

BESSIE WETZELL
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School board approves 4-day week

The Morrow County School Board voted to implement the four-day student week for all of Morrow County schools beginning this fall. The change would save at least \$125,000 a year for the financially strapped school district, and, according to many of the teachers at the Monday night meeting, would allow them more time for planning and implementing upcoming changes in education mandated by Senate Bill 3565.

Board members Marcia Kemp, Lexington, Gary Frederickson and Scott Bauska, both Boardman, and Molly Rill, Heppner, voted in favor of the four-day week. Board members Dwayne Carroll, Irrigon, Bill Doherty, Lexington, and John Rietmann, Lone, voted against the change. Carroll, Doherty and Rietmann said that although the change may improve the situation for the teachers, they had doubts as to whether the change would improve children's education. "What the seven of us (board members) have to realize," said Rietmann, "is that we're the only true advocates of the children."

Rietmann also questioned whether scheduling sports on Fridays in a four-day student week would actually be a benefit if extra-curricular activities are going to be eliminated entirely in

1995-96. "I'm not sure whether that (eliminating sports in 1995-96) will happen," replied District Superintendent Chuck Starr, although that was one of Starr's cost-cutting recommendations.

Betty Rietmann, an Lone elementary school teacher, voiced concerns that the four-day week would be detrimental to young children because of the increase in the length of the day and because of hardships on families with two parents working.

Dar Merrill, recently hired executive director of the Morrow County Commission on Children and Families, said that he opposed the change to a four-day week for several reasons. He said that lower income families may not be able to afford day care an additional day, which would result in more latchkey kids and "a lot of kids in dangerous positions." He also said the low cost or free breakfasts and lunches at school may be the only nutritious meals low income children have during the day. Merrill also cited the increased idle time for older kids and increased potential for problems.

Classroom time in the four-day student week would be increased about an hour, but some of that time would come from reduced lunch periods, for example, instead of lengthened days. Teachers would work the same amount of time as they do now. Savings are expected to be made in the areas of utilities, transportation, food service and substitute teachers.

"The education program would be harmed to a much greater extent by losing programs, than by going to a four-day week," said Heppner Elementary School Principal Bill Karwacki. If a four-day week were not implemented in 1994-95, program cuts in art, music, and physical education would be made that year instead of in 1995-96 in order to balance the budget. Starr estimates that

the district will lose around \$150 per student in state school support, to the tune of around \$300,000. The tax rate for schools is currently \$10 per thousand assessed valuation. This will drop to \$7.50 per thousand in 1994-95 and \$5 per thousand in 1995-96.

Rill said that she had called people from several school districts that have the four-day week and received no negative reports from parents, students, teachers or administrators.

The 1994-95 school year would begin on Friday, August 26. The only other Fridays the students would be in school would be Sept. 9, Jan. 6, Feb. 24 and June 2, because of Monday holidays. The last day of school for students would be June 6.

The board also voted to approve a pay-to-play program for school sports. Beginning this fall students would be charged \$50 for each sport in which they participate, with a maximum of \$100 per student and \$200 per family a year. Starr said that no waivers or exceptions will be made, but students will get the opportunity to work to pay the charges. Starr estimates that the pay-to-play program results in around \$40,000 brought in each year. Baseball will be eliminated at Heppner Middle School and Columbia Junior High next year. The move will save money and student interest has decreased.

In other business, the board approved submitting a bond levy to the voters in Sept. The levy would provide additional classrooms and remodeling for overcrowded north Morrow County schools, remodeling to allow for K-5 and 7-12 grade schools in south county, computer technology and handicap access. A bond levy failed in March.

accepted the resignation of Mick Tolar, A.C. Houghton Elementary School principal. Tolar resigns after 31 years as A.C.H. administrator.

HEPPNER



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Fate of Kinzua Mill known this week



These logs might not be milled at the closed Kinzua plant.

The Kinzua Corporation is still closed this week following the sale of the mill and all its timberland to Pioneer Resources of Eugene.

It's still not clear whether the new owners plan to operate the facility, but general manager Frank Pearson said Tuesday an answer to that question should be available by Friday.

The majority of the management has been let go, said Pearson, who has been in meetings with three of the principals of Pioneer. A skeleton crew has

been working at the mill, but should be finished by Wednesday.

If Pioneer does decide to operate the mill, not all of the timberland will be available to harvest. As of Tuesday public records show that the Buckaroo Flats parcel had been sold to Louisiana Pacific for \$2,147,600, and the Rudio Mountain parcel to D.R. Johnson of Umatilla County for an undisclosed sum. The parcels already sold amount to about 35,000 acres out of

180,000 acres that were part of the sale. The remaining timberland has been pledged to U.S. National Bank as security on a \$75,000,000 loan to Pioneer.

Reports that a second buyer had stepped in to purchase the mill and timberland apparently was premature, and Pioneer is now deciding what to do. Under terms of the deal the company has the mill facility free and clear if it wishes to auction the equipment off and close the mill down.

Meanwhile Kinzua manage-

ment moved material to office space above the Coast to Coast building in Heppner.

Most workers' last day at the mill was Thursday, April 14, and, in response, unemployment benefits offices were set up at Columbia Basin Electric Co-op. These will be moved to the Forest Service building Thursday where career, job listings and services information will also be available. About 140 workers are laid off from the mill closure.

Candidates forum slated Apr. 25

A candidates' forum has been scheduled for Monday, April 25, at 7 p.m. at the Heppner High School cafeteria.

Candidates attending the forum as of presstime Tuesday include: Lynn Lundquist and Joan Silver, both for state representative for District 59; C.W. Smith and Jim Bradley, both for 2nd Congress-

sional District; Jerry Cohen, superintendent of public schools; John Jewkes, governor; and Rena Cusma, Bureau of Labor and Industries.

The forum is sponsored by the Heppner Chamber of Commerce. Everyone is invited to attend. Refreshments will be served.

Phone company sold

Pacific Telecom, Inc. has announced that it will purchase the Heppner telephone exchange from U.S. West Communications. According to PTI officials who were in Heppner last week

to discuss the sale, local phone users shouldn't see much change in service or phone rates.

PTI is a fast-expanding communications company that is buying up small exchanges, many from US West.

Watch for phone scam

The Morrow County Sheriff's Office is getting reports from local residents of a phone soliciting scam. The caller is stating that he/she is representing The Morrow County Sheriff's Office and is requesting donations for drug enforcement purposes. The Morrow County Sheriff's Office does not solicit for funds by phone.

The caller also mentions the Oregon State Sheriff's Association. They have been contacted by Sheriff Drago and state they are not soliciting by phone. If anyone else has received one of these calls, contact the Sheriff's Office or your local law enforce-

ment office. Sheriff Drago recommends that you check out any attempt to get money from you by checking directly with the organization that they claim to represent of check with your local law enforcement.

Look for more police during mushroom season

In an effort to head off any trouble, mushroom pickers working the woods this spring will see a larger police and forest service presence, according to officials in Heppner last week.

A recent influx of Asian pickers into the area over the past several years has caused some friction in the mountains, and in an effort to head off what some see as violence on the way, local forester Warren Plocharsky organized a public meeting to discuss the problem. Members of the Oregon State Police and the Morrow County Sheriff's Department also were in attendance.

Kuaychang Chin, a trooper with the Oregon State Police, was on hand to explain and answer questions about the Asian culture. Some of the difficulties surrounding mushroom picking have occurred as a result of misunderstandings with the Asian pickers, who are mainly of Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian origin.

A larger police force in the mountains during picking season will also help prevent problems. "You're going to see a lot of us up there," said Morrow County Undersheriff Verlin Denton. He also urged pickers to avoid confrontations. "We're asking your help," he told the room full of mushroom pickers. "If you see a problem, back off and let us handle it. That's what we get paid for. There isn't a mushroom up there that's worth getting shot over."

Everyone at the meeting agreed

that there are a lot of firearms in the woods, and lots of shooting going on during the mushroom season. Apparently Asian pickers use gunfire to signal each other while picking.

Trooper Chin will also be available during the picking season as an interpreter. Chin, who has been with the department two and one half years and originally came from Laos, speaks four Asian languages. He explained to the group the differences between the cultures and how these differences cause problems while picking in the woods.

"Prevention and volunteer compliance (with the laws) is the number one thing," Chin said. "Don't take things into your own hands," he urged.

In all there will be officers from the Oregon State Police, Forest Service and the Sheriff's Department in the woods to keep order this year, many more than last year. "We're going to do a saturation patrol," said Denton. "We're going to be as high profile as we can be this year."

For those wishing to pick mushrooms, there are two types of permits. The personal permit is free and good for any 10 days during the year. You cannot sell mushrooms picked with a personal permit. The second type of permit is a commercial permit available for \$2 a day with a \$10 minimum. You must have a commercial permit, available at the Heppner Forest Service office, if you want to sell mushrooms

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