

## Big changes afoot in Ione



Betty Gray (left) with City Clerk Robbin Ferguson

HEPPNER



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### Action will keep hospital and nursing home open (for now)

## Medical district okays bank loan

After several weeks of negotiations and community meetings, the Morrow County Health district voted Monday to accept a \$255,000 line of credit from the Bank of Eastern Oregon. The loan will allow the district to pay its bills and remain solvent until plans for the future can be developed.

Action to take out the loan was approved unanimously by the board of directors at its meeting Monday in Boardman. About 160 concerned citizens, most from Heppner, attended the meeting out of concern that the Pioneer Memorial Hospital and nursing home was going to be shut down as a result of the financial crisis. Without the loan the district would have run out of money in a couple of weeks.

In a related matter the board terminated its agreement with Western Health Resources, which had been receiving \$170,000 per year to manage the health district.

A new administrator has not been named, however, a hospital trouble shooting specialist was expected to be hired after scheduled meetings Saturday.

Sheila Dahlman from Joseph is scheduled to be interviewed by the board Saturday as a replacement for Susan Brock, who had been the district administrator for less than three months, but is an employee of Western Health Services and therefore left immediately Monday night when the board severed its management agreement with the company.

Scott Jacobson, human resource director, will manage the district until Dahlman is brought on board.

Dahlman was recommended to the district by Mike Bell, a consultant hired by the hospital foundation to study the medical district.

The district got into financial trouble because of low reimbursements from government agencies, poor collections of debts owed to the district, and expenditure of funds out of cash flow on purchases that should have been amortized.

The loan package approved Monday will be secured by future taxes collected by the district. The medical district collects about \$525,000 per year in taxes, money which should begin arriving in mid-November. The district already owes about \$180,000 in short term debt.

Bank of Eastern Oregon President George Koffler was at the meeting, and said that he is

confident the district will be able to repay the loan, and mentioned that once the consultant Bell is finished with his report, the district's short term debt could be converted to longer term debt, which would further help the district's cash flow problem.

"This is a bandaid to get us to where we can make an intelligent decision," Koffler said. "We're buying time to get us a chance to get better information. And we are committed to working with the entire health district," he said.

In the past the health district has had trouble getting accurate financial information in a timely manner.

### Grant, Payne, Jensen tied for first in GT football contest

Heppner varsity football coaches Greg Grant and Les Payne, along with Heppner Gazette graphics person Stef Jensen, are knotted in a three way tie for first place in the Heppner Gazette Football contest. All three have 19 right picks against four wrong to lead the pack going into the third week of competition.

Bringing up second place with a record of 18 - 5 is George Koffler of the Bank of Eastern Oregon, and tied for third is Larry Mills, and Ione football coach Dennis Stefani both with a record of 17 right picks against six wrong.

The contest runs through football season, and features picks of both college and professional games.

### Health Dist. meeting

A special Morrow County Health District Board meeting will be held Saturday, Oct. 10, beginning at 1:30 p.m. at the Home Health office in Heppner.

The business includes an introduction of interim CEO candidates, an executive session and dental office proposals.

The consultant hired to study the district, its finances and possible future direction, is Michael Bell and Co. out of Wallowa county, and has done much of its work in the state of Washington.

Larry Mills, president of the Hospital Foundation, which is funding the study, said that he hopes to see a report from the consultant by around the middle of November. He said the consultant will look at among other things: services, financial, health care trends, affiliation, management options (using a firm or managing independently).

### Arlington Rodeo tryouts Oct. 25

The Arlington Saddle Club once again preparing for their annual Jackpot rodeo. Every fall they select a queen to represent the club for the upcoming year. This year tryouts will be held Sunday, October 25.

All contestants must be between 16 and 21 years old as of May 1, 1999.

Contestants will be judged on horsemanship, speaking abilities and appearance.

The tryouts will start at 10 am with a meeting for all contestants. The club will review rules, patterns and judging criteria at that time. The judging will start at 1 pm.

A potluck lunch will be held at noon. Everyone is welcome to join.

Those attending are asked to bring their favorite dish. Drinks will be provided. Arcna games will follow the selection of the queen.

Anyone interested in being a contestant should contact Debbie Deen, 541-454-2502, or Mickie Seed, 541-454-2510, for more information.

The city of Ione has some pretty big plans for a small town. But, this can-do city has already accomplished quite a few of its goals and is one the way to making Ione an even more livable city.

Ione City Hall is now open four days a week and the city has hired a city clerk to handle the city recorder's and treasurer's duties, which have now been combined, and the watermaster's job, which requires testing and paperwork.

Robbin Ferguson, 38, who started as clerk Sept. 1, will keep the office open Monday through Thursday, from 9 a.m.-noon and 1-3 p.m. People may now come in and pay their water bills and pick up permits. (Ferguson is the only EMT currently in Ione during the day time, however, so she may be called away on occasion.)

"It's a business now," said Mayor Betty Gray. "It's not just a volunteer operation." Gray said that the process took awhile to complete, since the charter had to be changed to allow for the consolidation of positions and the "right person" had to be hired.

The city has also applied to the office of Rural Development for a grant/loan to build a new water reservoir and has received a \$12,000 grant from the Morrow County Economic Development office to fund a study about a new water system which would replace the current one, built in 1922.

"If we had an emergency, we would have only four hours of water," said Gray. Gray said that they have determined the proposed water reservoir can handle 700 thousand gallons, compared to 250 gallons in the present antiquated system and have decided that the reservoir will have an aerator and a chlorinator. The cost of the proposed reservoir is estimated to be around \$1.4 million.

Gray said that they anticipate an increase in water rates, in addition to a grant, to help offset the cost of the facility.

The city has also received another grant to study flood control down Rietmann Canyon, which has had flooding problems in the past. "We will hopefully find ways to alleviate that problem," said Gray.

Gray added that she is excited about hiring Ferguson and also credits the Ione City Council for "jumping right in if they see something that needs done." "We have a wonderful city council," added Gray. "They're very pro-active and interested in continuing to make Ione a wonderful place to live." Council members include Dennis Stefani, Dennis Thompson, Mark Bruno, Bob Ball, Dick Allen and Tim Key.

The city is also planning to improve the city park in several

stages. Phase One included

buying the park property, extending the park to Highway 47, putting in an underground sprinkler and new grass, fertilizing and spraying, repairing rostrums and the gazebo, planting new trees, placing new power poles and lights, purchasing maintenance equipment and yearly maintenance at a total cost of \$19,024. The improvements were funded through a grant, matching funds and donations. The stage at the park was built with the help of the Arts Council and the city.

The second portion of Phase One includes park tree removal and trimming, additional electrical outlets, an additional water drip system and a kiosk at \$5,500. Phase Two improvements include RV pads for an RV park, handicapped approved sidewalks and pathways, a complete access road with a kiosk, a handicap-approved bridge crossing, yearly maintenance and

equipment at a cost of \$39,430.

Phase Three includes new handicap access rostrums with showers, playground equipment, yearly maintenance and other equipment, estimated at \$54,715.

Phase Four would be yearly maintenance at a cost of \$7,500.

Gray also envisions a summer music in the park program one night a week, similar to Irrigon and Boardman's music in the park held this past summer. "It will happen, too," laughs Gray. "It's amazing the workers we have."

In other changes, the time of the Ione City Council meeting has been changed to 6 p.m. on the first Tuesday after the first Monday.

Ferguson says she is trying to streamline the office to make it more efficient. Her immediate goal is to put the budget into the computer so the council can review each budget item. "It will give them more control and it will be easier to read," she said. The accounting has traditionally been done on paper.

### Booster club auction features lots of items



Luke Basile, eight years old, shows off the Beanie Babies collection to be auctioned at the Heppner High School Booster Club Auction Saturday, Oct. 17. The Beanie Babies are donated by Pat and Trish Sweeney, Sweeney Mortuary.

The HHS Booster Club steak feed and auction is planned for Saturday, Oct. 17. The steak feed will be from 6-8 p.m. and the auction will get underway at 8 p.m.

Auction and raffle items this year range from a collection of 20 Beanie Babies (three cats, two dogs, a snake, turkey, flamingo, spider, ostrich, kangaroo, two monkeys, bull, cow, lamb, rhino, racoon, horse, and iguana) to jewelry, hunting and fishing trips, a Mexican dinner for four,

a rifle and autographed sports memorabilia.

Dinner and raffle tickets may be picked up at the Shoe Box in Heppner. You need not be present to win raffle items.

Steak feed tickets are \$7.00 each.

News deadline  
5p.m. Monday

**Hunter Specials**  
Danner Boot Sale thru Oct. 10th

HD WINTER LT	RAIN FOREST	GEMINI
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		99 <sup>99</sup>

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