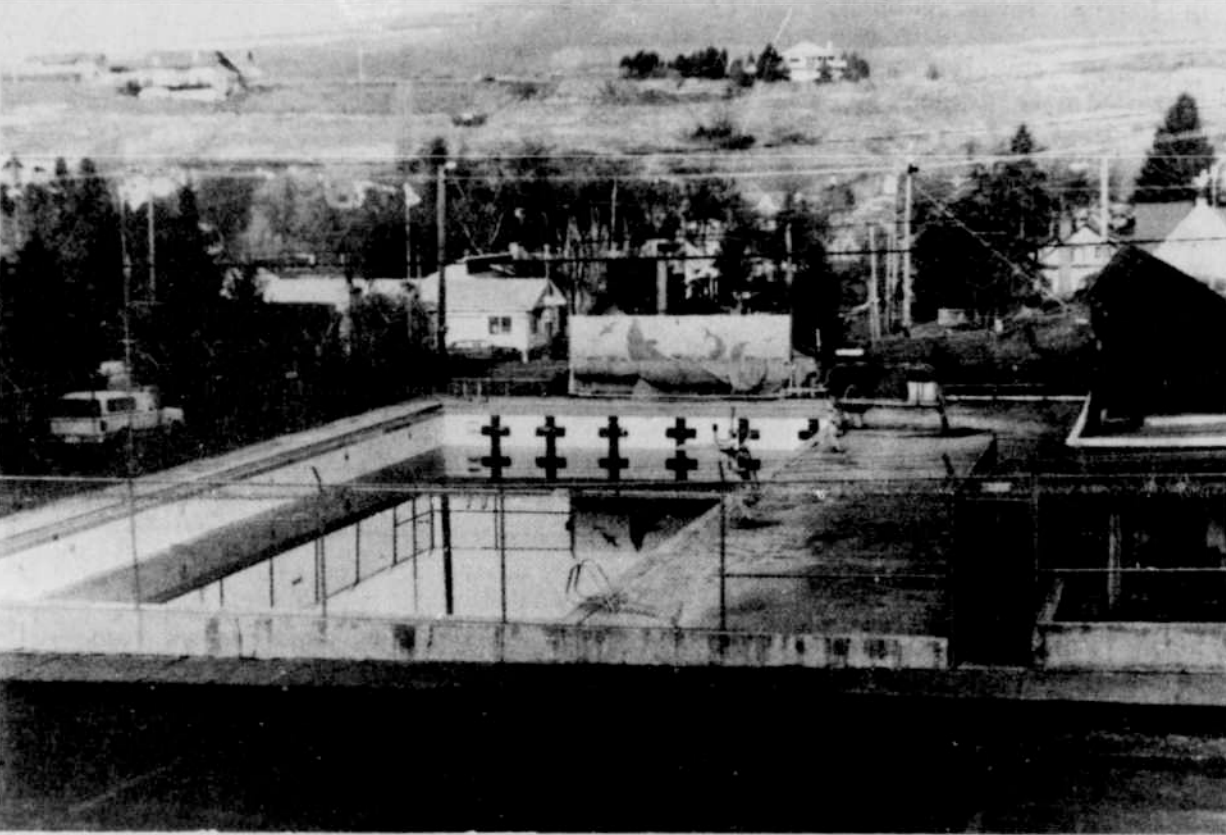


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'Pool not worth fixing' says Marks



It may be long wait for pool in Heppner

Heppner's swimming pool is closed for the summer and, according to city officials, no one is quite sure if, and when, it will reopen.

Concerns over the safety of the swimming pool prompted the Heppner city council to vote in favor of closing the facility, and last week city administrator Gary Marks said he wasn't sure when the pool would be back in operation.

Marks said three floods and general wear and tear have left the pool a safety hazard, and said the city doesn't have the money to fix it up. He also said the pool probably isn't worth fixing and a new one probably should be built.

"The pool has very serious problems and isn't worth the effort to save it," Marks told the Heppner Chamber of Commerce after showing a video he and city employee Dave Winters made illustrating the pool's problems.

Marks said floods have undermined the foundation of the pool deck, the boilers and chlorination units are outdated, the filter system inadequate to state standards, and the drain system potentially life threatening. In addition he said there are cracks in the pool and the solar heating system installed several years ago is useless, because parts aren't available.

Marks said it would cost as much to fix the existing pool as it would to build a new one, but that the city doesn't have the money to do either, and he isn't sure where funding might come from.

One place the city is looking is at the park district, which may be able to levy a bond for a new pool. The park district taxing area covers a larger area than just the city of Heppner. However, park

district officials haven't agreed to ask voters for a levy, Marks said.

Twenty five percent to 30 percent of the pool's operating money came from ticket sales and the rest from Heppner city tax payers.

If the pool were financed through the park district the cost of operating the facility would be spread over more of the people who use it, Marks said, but added, "There's no guarantee a new pool would be located in Heppner either." Marks said the

school district had been approached about helping with funding, but was "reluctant to go in to this."

Because ballot measure five, the property tax limitation measure, Marks said the city could not pass a bond issue to build a pool even if it wanted to. "The city doesn't have enough bonded debt to finance the pool," he said.

When asked if it was possible the city could be without a pool for five or six years, Marks responded, "it's possible."

Breitlings new managers at Northwestern Motel



Sherry and Arnold Breitling

Sherry and Arnold Breitling are the new managers at Northwestern Motel and RV Park in Heppner.

The Breitlings began training at the motel the second week in February and took over as managers March 1. The motel's owners, Tom LaRusso and

Dolores Cooper, have moved to Bend.

The pair, who come from Grants Pass, have lots of business experience. Sherry was manager at Thriftway Store and Arnold had a video store in Oregon City. Together they operated a nursery in Reno for a short while.

Medical board hears financial report

Voter approval of the \$506,344 one-year medical fund operating levy on March 24 brought good news to the County Medical Board who met that evening for their monthly business meeting. It was also the first official meeting with the new hospital administrator, Kevin Erich, who recently moved here from Illinois.

Also attending the meeting was Rodney Applegate, president of the Walla Walla General Hospital. Under a management contract between the medical board and Western Health Resources, Applegate will become the new supervisor. He replaces Stan Berry, who was also in attendance, since Berry has accepted a hospital management position with a California hospital.

"First, I want to get a feel of the health needs of the community," said Erich. However he said he has plans of marketing the health care facilities available in the county, including home health, therapy and promoting wellness clinics.

Erich also added that he hoped to be able to certify some nursing home beds for skilled care as well as intermediate care levels. The nursing home can better serve the elderly by retaining patients that need skilled care. It

would also account for a higher Medicare reimbursement, he said, thus saving money for the people of the community.

The medical levy for the 1992-93 fiscal year was increased by about \$43,740 and passed by a 424 vote margin. Accounting for the hospital portion of Pioneer Memorial shows a net operating loss of about \$5,000 for the first six months of the current fiscal year.

While about 85 percent of the medical fund revenue is derived from patient charges, a drop in patient activity during the past six months is probably associated with an unusually mild winter with fewer cases of flu or pneumonia, Stan Berry said.

A three-patient per-day average patient load at the hospital would put the hospital back in the black and provide money for capital improvements, Berry added. Recent capital expenditures include an X-ray machine, a kitchen refrigerator and past building improvements as required by the state. Retroactive wage increases for staff members have also added to the operating costs during that period.

The nursing home revenue for patient services from July 1 through December 1991 was reported at \$425,974. Nursing home expenses totaled about

\$450,000.

The report showed that the Heppner clinic has a property, plant and equipment value of \$20,974 and generated a gross revenue of about \$174,000, for the same six month period. Operating costs and professional services of the clinic were not listed on the report.

The Boardman Clinic has a property, plant and equipment value of around \$220,000. The business is handled under a \$130,000 yearly contract with Dr. Robert Boss who pays the clinic's operating expenses and labor costs. The county-owned Boardman Clinic is maintained and upgraded at county expense.

Tentative plans for county medical facilities include an additional wing onto the Heppner Clinic building which would provide additional patient examining rooms. The board is also seeking recruitment of a physician's assistant to provide work relief for doctors Jeanne and Edward Berretta. That additional clinic space may also be used for therapy, home health or other services depending on final plans. The plans also call for additional parking space at the clinic building, which could be implemented by terracing a nearby steep slope.

Anti-tax petition out in Heppner

An anti-motel tax petition, sponsored by Tom LaRusso and Dolores Cooper, owners of the Northwestern Motel, and Darlene Scroggins, owner of the Penland House Bed and Breakfast, is circulating at several Heppner businesses.

According to Scroggins, petitions have been placed at Miller's Mini Mart, Central Market, Heppner Bowl, Lott's Electric, the motel and bed and breakfast.

The petition would stop the city council from enacting the proposed transient room tax and prevent the council from enacting new taxes or raising existing taxes, except by a vote of the people. Currently, only the Heppner City Council may vote to raise or implement taxes. A vote of the people on a city tax issue would not be binding, only advisory.

Proceeds from the proposed tax would be earmarked for the chamber of commerce manager's salary. According to city officials, chamber funds were cut from the city budget because of Ballot Measure 5 shortfalls.

According to Scroggins, the petition requires 15 percent of the 829 voters registered in the Heppner precincts to place the issue on the ballots. The Morrow County Clerk was not available at press time to confirm the number of registered voters, percentages and procedures required.

Heppner chamber president LoRayne Bowman says that the five percent proposed tax would not have a detrimental effect on

local motels. LaRusso earlier pointed to a study down by Purdue University for the American Hotel and Motel Association which indicated a 5.4 percent drop in occupancy for motels with 150 rooms or less in areas with a hotel-motel tax. "No one is going to drive to Heppner and then turn around and drive an hour back to a motel with a seven percent tax," said Bowman. She added that, according to Purdue University, the study was based on a 10 percent tax and probably did not apply to a rural town with only one motel. Bowman went on to say that the study did not examine the pluses of such a tax. "Without the chamber manager, we wouldn't have a lot of things that make money for local businesses."

"It's not going to cost them (motel owners) anything," said Bowman, considering that the motel and bed and breakfast will be reimbursed for a percentage of the amount collected in taxes.

Bowman stressed that the tax would be paid by visitors to the community and not by local business owners. She said that a business tax, suggested by LaRusso as an alternative to the motel tax, would unfairly burden business owners, since they already pay local taxes. "It's the most equitable one," she said, "because I think anything the chamber does brings business here and affords other businesses some income."

Bowman cited motel-hotel

taxes in other Oregon cities, ranging from five to eight percent. The Pendleton chamber receives 25 percent of a seven percent tax for around \$55,000 a year and the Prineville chamber receives 40 percent of a seven percent tax for around \$15,000 a year. The remainder of the taxes went mainly to the cities' general funds, visitors' convention bureaus and county fairs.

Bowman said that she does not understand the opposition to chamber voiced by those testifying at an earlier city council meeting. "What do they oppose?" she asked, citing the chamber's goals of strengthening the local business and ag community, promoting good working relationships with and among the various entities and supporting economic development.

Bowman, who is employed as an administrative assistant to the Morrow County Court, is also a member of the Heppner City Council.

Band concert slated at HHS

A Tri-County high school band concert will be held Wednesday, April 8 at 6:30 p.m. at the Heppner High School gym. Schools participating are from Umatilla, Wasco, Gilliam and Wheeler counties.

Everyone is invited to "thrill to the sound of 200 winds" performing works by Tchaikovsky, Gershwin and other composers.

Admission is \$1 for adults and 50 cents for students.

Catholic church plan retreat

Father Gerry Condon will conduct a day of retreat for the St. Patrick and St. William's parishes, at St. Patrick Parish Hall on Saturday, April 4 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The theme is "Toward a Deeper Prayer Life".

On March 29 students in grades kindergarten through eighth gave a "shadow" presentation of the stations of the cross. The presentation directed by Bill Kuhn, assisted by the catechetical teachers was well attended.

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