

HEPPNER



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Morrow County
 Times

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School district, bus drivers deadlocked

By April Hilton-Sykes
The Morrow County School Board may decide at their regular meeting Monday, Nov. 13, at the school district office in Lexington, whether to contract out bus services or stay with district-employed drivers.

The school board and the bus drivers, represented by Oregon School Employees Association Chapter 59, are deadlocked in negotiations.

OSEA says it will file a contractual grievance against the board, "If the board makes a unilateral decision to contract out the district's student transportation services."

The school board says that the union "refused to negotiate" with the board.

The bus drivers maintain that the district cannot hire out bus service cheaper than is provided now and take issue with the district allowing Mid Columbia Bus Company to do the study on bus services when Mid Columbia would also be a bidder to provide the service to the district.

The drivers say that all vehicles owned and operated by the district were funded through the transportation account rather than through their own departments, so that the actual costs of transporting students is less than the total transportation amount.

The drivers believe that they and the community will be adversely affected by the district contracting bus services.

The district pays now pays \$387 per month per employee, working four or more hours per day, for health benefits for the employee and his family year round. According to union statistics, of 22 bus drivers, nine receive full benefits, including PERS and insurance; and 13, who work under four hours a week, receive \$194 a month in health benefits paid by the district. The employee pays the other \$194 per month for full benefits. Those working under four hours a day do not receive PERS.

If bus service was contracted out to the low bidder, the employee would be eligible for insurance, but would pay additional premiums to provide insurance benefits for his family.

The drivers say that the salaries are not high enough to make a living, but most of them work to provide health benefits for their families.

Morrow County School Superintendent Chuck Starr says that the district can save

at least \$75,000 and probably around \$96,000 by contracting bus service. The district maintains that the cuts are necessary because of funding reductions because of Ballot Measure 5 and the state school funding formula. Morrow County School District has had to cut teachers, programs and school extra-curricular activities. Extra-curricular activities, such as drama and sports, are now funded by the Morrow County Unified Recreation District, not the school district.

The drivers say that the community will lose control over the bus routes and drivers and that children's safety could be at risk if the district goes to a private firm. They also express concern that the contracted company would buy their own tires, parts and supplies that are now provided by the local business community. Starr said that the contractors would work with the community, utilizing local businesses for services and supplies.

The drivers maintain that the contractor will not have to pay for the district's buses in one lump sum, but may do so over a period of several years. They say that inflation would prevent the district from repurchasing the buses. The district, however, says that the contractor would, indeed, pay for the buses in one lump sum, which

MCGG profits dip

Morrow County Grain Growers' net profit for last year was down, MCGG members were told at the co-op's annual meeting Monday night, Nov. 6, largely because of less grain movement and a dry growing year.

Despite a drop of 25 percent in net income on sales of over \$38 million, the overall financial condition of the co-op remains strong, co-op officials reported. "We're pleased," co-op Manager Larry Mills told the gathered crowd. "We had an extremely dry fall." Less grain shipment from Idaho through the co-op's shipping facilities on the Columbia also con-

Voters approve livestock district

A proposal to form a livestock district in Fuller Canyon out Slaughterhouse Road has been approved, according to Morrow County clerk, Barbara Bloodsworth.

Bloodsworth says that 20 out of 23 eligible voted. Thirteen voted yes and seven voted

would be saved, earning interest so that the buses could be repurchased in the event that the district again decided to employ their own drivers.

The drivers say they are proud to drive Morrow County School buses and feel they have done a good job, "as shown by the number of years" that most of them have driven. Some have been with the district for over 20 years. They say that it takes "special people" to drive school buses. The district says, "We respect our employees. We know they have done a good job. The issue is that we know we can save money by contracting out."

The drivers earlier suggested a 20 percent cut in their salary and health benefits, but that proposal was turned down by the county OSEA membership. Chapter 59 representatives said they identified \$36,000 in yearly savings to the district which were implemented. Their wages have already been reduced by 20 percent when the district went to a four-day student week.

OSEA said that the district could end up paying for contracting busing services in addition to the present employees' salaries, if a ruling is made against the district on the issue of contracting services.

tributed to the drop in sales and profits.

Mills also said he sees a bright future for agriculture and "excellent opportunities for those taking advantage of technological advances."

MCGG accountant Steve Green reported that the regular yearly audit revealed that the co-op is in sound financial condition.

Every department except fertilizer showed a drop in gross sales last fiscal year, which ended in May, to account for the \$5 million decline. Increased sales in neighboring counties helped boost the fertilizer department's income, Mills said.

Grains meeting

The Oregon Grains Commission will hold a regular commission meeting on Tuesday, Nov. 14 at 7 p.m. The meeting will be held via telephone conference call.

Lone Youth Group helps with projects

Lone Youth Group has been involved in helping with several community projects in Lone this fall.

In early October, nine members of the group gathered to begin painting the playground equipment at the elementary school. Members who helped paint were Melissa McElligott, John Doherty, Marie Tworek, Luke Swanson, Kelly Morgan, Steve Allen, Jake McElligott, Katie Tworek and Jessica Krebs. Assisting the group were leaders Jannie Allen, Jeri McElligott, Debbie Morgan and Jim, Monica and Adrienne Swanson, who also hosted a pizza party at their home.

On Oct. 20, Steve Allen, Luke Swanson, Jory Crowell and Marc Orem helped Jannie Allen set up tables, chairs and straw bales to decorate for the Jason Halvorsen Scholarship Bazaar. The following day, Jessica Krebs, Niki Sullivan, Megan Proudfoot, Jenny Sullivan, Marie Tworek and Melissa McElligott helped at the bazaar by selling raffle tickets, pie and coffee and helped buyers carry items to their cars. The youth group donated caramel apples to the sale.

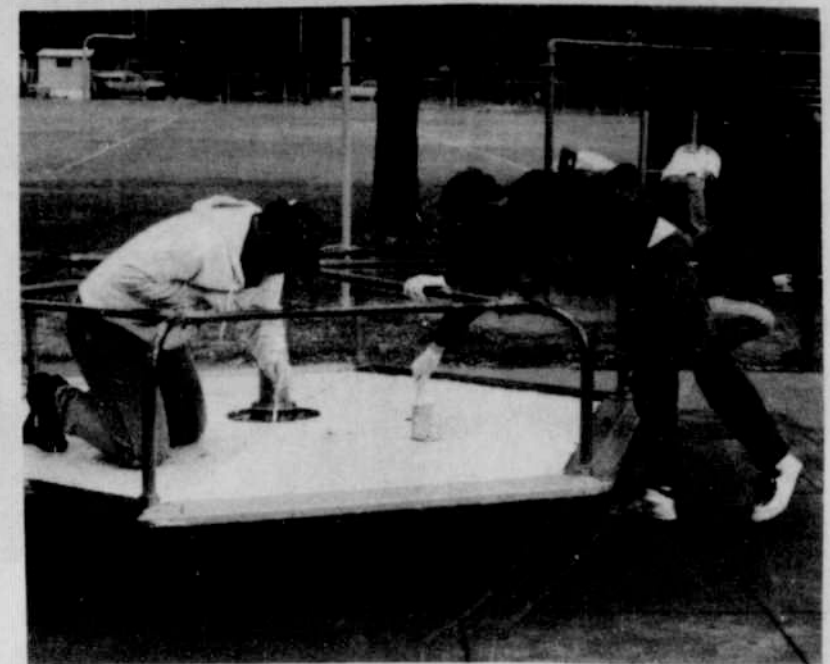
The youth group will be involved in several upcoming activities. The annual Lone Food Drive will be Thursday, Nov. 9. Youth Group members will be supervising the junior high students in collecting food in the Lone area at 7 p.m. that evening.

Senior citizens and those who are home bound will not have to shovel snow off their sidewalks this winter. For the third year, the youth group members plan to clear sidewalks in front of homes in Lone. Anyone who has been missed in the past can call Jannie Allen, Lone, for assistance.

The next regular meeting for



Jessica Krebs sells tickets at the Jason Halvorsen Scholarship Bazaar.



Kelly Morgan and Steve Allen paint merry-go-round at Lone Elementary.

Lone Youth Group will be Sunday, Nov. 12 at 3 p.m. at the United Church of Christ basement. The topic for the afternoon will be "spirituality". Members will also be preparing Christmas tree order forms to be mailed to customers. The

same trees will be available at the same prices as last year. Trees will be delivered to buyers' homes by Dec. 10. Selling Christmas trees has been the group's major source of income to fund activities.

Cattlemen offer award

The Oregon Cattleman's Association is offering up to \$1,000 in reward money for information and evidence resulting in the arrest and conviction of anyone butchering a calf at the Ross Westberg place near Heppner.

According to Oregon State Police Senior Trooper Tim Cundell a 300-pound calf belonging to Westberg was butchered and parts were left behind on October 12 or 13. The calf was butchered in the Hinton Creek area around six miles east of Heppner.

Anyone with any information is asked to call Senior Trooper Ron Caudell, 1-800-422-0543, or Slater Lindsay with the Oregon Cattleman's Association, 731-3200, extension 16, 729 N.E. Oregon Suite 190, Portland.

Arts and Crafts Club to meet

The next meeting of the Morrow County Creative Arts and Crafts Club will be Wednesday, Nov. 15 at 1 p.m., upstairs at Kate's Pizza, Heppner.

Market Report

Compliments of the Morrow County Grain Growers
Tuesday, Nov. 7
Soft White

Nov.	\$5.40
Dec.	\$5.41
Jan.	\$5.42
Feb.	\$5.43
new crop	\$4.50
Barley	
Nov.-Jan.	\$150

First grade parents, administration meet

By April Hilton-Sykes
Parents, teacher and administrators met Monday evening, Nov. 6, to discuss the situation with the first grade classroom at Heppner Elementary School.

School officials had anticipated that only around 17 students would enter first grade at HES this fall and decided against hiring an additional teacher. However, the class now has around 32 students and parents are concerned about crowding, noise and whether the students are learning.

Parents asked that an additional teacher be hired, but the school district had not budgeted funds to hire a teacher. Instead, a full-time classroom aide was hired to assist.

First grade parents met Monday night with Morrow County School Superintendent Chuck Starr, HES Principal Bill Karwacki, school board member Russ Morgan and teacher Cherry Webber. Starr said that the administrators "listened and understand" the parents' concerns. He said that the district "was in the process of examining testimony about the progress of the kids" in the first grade classroom.

Starr said that the school

board will hear from a delegation of parents at the regular school board meeting Monday, Nov. 13, at the district office in Lexington at 7:30 p.m. He said that the board will then decide whether to maintain status quo or decide to hire an additional teacher.

Starr added, however, that if an additional teacher is hired at HES and 17 students is considered an appropriate class size, the board would also be "obligated to take a strong look" at kindergarten classes at Sam Boardman Elementary School in Boardman. The three SBE kindergarten classes have 28 to 29 students in each class. The SBE classes also each have a full time educational assistant.

The cost for a full-time teacher for a full school year is estimated between \$42,000 and \$50,000. The cost to employ a full-time educational assistant is around \$16,000. Starr said that hiring a full-time teacher for the remainder of the school year would cost the district an additional \$16,000 to \$20,000, since an educational assistant would not be required. Monies to hire additional teachers would have to come from the district's contingency fund, since no monies have been budgeted.

Man killed in accident

A Gresham man was killed in a one-vehicle automobile accident near Heppner on Thursday, Nov. 2.

Curtis Spotts, 63, was

discovered dead on Highway 74, milepost 66, at the Franklin Hill summit. Morrow County Sheriff's office officials said that a deer was involved in the accident.

Morrow County Grain Growers will be closed
Friday - November 10th
Saturday - November 11th
in observance of Veterans Day