

The Official Newspaper of the
City of Heppner and the
County of Morrow

Heppner
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April Hilton-Sykes News Editor
Stephanie Jensen Typesetting, Layout, Distribution
Monique Devin Advertising layout & Graphics
Penni Keersmaker Printer

David Sykes, Publisher

Letters to the Editor

Sick of petty battles

To the Editor:
I am sick and tired of reading about the petty battles in Morrow County between the Medical District and Boardman. If the newspaper articles were accurate and written by someone who knows how to report the news, maybe the situation would be resolved. Instead, I have to put up with false information in which the writer did not do any research and just relies on hearsay from sources that have no knowledge of the situation.

I have only lived in the area for eight years, so at least I'm not prejudiced, which is more than I can say for the majority of the citizens of this county. In the military, I learned that you do not put your trust in what an individual says, but how that individual performs in a crisis situation. You don't hide behind your buddies or use red tape for an excuse; you stand up and confront the enemy, period. Anything less is a lie and the coward's way out.

To prove that I'm not afraid to face the fire, I will admit that my employer is Pioneer Memorial Hospital. However, my loyalty is to my patients and their well-being, not the institution. If I get fired tomorrow for my opinions, I would have a job within 48 hours. So my views are not mandated by my employers. Anyone who feels my views are biased are just blowing smoke.

I have been in the medical field for over 18 years now. I've worked in huge facilities that have over 1,000 beds and I have been in isolated areas in which I was responsible for the health of the men and women placed under my care. From the clean office setting, preparing budgets, to swamps trying to save someone's leg, I've been there, done that. So I speak with not only authority, but with experience.

It's time both parties took a history lesson. The Medical District needs to be aware that when a select group of individuals (even though they are elected) tries to force a small group to conform, the following results usually occur:

1) The small group will gain sympathy, regardless if they are right or wrong.

2) This sympathy will be perverted and misinterpreted by the leaders as support.

3) This results in revolution, which leads to confrontation, and anytime there is a confrontation, there must be a winner and a loser.

The isolated group in Boardman must not ignore the lessons of the past either. For this group to succeed, they must be prepared to do the following:

1) They must provide honest, documented proof of their position. There can be no hearsay or closed doors if they wish to gain the support of the general public.

2) There must be a solid plan for the future, not just empty statements that things will be better without the current leadership. The lack of a future will create a situation that is more intolerable than the current one.

3) Leaders of a small revolutionary force must be prepared to "not be taken prisoner". They must stake their entire careers on their position; if defeated, they will not be tolerated by the victor, nor the general public to sit in the background and mutter their discontent. They will have been defeated and must accept the victor's terms.

Each "camp" must remember that history has a tendency to repeat itself. So let us learn from the past. "Rome was not built in a day." We cannot rush into any situation that may jeopardize the health care of the citizens of Morrow County, either in the north end or the south. "A chain is only as strong as its weakest link", each "camp" must take a serious study as to which members in its organization may be detrimental to its actual goal in this confrontation. "A house divided against itself cannot stand." "United we stand, divided we fall"; to continue the current battle on the outskirts of the battlefield leads to failure. Either make a direct confrontation or take your toys and go home. This ridiculous bickering will go nowhere and the citizens of both "camps" are tired of this childish behavior.

(s) Jay Straley

With melting snow, flooding a concern

The frigid weather in South Morrow County finally broke Monday, Feb. 5, with temperatures rising above freezing for the first time in almost a week.

The high for Jan. 30 was only 18 degrees, with a low of minus eight. January 31 saw even lower temperatures, with a high of 14 and a low of minus 10.

Meanwhile, with warmer weather, snow melting and rain, flooding was a concern Tuesday.

Darcy Bergstrom at the Emergency Management office in Heppner says that the National Weather Service put out a flood alert at 7 a.m. Tuesday.

Hinton Creek peaked at about 6:30 a.m., but since receded as were other creeks in the area, said Bergstrom. She said that Willow Creek Dam

was shut down to allow only a very low output in preparation for high output out of Hinton Creek. The dam was holding any water out of Willow and Balm Fork. Officials did not anticipate any flooding problems if there was no additional rain, however Bergstrom said that the National Weather Service predicted some rain Tuesday evening.

Bergstrom said that the public works department was in the process of clearing any ice jams and was watching the situation closely.

Meeting set on discussion group

A meeting to determine interest in a Great Decisions discussion group will be held on Wednesday, Feb. 14, at 7:30 a.m. at Twice Upon A Time... (next to City Hall).

"Do you need more than the evening news to understand our changing world?" reads the question on the Great Decisions 1996 brochure. "Become informed, get involved and join a Great Decisions discussion group." This year's varied topics include: Foreign Policy and the U.S. Political System; The Intelligence Community: Time for Reform?; Mexico: Embattled Neighbor; Economic Cooperation in the Asian Pacific; Openings for the U.S.; Water: A Dangerous Endangered Resource?; Failing Nation States: What U.S. Response?; Africa: Should the U.S. Care?; and NATO: What Future Role in Europe?

Sponsored by the Foreign Policy Association (FPA) since 1918, the Great Decisions pro-

gram is offered to "reinvigorate the public dialogue in international affairs for an enlightened foreign policy," through local discussion groups. The FPA is an independent, nonpartisan, non-governmental, national nonprofit educational organization that "seeks to help Americans gain a better understanding of significant world issues in the belief that in a democracy a concerned and informed public is the foundation for an effective foreign policy." Oregon's program coordinator is a staff member at Oregon State University.

More information about Great Decisions is available at the bookstore and by contacting Pat Struthers at Eastern Oregon Computer Consulting in the Ployhar Insurance office, or Doris Brosnan at 676-5382. Interested persons are encouraged to attend the meeting; the program encourages participation by all age groups from high school through senior citizen.

Donations sought for St. Pat's auction

Heppner residents should prepare themselves for the "Great Heppner Auction Blitz", said a St. Patrick's celebration organizer. Volunteers will be going through the town on Tuesday, Feb. 27, asking for donation items for the St. Patrick's Day auction. Items sold at the auction help support the Heppner St. Pat's Celebration by offsetting expenses for entertainment, publicity and the logistical needs of the weekend, and help support local needs and projects. Last year, the South Morrow County

Scholarship and the park playground equipment fund benefited.

Almost any type of item can be donated, although the committee asks that items be in serviceable condition and only small appliances can be auctioned.

Residents need not wait for the "blitz" to get items out of their homes. Volunteers are available now to pick them up. Steve Rhea, days 676-9113, Mike Mills, days 676-9141, Dan Brosnan, 676-5382, or the Murrys, days 676-9158, evenings 676-9631.

Singspiration to be held Sunday MCGC has shoot

All Saints' Episcopal Church will host the "Singspiration" service this Sunday, Feb. 11, at 7 p.m. "Singspiration is an uplifting time of singing and listening to the joy in Christian living through music," said Father Al Miller.

Anyone is welcome to attend. An offering will be taken for the South Morrow Ministerial Association to help with aid to those in need. Fellowship and refreshments will follow.

Mick Sharp led the 16-yard event at the Morrow County Gun Club last Sunday, Feb. 4, with a score of 22 targets broken out of a possible 25. Harvey Childers, Kelwayne Haguewood and Roger Mortimore tied up second, with 21 each.

Childers won the handicap event with a 22. Haguewood took second with an 18.

Shooting will begin at noon this Sunday, Feb. 11, at the gun club.

GROWER MEETING

DATE: February 9, 1996
TIME: 8:30 a.m.
LOCATION: Willows Grange lone

AGENDA

8:30-9:00 **Marv Aguiar, Tri River Chemical Phenoxy Formulation and Carriers**
9:00-9:30 **Collette McIntire, Rhone Poulenc Herbicide Safety On Small Grains**
9:30-10:00 **Paul Pargeter, Bayer Product Label Updates**
10:00-10:15 **Break**
10:15-11:00 **Geoff Roper, Sheldon Blank, Monsanto New Products & Formulations**
11:00-11:30 **Pete Vanourek, Ciba Crop Protection Herbicide Resistance Management**
11:30-Noon **George Stallings, Gustafson Seed Treatments**

Credit Hours Will Be Awarded

Lunch Will Be Provided

Following Lunch:
1:00-1:45 **Steve Kahler, Country Hedging Inc. Grain Marketing, Futures and Options**
2:00 **R-134 Air Conditioning Seminar**

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The children of
Raymond and Thelma O'Neal
wish to extend an invitation
to the couple's
60th wedding anniversary
Saturday, Feb. 10, at 2 p.m.
in conference room of the Best Western Motel
Highway 26 E., Prineville, OR.
no gifts please

Editorial: Return to Reason

By Kevin Erich
Morrow County Health District Administrator

Yes, it's true. The Morrow County Health District is at the center of yet another political firestorm. Misinformation, rumor and innuendo blaze through the county and seemingly consume all hope for rational, reasonable discussion. We must stop this inferno before it consumes us all. With this in mind, I ask that you consider the following information as we work our way through this difficult time.

Much of the contention is focused on expansion plans and the distribution of services and tax dollars between the north and south ends of Morrow County. Let's look at what is presently provided and at what cost to the taxpayer. The following are provided by the Morrow County Health District: (1) County-wide emergency medical services; (2) County-wide home health care; (3) Pioneer Memorial Hospital and Nursing Home; (4) Boardman Health Care Center; (5) Pioneer Memorial Clinic; (6) Boardman Dental Office; (7) Heppner Dental Office.

Just how much do these services cost taxpayers? With a district operating budget of seven million dollars, \$455,000 comes from taxpayers. Tax revenue is 6.5 percent of the total budget. The remainder comes from patient revenue, grants, donations and working capital.

To understand the true impact of district services on Morrow County taxpayers, it's important to realize who pays what of this \$455,000. According to information from the County Assessor's office, Morrow County utilities pay \$284,830 (62.6 percent). The remaining \$170,170 (37.4 percent) comes from residential, commercial, industrial, farm and forest taxpayers. Bottom line--the owner of a \$50,000 home in Morrow County pays \$25.42 (before Measure 5 compression) in tax support to the Health District.

Some Boardman residents have expressed concern that they aren't getting their fair share of services. They say too much tax money goes south at the expense of services in their community. So, how much tax money goes to Boardman? Nearly one-third of the medical district tax dollars go to pay for services at the Boardman Health Care Center. This clinic is owned by the District, but operated independently. The clinic receives approximately \$150,000 in tax support per year to provide medical care to the Boardman community. It retains all revenues (\$300,000-\$350,000) generated from its operation. The Health District receives no rent, is responsible for building maintenance, property taxes and some equipment purchases. In comparison, the physicians at Heppner's Pioneer Memorial Clinic (also owned by the District) are salaried and all of the revenue generated there is retained by the District.

The total 1995 health district taxes (after Measure 5 compression) collected from within the Boardman city limits was \$15,971. The area surrounding Boardman, excluding the Port of Morrow, paid a total of \$22,160.

Also in the Boardman taxing district are two major industrial areas--the Port of Morrow and the PGE plant. Combined health district taxes from these nonresidential areas were \$262,750. This amount comes from industry located within Morrow County's borders--not from Boardman area residents' property taxes. Clearly, Boardman medical services receive far more in tax support than what is paid into the District by Boardman area homeowners. The same is true for each community in Morrow County.

The questions are always "Where have our tax dollars gone?" and "How have they been allocated between north and south Morrow County?" I feel the real issue is how can we more effectively use tax dollars to enhance services. During the past two fiscal years, an average of \$143,901 was needed for operations in north Morrow County. The other areas of the District utilized \$155,353 of tax funds to balance operations. North county entities generated \$394,980 in revenue from the \$143,901 in tax support--resulting in a return of 2.75. The entities in the rest of the district generated revenues of \$4,391,962--a return of 28.27 times the investment. Tax support for Pioneer Memorial Hospital and Nursing Home was \$189,469, which in turn generated \$3,220,463 in gross revenue.

The Health District is eager to improve services in north Morrow County. Unfortunately, contracting services without control over how funds are managed and without receiving any of the revenue generated by these services means additional tax support will be needed to expand or provide new services.

On Dec. 28, 1995, the Morrow County Health District Board held a strategic planning session where they unanimously agreed to aggressively work on improving health care services to the people of north Morrow County. Most of the projects are targeted for Boardman and Irrigon. We know we must plan wisely if we are to meet tomorrow's demands on our health care system--particularly in these growing communities. Our plans include a new medical center for Boardman; a medical clinic in Irrigon; adult foster/day care for Boardman and Irrigon; new ambulances for Boardman, Irrigon and Heppner; physical plant improvements at Pioneer Memorial Hospital; computerization of all medical records; and improved medical technologies throughout the county.

These projects are in the early planning stages. Now, we need input from Morrow County citizens. Five town hall meetings have been scheduled throughout the county. The agenda is open. We want to answer your questions. We want you to tell us how you feel about expansion plans. Perhaps these meetings will provide the format for a return to reason. I hope so. The future of Morrow County's medical services may depend upon it.



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