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County-wide medical district formed

An on-going dispute about health care funding in Morrow County may be coming to an end, after the Morrow County Court last week signed papers forming a county-wide health district, says Morrow County Judge Louis Carlson.

Two separate health district proposals, one for the north end of the county, and one for the remainder of the county, will still be on the November ballot, but approval by the court of the county-wide district will nullify whichever of the two districts is approved by the voters, says Carlson.

The separate medical district controversy started about seven months ago, when disgruntled petitioners from the Boardman area gathered enough signatures to place a separate health district issue on the ballot. If approved, the original measure would have placed the city of Boardman,

along with the Portland General Electric Coal Fired plant (a substantial property tax payer in the county) in a special medical district. Health services in the county currently are part of the county budget, although levies are often voted on separately.

In response to the Boardman petition, south end residents, led by the Heppner Chamber of Commerce, spearheaded a petition drive which successfully placed another health district on the ballot which also included the coal-fired plant.

Multiple problems arose by the possible passage of both measures, and a bi-county committee held multiple meetings in an effort to iron out the differences between the north and south end groups. Since the coal-fired plant could not be taxed twice for the same services, the county commissioners were charged with the

task of establishing boundaries for the two districts. The commissioners eventually placed the coal fired plant in the county-wide district, but questions were raised as to the legality of altered boundaries since both proposals were generated by petition.

The end result of those meetings was the county-wide district signed last week by the county court.

This district proposal was generated by a resolution of the county court.

One agreement to come out of the negotiations was the formation of five zones, from which directors will be elected to administer the health district.

Election of the medical district board members will be held later, and the court is expected to ask members of the current county health board to serve until an election can be held.

surrounding the pool in March. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Park Board adopted a motion to begin work on a bond authorization and serial levy request for the March election.

The board will ask voters to approve a \$975,000 20-year bond for pool construction. Construction is expected to cost \$1.2 million, but the park district board said that it is committed to raising the additional funds through donations, grants and loans. "If there is a shortfall," said Marks, "there will be elements of the pool that will be scaled down." The pool commission has recommended an outdoor zero-depth fan pool with four lanes, competition length, with a slide and slide well, in addition to a small indoor therapy pool.

A \$45,000 grant from the former owners of Kinzua to the fund raising group "People for the Pool" has been approved, contingent on voter approval of the pool levies.

The Willow Creek Park Board has made passage of the construction bond issue contingent on passage of a three-year, \$36,000 serial levy for operation of the pool. The outdoor pool would be operated for three months in the summer, while the indoor pool could be operated year-round. The therapy pool could be used for classes, seniors and physical therapy, which would create a

wider base of usage and may make the project more likely to qualify for grants, say Pool Commission members.

Non-union employees receive raise

At its regularly scheduled meeting August 24, the Morrow County Court determined to give its non-union employees a 1.5 percent cost-of-living increase. "Well below the established 2.7 percent actual rise in the cost of living," said Judge Louis Carlson. "The budget committee was very explicit about its desire for cost containment in personal services," said Judge Carlson.

In other changes, the court decided to restructure the health insurance benefits to a more efficient plan. "There have been many discussions over the past couple of years about the rising costs of health insurance," the judge said "so we began several months ago exploring changes." The county's health insurance was put out for bid and it was ultimately recommended that the best way to achieve savings was to increase up front costs such as the deductibles and co-payments. The result is markedly reduced premium costs to both the employee and the county, said Carlson. "The county

Ribbon cutting held for Sperry bridge



L-R: city crewman Jay Brown, Mayor Bob Jepsen, Jim Gaven, Tim VanCleave, Gary Marks, city foreman Dave Winters, not pictured Kara Anstogui and Roger Ehrmantraut.

City officials and crew commemorated the opening of the new Sperry Street Bridge in a ribbon-cutting ceremony Friday, Sept. 2. The bridge was totally rebuilt with new materials and ended up under budget. According to city manager Gary Marks, \$10,300

was budgeted for materials for the project, but only \$9,000 was spent.

The bridge was on the agenda for rebuilding, but work was moved up when the state bridge inspector found the bridge unstable. Don Olson

with the Anderson Perry engineering firm said he was impressed with the stoutness of the new bridge, according to city crew foreman Dave Winters, who headed up the project. Construction included paved approaches to the bridge.

Camp Fire Girls prove their mettle



L-R Sally Calvert, leader Merry Brannon, Brittini Padberg, TyLynn Smith, Sheena Shank, Paula SpicerKuhn, Tara Ozment, Cindy Kennedy, Shelbi Padberg.

Some Heppner youngsters have proved themselves true Camp Fire Girls. Not only did they spot a forest fire, but they put it out—all by themselves.

The girls, Tara Ozment, TyLynn Smith, Paula SpicerKuhn, Brittini and Shelbi Padberg, Aleshia Geer, Sheena Shank, Abby Kahl and Sally Calvert, were on a one-night campout with their leaders, Merry Brannon and Cindy Kennedy. Brannon and Kennedy had taken the girls to Bob and Aloha DeSpain's cabin near Anson Wright Park to get them prepared for a week-long stay at the Camp Fire Camp, Camp Da Kon Ya.

When the girls arrived at the cabin, they spotted a fire across the road and up the draw. The

leaders at first assumed that the fire was just a slash pile burning because someone was logging in the area. But, after a hike to the park, the group looked up the draw and noticed that the smoke had become thicker. Brannon and Kennedy told the girls that they would walk them up to the fire later in the day.

Right before dark fell, the girls and their leaders took a walk up the hill. When they arrived at the fire, they could tell right away that it wasn't a controlled burn because it wasn't in a place where anyone would start a fire.

The fire was about 100 yards long and 15 feet wide, big enough to get the girls excited,

but not so big that they could be harmed. No full size trees were involved, just the trunks. "The girls wanted to do something to help," said Brannon. "And Paula SpicerKuhn made it clear that we couldn't just leave the fire burning. We had to do something."

So Brannon and Kennedy got the girls rounded up with shovels and buckets and they set to work. By this time it had gotten pretty dark, so some held flashlights for those who were putting out the fire.

"They worked fast and they worked hard," said Brannon. "I had never seen so many little bodies move like these kids did. Falling down in the pond, which is nearby, or tripping on the ground, a log or a rock was no big deal. The important thing was to get the fire out." Brannon said that the girls would get one stump put out and then move to another area that needed attention just to then turn around and see a small spark of fire that had to be put out again.

Brannon had nothing but praise for the girls. "These girls were very cautious and brave in their actions," she said. "We are very proud of our girls. They remembered what they were taught and did it on their own. These girls are real troopers and are truly Camp Fire Girls."

Brannon and Kennedy are not alone in their appreciation of the girls' efforts, the girls were given commendation lapel pins from the Heppner Forest Service for their brave efforts.

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