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Wes Cooley makes Heppner stop



Wes Cooley

Congressman Wes Cooley met with a group of community members on Wednesday, Feb. 7, at Kate's Pizza in Heppner.

Cooley told the audience of around 10 people that the biggest challenge facing Congress is balancing the budget. He said that he is concerned about passing the debt and the staggering amount of interest on

the debt to our children and grandchildren.

Cooley also assured the assembly that, "no matter what you hear, Social Security is not going to be cut."

Cooley said that he is against federal control of education and education dollars. "We want to turn education back to the states, counties and school districts," he said.

Development, Main Street project Council topics

Heppner's Gale Street from the intersection of Church Street to Union Avenue will undergo major repairs this summer. City administrator Gary Marks said that it's hoped the cost of the project will be covered by a \$25,000 Oregon Department of Transportation grant.

There's also a major development slated to take place this summer for Heppner. If annexation is approved, the Port of Morrow will finance the development of up to 27 building sites on six acres adjacent to the Masonic Cemetery.

The proposed development, with plans drawn up by Ferguson Engineering, will be contingent on access to city sewer and water lines. Adequate city water pressure will also play a role in the number of lots to be developed.

The Heppner Economic Development Corporation (HEDC) was instrumental in getting the Port of Morrow to purchase this property, which

lies between the cemetery and the Willow Creek Highway. HEDC proposed the development of a restaurant/motel complex at this site. However, the location proved to be too far from the major portion of the townsite. Access to the property would have to be obtained from the Corps of Engineers. The dead end road now accesses the Corps of Engineers buildings from the highway.

Estimates are that the purchase price of these ready-to-build-on sites would range from \$13,500 to \$17,000. The Port of Morrow, a tax-supported district, can probably finalize the project at a lesser cost, which would then be turned over to the city. One private developer estimates that at above break-even prices, the lots would have to be sold for at least \$18,000.

The Heppner City Council was also informed about the

Cooley said that there is little support in the U.S. Senate for agriculture. "They believe we don't need any help." He said it looks inevitable that agriculture subsidies will be cut, but he is hoping that there will at least be a gradual reduction. "The problem is that the majority of people don't understand the importance of agriculture," he said.

proposed Main Street renovation project slated for 1997. This will involve the equivalent of six city blocks and include a portion of May Street below the courthouse. In addition to completely restructuring the street, storm drains and new sidewalks with planters are involved. The power and telephone poles will be removed on Main Street and the turn around at the mini-park will be paved. The city's portion of this \$1.4 million dollar project is about \$205,000 with 86 percent of that cost expected to be grant funded.

In other business: -the council approved the placement of a Blue Star Memorial Veteran's Marker at the 1903 Memorial mini-park, which is being purchased by the Heppner Garden Club;

-It was also reported that the High School shop class will construct picnic table shelters for the mini-park.

Boardman residents ask to withdraw from MCHD

By April Hilton-Sykes

Former Boardman physician, Steven Zielinski, told the Boardman City Council Tuesday, Feb. 6, that he would fill in as long as six months as physician at the Boardman Clinic. Zielinski said that he made the offer so that the Morrow County Health District (MCHD) wouldn't be forced into accepting a contract with current Boardman physician, Dr. Robert Boss.

Boss and MCHD have been unable to come to a contract agreement. According to figures released by MCHD, Boss would receive \$130,000 or \$154,000, if Boss agrees to an audit, for 24 hours a week minimum, with the clinic open four days a week.

Zielinski told the council that he left the Boardman Clinic when he and the Morrow County Medical Board (in charge of county medical services until the health district came into being) couldn't come to a contract agreement, and he said he asked the medical board for only \$4 thousand a month plus clinic receipts.

Zielinski worked for the Morrow County Medical Board under the auspices of Morrow County in the 1980s. Zielinski also suggested that Boardman residents were afraid of losing a doctor and were under pressure to pay Boss' requests or Boss will leave the district. Boardman Mayor Bill Brown repeatedly asked Zielinski to stop talking and at one point threatened to have a police officer escort Zielinski out of the meeting, amidst cries of the audience, "Let him talk."

MCHD pays Dr. Boss \$130,000 a year, in addition to providing Boss medical offices free of charge, and paying for clinic expenses. MCHD gets no revenue from operation of the Boardman Clinic. Boss keeps the receipts on the clinic, although he maintains he is losing money, and has asked MCHD for an additional \$2,000 a month. MCHD said that they would pay Boss the additional \$2,000 a month if he agrees to a comprehensive audit. Boardman Clinic expenses for 1995 paid by MCHD are as follows: Dr. Boss' subsidy-\$130,000; depreciation-\$13,057; taxes-\$5,271; legal and audit fees; repairs and maintenance-\$2,029; interest-\$587; and insurance-\$266; for a total of \$151,460.

Boss' supporters maintain that he is well liked in the community, is providing a needed service and should not be required to divulge his private financial matters. They say that they are happy with Boss' medical care and are concerned that if he leaves, Boardman will not be able to retain a stable physician.

A group of Boardman residents brought a request to the Boardman Council that the community of Boardman create their own medical district and withdraw from MCHD. But, in the meantime they asked MCHD to come to a contract agreement with Boss.

The city of Boardman was recently able to annex property including the Port of Morrow, which greatly increased their assessed valuation and which Boardman district supporters say would enable them to support their own medical services. The proposal indicated that the boundaries for the Boardman medical district would not include the PGE Coal Fired Plant outside the Boardman city limits, which accounts for a large proportion of tax monies. So, supporters of the Boardman district say that medical services for the

rest of the county would not be harmed financially. Boardman district proponents, including Karen Pettigrew, Gene Allen, Jack Strege and Raymond Michael, owner of the Boardman Pharmacy, say that the city of Boardman has \$36,303,890 in assessed valuation, four Boardman rural tax codes, \$29,017,980, and city and port industrial, \$218,238,230 for a total of \$283,560,100. The total for the rest of the county, including \$342,537,250 for the PGE Coal Fired Plant, would be \$660,629,250.

MCHD, represented at the Boardman Council meeting by Kevin Erich, MCHD CEO, maintains that remaining a unified district increases efficiency, purchasing power, the ability to improve and expand services, the provision of support services and reimbursement of Medicare and Medicaid, especially if the Boardman Clinic receives a rural health care designation. Those in favor of keeping MCHD county-wide also fear the loss of assessed valuation and loss of services for the other cities in Morrow County-Heppner, Lone, Lexington and Irrigon-if Boardman withdraws from the district.

Erich said that while many Boardman area residents may think that south Morrow County receives a disproportionate amount of tax support for health care services, that is not the case. Erich supplied the following MCHD figures, based on audits averaged for the fiscal years 1993-94 and 1994-95

(not including depreciation):

-Pioneer Memorial Hospital and Nursing Home-\$3,220,463 revenues, \$3,315,700 expenses;

-Pioneer Memorial Clinic, Heppner-\$446,662 revenues, \$472,907 expenses;

-Boardman Clinic-\$0 revenues, \$144,451 expenses;

-Heppner Ambulance-\$97,490 revenues, \$75,459 expenses;

-Boardman Ambulance-\$60,662 revenues, \$53,147 expenses;

Irrigon Ambulance-\$16,837 revenues, \$19,229 expenses;

Home Health-\$658,094 revenues, \$558,931 expenses;

Boardman Dental Clinic-\$126,070 revenues, \$132,420 expenses; and

Heppner Dental Clinic-\$156,742 revenues, \$137,792 expenses.

Supporters of the proposed Boardman district also expressed disagreement with MCHD's choice of Boardman area appointed board members. The Boardman Chamber of Commerce recommended Boardman resident Gene Allen. MCHD appointed Jim Hankins, also of Boardman. Some Boardman residents earlier said that they lost representation in Morrow County when their candidate, Ed Glenn, lost the at-large commissioner's race to Don McElligott, Lone.

The conflict between Boardman district proponents and MCHD came to a head following a MCHD proposal for a county-wide bond issue that would fund an urgent care center in Boardman and a clinic in Irrigon.

MC Clerk's office to begin using automatic ballot counting machine

The Morrow County Clerk's Office in Heppner will begin using an automatic ballot counting machine beginning with the presidential primary election March 12. Ballots for this election will be sent out around Feb. 22.

Morrow County Clerk Barbara Bloodsworth says that it is

hoped that the new machine will make the counting process less costly and more efficient.

Bloodsworth says that the ballots are similar to a standardized test. A broken arrow will appear next to the candidates' names and next to 'yes' and 'no'. The voter will fill in the area of the broken arrow located next to his choice.

Cardinals boys and girls go to district this Friday, Feb. 16

A big week is in store for Cardinals' fans as both the boys and girls teams will be contending for a district championship on Friday, Feb. 16, at Hermon High School.

The Lady Cardinals will play the Wasco County Redsides at 6 p.m. The Cardinal boys will also take on Wasco County at 8 p.m., in a return match of last year's district championship, which Wasco won.

Games between the second

place Condon girls and Dufur will begin at 1:30 p.m. Friday, in the first game of the tournament, and the Helix boys will play Culver in the other second place game.

Losers of the Friday championship games will play the winners of the two second place teams on Saturday, Feb. 17, for the second position to the state tournament. Saturday's games will also be at Hermon High School, beginning at 3 p.m.

Governor declares Morrow County a disaster area due to recent flooding

Governor John Kitzhaber has declared Morrow County a disaster area, following some of the worst flooding in 30 years. Morrow County Commissioners are applying for federal funds to help pay for repairs to roads, bridges and public facilities.

Morrow County residents who experienced flood damage last week may be eligible for federal assistance. They should call the Emergency Management office at 676-5161 as soon as possible to report flood damage. Examples of items that residents should report include: damage to their home, business or property; lost business from flood damage or

flood-related utility outages; farm damage, including crop and topsoil loss, livestock losses and damage to equipment or outbuildings.

Preliminary damage estimates on Morrow County roads and bridges total one million dollars. This figure does not include damage to other public or private property in Morrow County. The city of Boardman has reported \$34,000 in damage to public utilities. Two Boardman businesses have reported some loss of business due to last week's flooding and flood-related problems.

Again, Morrow County residents should report flood damage by calling 676-5161.

Customer Appreciation SALE Ends
Saturday February 17th
Hours 7 a.m to Noon
Morrow County Grain Growers
Lexington 989-8221 1-800-452-7396