

HEPPNER

50¢



Gazette  
Times

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## MCGG takes first in light parade



Mekayla Kindle, 6, talks with Santa before the Light Parade



Third place winner: "Big Santa Float" presented by the Bank of Eastern Oregon

The events of Dec. 5 began before the Light Parade, with the Christmas Tree lighting and pictures with Santa. Santa this year was played by Jerry Olson of Heppner, who was also seen on the Columbia Basin Electric Co-Op float.

Winners for this year's sixth annual Parade of Lights were as follows: First- Morrow County Grain Growers pulling the 2003 Fair and OTRP Princesses; Second- Columbia Basin Electric Co-Op with live

Santa Clause; Third- Bank of Eastern Oregon's "Big Santa"; and Fourth- Bucknum's Christmas Gift.

### Library to hold Kid's Ornament Workshop

The Heppner Library will be holding a Kid's Ornament Workshop, Friday, Dec. 13, from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. All children interested in making ornaments are welcome to attend.

### School holiday concerts coming soon

Heppner Elementary School will be holding their holiday music program, Thursday, Dec. 12, at 7 p.m. in the Heppner High School gym.

The holiday music program for HHS will be Tuesday, Dec. 17, at 7 p.m. in the HHS cafeteria.

## School board votes against consolidation

A measured lone contingency that packed into the school district board room in Lexington Monday night emerged with a small victory—albeit a bittersweet one. The Morrow County School Board, before a standing room only crowd, voted against consolidating lone and Heppner schools "at least for now." But, the board, attempting to cope with severely diminished state funding, voted to pursue \$660,585 in general cuts and \$816,480 in staffing cuts to balance the budget, in effect decimating the educational programs in south Morrow County. Also at the meeting, the board learned that the Morrow County Education Association that afternoon had ratified a contract with the district, which would provide a three percent raise for the district's teachers (two percent retroactive to July and one percent to begin in March). Board member Gary Frederickson said that the raise would help make the district "more competitive" in retaining and attracting teachers, a problem in north Morrow County schools, which are said to lose teachers to nearby school districts such as Hermiston and Pendleton. The contract also calls for an increase in district-paid insurance costs from \$490 to \$530 per month per teacher.

The general cuts call for a \$250,000 cut in the capital improvement fund, a \$75,000 reduction in the transportation system fund and a change in the early retirement system that would result in a \$70,000 cut from that fund's \$270,000 budget. Also on the chopping block are: elimination of the summer school program—\$28,000; elimination of head teacher stipends or positions—\$30,423; elimination of substitutes for aides except for special education and one-on-one aides—\$35,295; dropping an equipment fund—\$40,100; closing of the Lexington district building—\$25,000; and other reductions in funds. The \$3,000 the district allotted for operation of the lone pool was also included in the list of cuts. Also, a move of athletic director funding to a different fund is expected to result in a savings of \$30,332.

As to \$816,480 in staffing cuts, the formula presented at the Monday night meeting calls for a reduction of 14.35 teachers in Heppner and lone.

Preliminary recommendations call for a \$216,720 cut from Heppner Middle School (3.87 teaching positions); a \$211,680 cut from Heppner Elementary School (3.78 teaching positions); a \$200,480 cut from lone High School (3.58 teaching positions); a \$100,240 cut from Heppner High School (1.79 teaching positions); a \$67,760 cut from lone Elementary School (1.21 teaching positions); a \$6,720 cut from lone Middle School (.12 teaching position); and also a \$12,880 cut from Riverside High School (.23 teaching position). Board Chair Julie Weikel stressed that while the \$816,480 amount will be cut from the district budget, recommendations as to where the cuts will be made and the nature of the cuts is still preliminary. The cuts may not be limited to teaching staff, but could include other staffing and building reductions. In explaining their

slashing of south Morrow school funding so severely, the board reiterated its goal of "equity", which correlates the amount of money a school brings in with the amount of money it spends. "We want to balance the budget with an eye to where funding is coming from," said Superintendent Dr. Jack Crippen. The more populous north Morrow County schools not only have more students (the state allots districts a certain amount of money per student) but also have more English-as-a-second-language students and other factors which increase the amount of funding the state doles out. While small rural schools do receive some additional state funding, they have proven to be more expensive to operate. Dr. Crippen said that the district could lose at least eight to 10 teachers through retirement, which would help mitigate the effect of the board's decision.

Dr. Crippen also told the board that the newly constructed elementary schools in Boardman and Irrigon will not open for some time because the district cannot afford to staff the new buildings, adding that the expected growth in that area has not yet materialized. Weikel later emphasized that north end schools are already crowded, even without the expected growth. "Sam Boardman (elementary) doesn't even have an extra closet," said Weikel.

The cohesive lone community, appearing en masse at the meeting, has galvanized in its goal of avoiding school consolidation of Heppner and lone schools. As a result of a meeting December 2, the lone community submitted a list of concerns and recommendations to the board Monday night. "Consolidation is not an option," said a letter handed out to the board and members of the audience. "We realize that cuts are necessary and we will bear our fair share, but the lone School must not be closed. Give the community a chance to offer solutions within the boundaries of the State Funding Formula." lone resident Joe Rietmann reiterated that sentiment, saying that lone wants to take its cuts and work within the budgetary restrictions, but wants to have input as to how those reductions are made and avoid closure of its school. "We are willing to take a bite of the pill," said Rietmann, "but we don't want to choke on it. Our school is everything to our community." Rietmann said that the lone community would consider establishing a charter school or forming its own district before it would consider consolidation. "I have not seen any proposal which would close the lone Schools," said board member John Renfro.

Irrigon resident Meredith DeHaven offered lone support from the Irrigon Community and said that when Irrigon lost its school it, in effect, lost its community. DeHaven drew laughter from the audience with her comment, "Irrigon is a dead community. You'd hold the second coming of Christ and you still probably wouldn't have more than five people show up. If you take the school out of lone it would erase lone right off the map." The lone contingent emphasized that they do not blame the board for the cuts and realize that the cuts are the result

of state budgetary problems and also said they have "no quarrel with Heppner." Crippen told the board, however, that he did not want the communities to have "carte blanche" in decisions about their schools. The board said that they would take the lone community recommendations into consideration, but stressed that the final decision as to funding cuts lies with the board and superintendent.

Besides the issue of consolidation, the lone letter made the following points:

"lone has twice been named an "Exceptional School" and the high school has been named the OSAA Oregonian Cup each year it has been in existence. Don't kill an exceptional school."

"The effects of consolidation on our children would be both physical and emotional. Not only would the already lengthy school day become longer, but children could be as far away as 45 miles from home should they forget lunch money or get sick at school. Some of the bus rides would be unmanageable, especially for younger children." lone community member Sarah Carlson said that if lone area students are bused to Heppner, her children could face a four-hour daily bus ride and she would consider home schooling if consolidation was realized.

"In the event of consolidation, the high level of parental involvement of the lone school children would drop dramatically. The cost in time and money would discourage parents and townspeople from volunteering. We believe that parental and community support is one of the biggest factors in student success."

"Consolidation would not occur without a significant number of students seeking other educational alternatives, whether that is neighboring school districts or home schooling."

"A new school is being constructed in lone. The taxpayers, of this area who are paying for this facility and will continue to pay for the next 20 years, expect it to be used to school the children of lone and the surrounding area."

"lone is a town with an abundance of community spirit and pride. The school is the center of this community. Most anything that happens at school (games, concerts, programs, graduations, etc.) is well attended. Support for school activities is very strong. The town and its economy are tied closely to the school. Should the school go, the businesses are likely to follow." Along these same lines, lone resident Beth Heagy also said at the meeting, "We participate in Heppner's economy. If we do go down, Heppner will probably go down with it."

"lone voters have been long-time school and school district supporters. The citizens in lone have been known to pass levies and bond issues. In the last election, the "yes" votes from the lone area put the bond issue over the top. While our population may not be the biggest, a high percentage of the citizens in lone vote."

Another community meeting has been scheduled at the lone School cafeteria on Tuesday, Dec. 17, at 6:30 p.m.

In other business, the board: approved resignations/

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ALL NEWS AND ADVERTISEMENT DEADLINE:  
MONDAYS AT 5:00 P.M.



### CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE

Friday, December 13 from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

COME JOIN THE FUN!

Refreshments, cookies and hot apple cider

Morrow County Grain Growers

Lexington 989-8221 • 1-800-452-7396 For farm equipment, visit our web site at [www.mcg.net](http://www.mcg.net)