

HEPPNER

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Park district assists with Ione pool shortfall



Skip Matthews (left), Willow Creek Park District chairman, presents a check for Ione Pool expenses to Jim Swanson, Ione Pool Committee chairman. Also pictured are Ione Pool lifeguards, Emily Key, Natalie McElligott, Caitlyn Orem, Billy Gates and Johnny Collin, and Shelly Key, Ione Pool manager.

The Willow Creek Park District has entered into an agreement with the Morrow County School District to help with a funding shortfall for the Ione swimming pool.

"The Park Board is glad to be in a financial position to help Ione with their swimming pool," said Skip Matthews, WCPD Board Chairman.

An agreement was worked out between the Ione Pool Committee, the school district board and the park board to make up operating money if the funding was available.

"With the hard work of the Ione Pool Committee and the increasing financial strength of the park district, the Ione pool should be able to stay open for many years," commented Matthews.

"Receiving the first of three \$5000 payments from the park district was a tremendous relief," said Jim Swanson, chairman of the Ione Pool Committee. When the school district decided two years ago not to fund the Ione pool, the Ione Pool Committee (Mike Stuart, Betty Rietmann, Anne Morter, Barb Collin, pool manager Shelly Key, and chairman Jim Swanson) needed to act quickly to obtain other funding.

"We were able to keep some small funding from the school for two years, improve our management of the pool, adjust our rates and also obtain some donations and grant monies," said Swanson. "But when we budgeted it out over the next three years, we were short about \$15,000 a year to operate the pool."

The committee knew they could not always count on donations/grants so Swanson approached the park district for assistance. "We were very pleased to find the park board willing to help," said Swanson. He went on to say that the pool continues to be important to the Ione community, as it has been for over 50 years. "We appreciate the park district very much and hope we can keep this financial relationship going for many years," said Swanson.

Local woman honored for genealogical website

A local woman has received an award for her work in genealogy on the Internet.

Carolyn McDaniel of Heppner will fly to Boston, with all expenses paid, where she will deliver a speech and receive an award from GENTECH, a genealogy website, in conjunction with the New England Historic Genealogical Society convention January 24-27. The New England Historic Genealogical Society is the oldest genealogical society in the U.S., founded in 1845, according to McDaniel. McDaniel has already received the first half of her award at the National Genealogical Society convention which was held in Portland.

"I'm trying to promote new ideas about how to develop technology that will meet researchers' needs," said McDaniel, who added that she established her website as a means of "community building, and as a source for education

about ethics, standards and resources for internet use in regard to genealogy and history."

On the website McDaniel explores her theory that many of the early Oregon pioneers came from the Philadelphia area.

McDaniel, who is the daughter of Sylvia McDaniel of Heppner, recently moved to Heppner from Portland where she was attending Portland State University.

"I'm interested in getting together with others in the community," said McDaniel, who has taught a genealogical course in Pendleton. "I'm hoping to reinstate it (a genealogical course) here. Computers work so well for people in these rural communities."

For more information, contact McDaniel at her e-mail address: cmacdee@centurytel.net; or access her web site: freepages.history.rootsweb.com/~amxroads.

Town & Country Jan. 17

Heppner's Annual Town and Country Banquet, "2002, The Red, White and Blue", dedicated to veterans and volunteers, is scheduled for Thursday, Jan. 17, at the Elks Club. There will be a no-host social hour at 6 p.m. with seating for the banquet at 7 p.m.

The evening will kick off with entertainment by Second Chance, from Pendleton. The group, composed of Jeremy Miller, Micah Bartron, Kevin Tesch, Chris Moore, Nathan Garton and David Bates, are part of the BMCC choir and have entertained audiences around the state, as well as in Washington,

Idaho, California and Hawaii. Most recently they have been honored to sing in many memorials for those who gave their lives in the Sept. 11 attacks.

Second Chance performs a variety of a cappella music, including contemporary, comedy, country, well-known hits and patriotic selections. These locals all share a love of music and look forward to entertaining Heppner.

On the evening agenda will be a visual presentation kicking off the 100th Centennial Celebration of the state, as well as in Washington,

Opponents in majority at city hall/library project meeting

Nearly 100 people turned out last Thursday for a town hall meeting to discuss the proposed City Hall/Library project that would see a 12,000 sq ft, \$1.4 million building constructed on main street in between the post office and the Shoe Box. Most of the people at the meeting were against the project.

The meeting was held to hear citizen concerns, explain the project and pick a committee to formulate a survey city officials plan on mailing out to further test public opinion. Mary Nixon from the Rural Development Initiatives, Inc. of Pendleton moderated the meeting.

First Larry Mills gave a brief history of the City Hall/Library project.

Mills said talk about a new facility began in 1994 when people starting talking about relocating the library. The feeling was that the library building was too small in its present location in the same building with the Morrow County Museum. He said the library is presently 1450 sq ft.

In August of 1999, Mills said, the library and city began talking about building a common building.

Funding for the new building would come mostly from the library district, which has access to grants and outside funding which the city does not have.

Under the current proposal the city would have to come up with \$300,000 and the library \$1.1 million to construct the two-story facility.

Speaking in opposition to the project was local businessman Bob Ployhar, who said that he was not against libraries, he just thought with Heppner current economic condition this was not a good time for the project.

"The biggest reason for opposition is the current economic situation," he said. "Our high school has 118 kids now and it used to have 165. Kids aren't staying here because there aren't any jobs. This town is getting smaller and we have to ask: who is going to foot this bill? I sell real estate and there are 70 houses for sale in Heppner right now."

"We have the highest tax rate in the state of Oregon. Lots of people are retired and on fixed income, and they can't afford this," Ployhar said.

He went on to say there are more pressing things the city could be spending its money on. "Our water system needs upgrading, our streets need repairs, and we have problems with our sewer system. We have to take care of business first," he said. "We just can't afford this."

"Nobody is against libraries, it's just the economics of the community that has us concerned," he said.

Ployhar went on to say that the proposed location of the building is wrong because it will take up valuable parking spaces downtown, that should be available for people shopping at downtown businesses.

Speaking in defense of the project was local banker George Koffler, who said that the new building would solve several problems.

"The library and the museum are inadequate. Our city hall is a converted garage. The city people have no office for confidential discussion and the building is cold in the winter and hot in the summer," he said. "And the restrooms are not ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant."

Koffler also pointed out that the taxpayers of Heppner were getting a good deal as far as paying for the new building.

**NEWS DEADLINE
Monday, 5 p.m.**

"There is a \$1.4 million total price on the project. Library is putting up one million, and if their grants don't come through the project is dead," he said. He said city residents would only have to pay 44 cents per thousand of assessed valuation to fund its portion of the project. "That comes out to \$2.70 per month if you own a \$75,000 home," he said. "I don't think the debt service is too much, in fact the debt is going to be going down (other bonds the city has are going to be retired in the future)."

"Where should the project be built?" he asked. "Business is probably not going into that lot (the proposed site is currently a vacant lot). Retailers and restaurants can't help but be helped by this project," he said. "We're either on the way up or on the way down. I think this building says a lot about which way we are headed," he told the crowd.

Space in the building would be allocated in this manner: general common areas 1925 sq ft; library 2925 sq ft; city hall 3405 sq ft and police dept 1080 sq ft. With other misc. rooms the total space of the building comes to 12,025 sq ft.

Other Heppner citizens also spoke at the meeting, including Randy Lott who pointed out Heppner's high unemployment and the fact that a large number of signatures had been gathered in opposition to the project. "Senior citizens can't afford more taxes," he said. "Forget this project and put our money into broken water valves and pot holed streets."

Ed Dick, a long time resident and former businessman in

Heppner, said that he was opposed to the location of the building. "There is no possible benefit by placing that building next to the post office. That is a high traffic area, and the proposal would be a detriment to main street businesses. I object to it being next to the post office."

City manager Jerry Breazeale said the city had looked at other sites and "this is the best site. Locating city hall and a library in a retail area is a good thing. We don't see another store coming into that area," he said.

Another resident wanted to know why the city was proceeding in light of the stiff opposition to the project.

Breazeale said a petition had been turned in to city hall with 400 signatures against the project, and 20 in favor.

"Why are we continuing to move ahead with this project given the opposition in these economic times?" Dave Campbell asked.

Pat Edmundson spoke in favor of the project and pointed out that she was never asked to sign a petition either way on the project.

At the end of the meeting a committee was appointed to come up with the survey questions that would be mailed to every registered voter in Heppner. Appointed to the committee was Ann Spicer from the library board, Tom Wolff from city council, Bob Ployhar as an opponent, Grace Drake as a proponent and Cyde Estes as an at large citizen.

It was expected that the committee would come up with the survey questions by mid February.

Health district in the red again

The Morrow County Health District, at their regular meeting Monday night, learned of a \$74,539 deficit for November. The previous month the district had a \$19,000 loss.

"How do you feel about this?" asked board member John Prag. "I don't feel good," replied CEO Victor Vander Does. Vander Does has been credited for bringing the district's ailing bottom line back into the black.

Vander Does and assistant financial officer Nicole Mahoney said that November's loss was a combination of a large amount of contractual adjustments (Medicare and Medicaid write-offs), a larger than normal payroll because of an additional pay period, increased one-time lab costs and below average home health revenues.

Vander Does said that there is not much more that can be cut from an already spare budget and added that the district needs to concentrate on increasing revenues.

Vander Does said that the Pioneer Memorial Hospital is close to becoming designated a critical care access facility which would increase revenues \$200,000-\$250,000 a year because of increased Medicare and Medicaid payments.

The board discussed how to increase patient usage at the Irrigon clinic and cited maintaining a "constant stable provider" as one means. Vander Does said that the district has received 10-12 applicants for the physician's assistant position at the clinic and plans to review them over the next few weeks. Increasing clinic usage among the Hispanic population was also discussed.

The board also briefly discussed closing down different capacities of the hospital as a way of saving money. Vander Does said that all departments were so intertwined that closing down one area would not be beneficial since staff dovetails to

cover the hospital, nursing home and emergency room duties. When asked about closing the nursing home, he said that the only way that he would consider closing the nursing home would be if the facility lost "Pro Share" payments, a federal program disbursed through the states designed to help small nursing homes.

The board approved purchase of a sigmoidoscopy machine, which screens for problems in the colon. The cost of the machine is \$15,515, but Vander Does said that the machine will "probably pay for itself in a year," generating around \$22,000 a year. Vander Does said that patient charges for the procedure are estimated at \$250-375 per exam, which will be performed at the hospital. Vander Does said that providing the service would also help keep patients in the community.

In other business, the board:

-heard from Vander Does about problems with transmitting CT scans and other films to out-of-town specialists. Options for correcting the problem could include purchasing new software, but VanderDoes said he wanted to consult specialists at St. Charles Medical Center in Bend prior to making a decision.

-approved the lesser of two CT preventative maintenance contract plans and told Vander Does to try to negotiate a two or three-year maintenance plan, if possible.

-approved swing bed policies and procedures.

-approved reappointment of Dr. Jeanne Berretta to the medical staff.

-heard from Vander Does that CSEPP has indicated that the agency would like to rent the former Boardman clinic for \$900 a month. The district had previously put the clinic building for sale. The board approved a lease for one-year with the stipulation that CSEPP pay

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