

HEPPNER



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PMH has no plans to cut services or staff

Pioneer Memorial Hospital and Morrow County Health District chief financial officer Dan Grant told the Gazette-times Monday that the district does not plan to cut staff or services at the hospital.

Grant is acting chief executive officer in the absence of CEO Ken Schmidt who is attending meetings this week at the Adventist Health corporate offices at Roseville, CA.

Grant's statement comes in reply to community concern over the possibility of downsizing following the regular MCHD Board meeting Monday, Feb. 9, at the Lexington school district offices.

At the meeting, Karen Whitaker, with the Office of Rural Health, spoke on a federal program, the Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Program, which, she said, "might be good news for a hospital like the one in Heppner." The program, enacted by Congress in 1997, is not yet in effect and will be formulated by each state. The state of Oregon has not yet begun planning details for the program.

The program that Whitaker outlined would allow for cost-based reimbursement for inpatient Medicare and Medicaid patients and subsequently would increase Medicare and Medicaid payments to the hospital. Currently, the hospital receives cost-based reimbursement only for out-patient Medicare and Medicaid patients. The program would also encourage regional networking among hospitals.

Whitaker added that the program's staffing requirements are not as stringent as required for Level IV Trauma certification, which the hospital now has.

However, district officials stress that the program would not call for downsizing of staff or services, including those required for Level IV Trauma certification, and believe that Whitaker's comments may have been misconstrued.

Grant also told the Gazette that the board is beginning contract negotiations with Dr. Ernie Atkins, physician at PMH and Pioneer Memorial Clinic. Atkins' three-year contract expires June 1. "Dr. Atkins is a wonderful caregiver," said Grant. "We're very happy with him and anticipate a new contract." Atkins' only comment to the Gazette concerning that issue was that he is "officially in contract negotiations with the district."

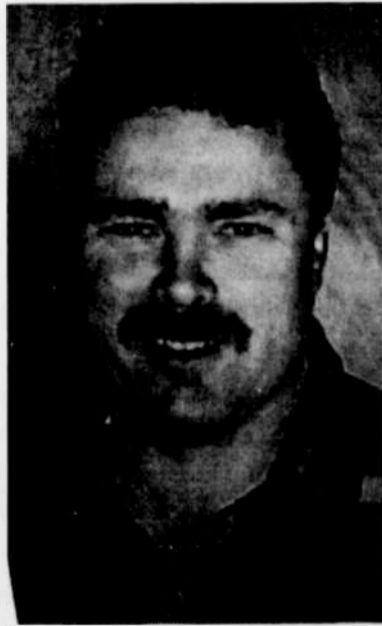
Grant added that the board is also pleased with the performance of Wendy Haack, nurse practitioner at PMH and

PMC. Haack's three-year contract will be in effect through Feb. 28, 2000.

Grant extended an invitation to the public to attend the district's budget hearing which will be held Monday, March 2, beginning at 6:30 p.m. at the Home Health Office in Heppner. A regular meeting will follow.

Concerns about the rumored downsizing at the hospital prompted the Heppner Chamber of Commerce Tuesday to approve a resolution calling for an open forum with the health district board. The MCHD Board agreed to a public forum which will be held Tuesday, Feb. 17, at 7 p.m. at the St. Patrick's Senior Center.

Washington man picked to head MCGG



Chris Meyer

Chris Meyer, general manager of Rosalia Producers, Inc., in Rosalia, Wa, has been named new manager of the Morrow County Grain Growers, it was

announced last week.

Meyer, 41, has been manager at Rosalia Producers, which is mainly a grain co-op with about half the gross income of MCGG, for the past two years. Prior to that he was with the Oakesdale Grain Growers in Oakesdale, WA. His other experience includes grain export with Columbia Grain, and working the family farm at Colton, WA, for several years. He grew up on the family farm and is a 1978 graduate of Washington State University.

Meyer and his wife, Mary Jean, have two daughters, Jackie, nine, and Kelsey, seven. Meyer starts on the job the first of June and plans to bring his family here when school is out in the spring.

Meyer replaces long-time manager Larry Mills, who is retiring.

"I look forward to getting here full time and we are excited about the move," Meyer said.

Mill rumors baseless

A rumor that Kinzua Resources plans to shut down in Heppner or that the mills will be taken over by the city of Heppner is baseless, according to Heppner City Manager Gary Marks.

A KOHU radio program, "Bits and Pieces", apparently attributed such a statement to Heppner Mayor Bob Jepsen, who spoke in an interview at the radio station. However, a review of a tape

made of the interview indicated that Jepsen did not mention Kinzua, according to Marks.

Unfortunately, the incorrect story was also picked up by another radio station said Marks.

"The mayor had no comment on the issue," Marks said. "He (the mayor) had no way of knowing (about Kinzua's operations)."

Marks said that Kinzua was contacted concerning the error.

Ione high plans Valentine dance

A Valentine's dance will be held at Ione High School on Saturday, February 14, from 9 p.m.-12 a.m., in the high school cafeteria,

following the basketball game versus Wheeler.

All Ione High School students are encouraged to attend.

St. Pat's Auction seeks items

The St. Patrick's Day Auction Committee is looking for people who make jams and jellies to help out with the new addition to the auction this year, the "Country Store." Handmade items would

also be welcome.

To donate, call 676-5306, or items may be dropped off at "Twice Upon a Time" bookstore by the Heppner City Hall.

Ground broken for new fair building



Participating in the groundbreaking at the new building are (L-R) Guy VanArsdale, Marlene Gray, Commissioner John Wenholz and Judge Louie Carlson on the shovel, Gary Oberg Shirley Adams, Sam Bellamy and Joe Yocom on other shovel, Kelwayne Hagewood and Bob Adler of Intermountain Steel Buildings from Idaho Falls.

By Marilyn Robinson

A large multi-purpose building on the Morrow County Fairgrounds will be built this summer, thanks to county-wide support.

A ground breaking ceremony was held Wednesday, Feb. 4.

Completion date for this 125' by 225' covered facility is targeted for July 1.

This building will be constructed on what was formerly known as the Little League Field. It will provide ample space for all 4-H, FFA and open class livestock exhibits plus show ring space.

This building will also be large enough to accommodate community events such as auction sales, flea markets, commercial fairs, sports or school activities throughout the year.

To date around \$195,000 in labor and money has been

pledged for this building. This includes the fair board's building fund and a loan of \$45,000. In addition to the \$30,000 given by the Dick Wilkinsons, for whom the building will be named, there are several other large contributions. The Morrow County Livestock Growers, the Morrow County Grain Growers and Northwest Metal Fabricators will each have 8' by 12' colorful banners displayed inside in recognition of individual contributions of \$25,000 or more.

The building material was purchased from Intermountain Steel Buildings, Inc., of Idaho Falls, Idaho. This company will provide the concrete work for foundations and bleacher seating. Northwest Metal Fabricators is donating the labor to put up the barn framework. Volunteer labor may be used to put up the roofing

and siding.

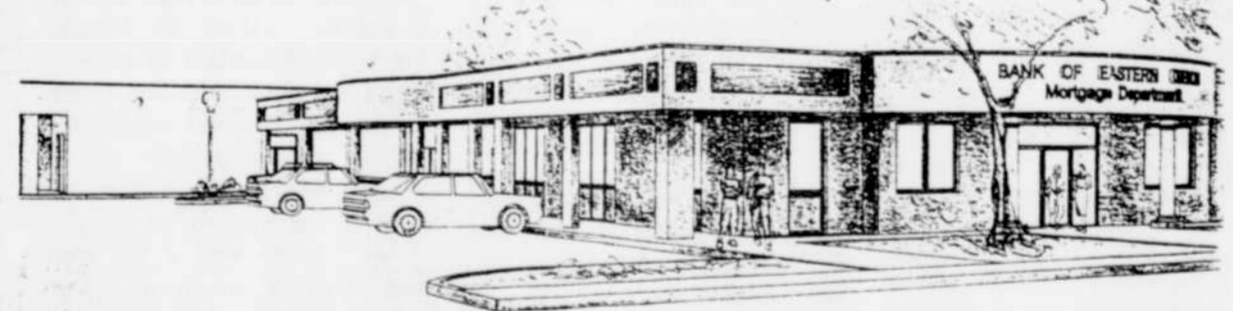
Approximately \$13,000 in donations is still needed for the expense of building new wash racks, metal panels and other enhancements to accommodate usage.

"The interest and financial support has been tremendous," said Fair Board Chairman Sam Bellamy. "We want all livestock producers to have their brand boards permanently displayed." There will be other donor listings and plaques as well as banners. Brand board donations are \$100. Other donations of \$100 will be recognized with name inscriptions. Larger 16" by 32" wooden plaques will recognize donors of \$500. And the large 8' by 120' nylon banners in varied colors denote contributions of \$2,500 or more.

Bank plans major building expansion



Front of existing bank



New addition to back of present bank building

A new construction project planned by the Bank of Eastern Oregon will double the size of the bank, bank officials said last week.

The bank plans to break ground on the new project the last part of February, and be in the new structure by late August.

The new 3,900 square foot office building will be constructed behind the present bank, and will be used mostly for bank operations offices, freeing up the present structure for customer related uses, says bank general manager George Koffler.

Koffler says the building will be made of brick and will house about 12 of the bank's 25 employees. "We just outgrew this building," Koffler says.

Located in the new structure will be the bank's data processing and computer systems, bank operations and accounting department. The mortgage department offices will be

moving in from across the street.

The old TV office on main street will be torn down to make way for the new project, which will include customer parking and landscaping.

General contractors on the project will be Allstott and Gentry of Heppner. The architect is Gale Sergeant of Hermiston. "We plan to use local sub

contractors when ever possible," Koffler said.

"This project will help us better serve our customers and better position ourselves as an independent bank into the 21st century," Koffler said.

The bank experienced growth in loans and deposits the past year and reached \$50 million in total assets in 1997, he said.

Sweek drops out of race

Greg Sweek, the only Democrat running for Morrow County Judge in the primary election, has announced that he will withdraw from the race because

of family and professional concerns.

Four Republican candidates will face off in the primary--Bill Doherty, Guy VanArsdale, Rollie Marshall and Keith Lewis.

Pizza feed this Friday at Heppner HS

A pizza feed has been planned for this Friday, Feb. 13, from 4:30-8 p.m. at the Heppner High School home ec room during the HHS basketball games versus Wahtonka. Games begin with

girls JVs at 3 p.m.

Cost is \$2.50 for a slice of Papa Murphy's pizza and a drink.

Proceeds will go toward the HHS senior class drug and alcohol free senior trip to Seattle.



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