

HEPPNER

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Volunteers enhance the community



Volunteers with the Neighborhood Enhancement Team work on a sidewalk project Saturday, April 8, in Heppner. The program, which is sponsored by the city of Heppner, allows volunteers to work on projects to beautify and enhance the community, according to city manager Jerry Breazeale. In the program, the city provides worker's comp insurance and liability insurance and furnishes needed equipment. The first project underway was sidewalk construction in front of the Notson House in Heppner. Property owners are responsible for the projects and must pay for the costs of materials, said Breazeale. Call city hall, 676-9618, to volunteer to join the team or to be put on the sidewalk replacement project list.



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Ione pool funding discussed

The Morrow County School Board Monday night discussed a plan to transfer operation of the Ione School swimming pool to the Willow Creek Park District.

The school district, facing a budget shortfall, proposes that WCPD "take over the cost of operating the Ione Pool in the same type of agreement that the Morrow County Recreation district funds the extracurricular activities in the county."

When the school district faced an earlier shortfall and proposed cutting extracurricular activities from the budget, voters approved tax monies for the Morrow County Unified Recreation District to fund extracurricular activities such as sports, band and other community activities.

The school board wants the park district to take over funding for the pool, which has a 1999-2000 budget of \$18,967, beginning July 1 of this year, with the school district furnishing personnel, equipment, materials and facilities for pool operation.

The park district, however, has already gone through the budgeting process for the upcoming year and has no funds for additional expenditures.

Kim Cutsforth, a member of the Willow Creek Park Board of Directors, says that the park district has already committed for the 2000-2001 year and will have no funds until the following year when it will make its last payment of around \$18,000 to pay off a short term loan for construction overruns on the Willow Creek Water Park in Heppner.

While the park district levies around \$74,000 a year, it also operates an RV park and a day park at Willow Creek Lake in addition to the Willow Creek Water Park.

Cutsforth said that in the future, the park district expects to have more money to be able to fund projects in other communities.

In addition to paying off the park district's short term loan, the district anticipates dramatically reducing its outgo for heating costs at the Willow Creek Pool. A pool cover to arrive in May, purchased with SCERT tipage fees, is expected to reduce heating costs by \$4,000-\$5,000 a month.

"We all agree we want to do something for all the communities," said Cutsforth. "We wish we had \$24,000-74,000, but the 74,000 is completely used up. We can't do anything this year. We're broke."

The school district proposal to Willow Creek Park District specifies that starting July 1 of this year, the remainder of the swim season will be funded through a "cooperative effort of the park district and the school district," in addition to around \$4,600 from an Ione community fund.

In the school district's proposal, the school district seeks "a sum not less than \$15,000 for the 2001-2002 budget years" from the park district for pool operation. In subsequent years, the proposal seeks payment to school district from the park district "commensurate with the amount the school district has expended for the Ione Swimming Pool upon receipt of a bill of actual expenses."

John Rietmann, school board member, said at the meeting Monday that he attended a meeting of Ione community members where the topic of "litigation" arose, since Ione taxpayers contribute to the park district and some do not feel they receive benefits from the park district.

Many people from Ione initially opposed Ione's inclusion in the park district and several petitioned to be excluded from the district.

According to Cutsforth, the park district paid around \$14,000 in legal fees to fight petitions to separate from the district. Cutsforth added that \$10,000 was given to the city of Ione for remodeling the Ione City Park and stage for performances.

In other business, the school board:

-heard a report from Kathy Neal, Boardman, who is heading

up a drive to promote passage of the school district's local option levy which would provide funds to rehire 10 teachers whose jobs were lost when the school district cut staff to balance the budget.

-heard a report from assistant superintendent Mike Keown concerning the "School Master" program. The School Master program would replace the current program for student services, OTIS, which has announced that it is going out of business.

Student services programs include data on grades, transcripts, immunization records and test scores.

With the new program, the district could utilize CD Roms supplied by school photography companies, which contain student photos. The photos could be downloaded into the school system and matched with the student records for administrative files.

Another feature of the new system, which could be added later for an additional cost, is an automated calling system. With the new School Master program and the upgrade, if a child is absent from a class period or a day, the automated system would call parents to inform them of the child's absence. Keown said that this feature would be used primarily in the secondary schools.

-approved resignations for: Carol Wilson, Sam Boardman Elementary School kindergarten-first grade teacher; Pat Quarisa, Riverside High School Title I assistant; and Kari Keown, Heppner High School cheerleader advisor.

-approved employment for: Helen Bliss, A.C. Houghton Elementary assistant cook,

replacing Joyce Gordanier; Deanna Hamilton, ACH ed assistant, replacing Eleanor Parker; Michelle Duncan-Luna, temporary part-time one-on-one special ed assistant for a position as an aide with a new special needs student; Linda Neumann, temporary part-time special ed assistant for a new special needs student; Paula Post, Columbia Middle School temporary full-time one-on-one special ed assistant, for position as an aide for a special needs student; Carmen, SBE English as a Second Language ed assistant.

-approved extra duty contracts for: Jason Just, Heppner Junior High assistant track coach; Rick Johnston, HHS assistant baseball coach; Lindsay Harle, HHS assistant softball coach; and Ryan Rudolf, Ione Middle School assistant track coach.

-approved a promotion for Kevin Toms, from RHS assistant custodian to head custodian, replacing Paul Gisi.

-approved a calendar change to bring Morrow County Schools' spring break into line with state colleges and universities. Spring break for the year 2001 will now be held the last week in March, from March 26-30.

-approved the 1999-2000 list of classified and confidential employees. Some employees, however, may not be rehired due to budget constraints.

-heard the following announcements: April 17-second budget meeting at Riverside High School, 7:30 p.m.; April 18-Oregon School Boards Association spring conference at Pendleton Red Lion; April 19-Facilities meeting, Heppner Elementary School gym, 7:30 p.m.; April 24-third budget meeting, Ione Schools, 7:30 p.m.; May 8-next board meeting, district office, 7:30 p.m.

\$22.8 million budget proposed

Morrow County School District has proposed a \$21,823,080 budget for the 2000-2001 year. The budget includes \$16,213,418 in the general fund.

School Superintendent Bruce Anderson, in his budget message April 3, said that the budget was guided by district priorities to maintain favorable class sizes, move toward equity in the distribution of resources, help more students meet CIM standards and stay within the budget, as mandated by the state.

However, Anderson stressed that the district "should move carefully in this shift of resources to avoid creating another group of underserved students. Criteria other than class size and expenditures per student must be considered so that all students in the county have access to quality educational programs"

Financial policies included plans to discontinue the transfer of funds from the general fund to co-curricular activities and funds to provide flexibility to add additional staff in Boardman and Irrigon should enrollment there increase.

The budget also included "place savers" to add additional funds in the amount of around \$500,000, should the local option levy pass to hire back teachers who were cut following the budget shortfall.

The resources for the upcoming year are \$322,280 less than the current year, after adjusting for the local option due to a reduction in the ending fund balance and lower than expected state revenues.

If the local option passes or the district receives more money from the state due to increased enrollment, Anderson recommends that the money be carried over to the 2001-2002 budget.

The school district estimates an ending fund balance of \$800,000 this year. The unappropriated ending fund (\$358,957) and contingency allocated for unforeseen events (\$300,000) predicts an ending balance of \$658,957 which is around \$250,000 short of cash flow needs for the 2001-2002 school year.

The proposed budget estimates an increase of around 41 students.

The 2000-2001 budget is

approximately 80 percent salaries and benefits, compared to 81 percent the previous year. Salaries and benefits will decrease \$191,376 unless the local option does not pass; in that event salaries and benefits will be reduced \$691,376.

The upcoming year's budget calls for:

-inclusion of \$250,000 in operating contingency to allow addition of teaching positions to equalize class size due to an increase in student population.

-addition of \$500,000 in local option expenditures for 10 teaching positions.

-\$100,000 to contract with Union-Baker ESD for alternative education.

-\$25,000 for assessment and additional contracted services for handicapping conditions.

-addition of one teacher and 3.5 aides to accommodate growing student population at all levels in Boardman and Irrigon.

-re-allocation of \$25,590 for summer school to improve student performance in math and reading at the elementary and middle school levels. The funds were previously budgeted for Benchmark Booster Days.

-addition of \$24,500 for student accounting services for a new student accounting program. The funds will be reimbursed by ESD.

-inclusion of \$31,000 for special ed transportation, because of increased activity in the service, which is mandated. The money is reimbursed at a rate of 70 percent of cost.

-inclusion of \$34,450 for building improvement, of which \$30,000 is for the completion of the remodeling project of Heppner Elementary office space. Funds for this project will be transferred from the old bond levy account, which will be closed upon completion of the project.

Co-curricular activities will be reduced by \$24,806 with a "real reduction of approximately \$68,000 in programs." Major program reductions include golf, cheerleading, middle school track, C-team basketball, FFA and "severe reductions in supplies and equipment." No general fund dollars will be allocated to this fund as in the past.