

HEPPNER

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## Ione community to meet to decide secession issue

It's not just about consolidation—it's about self-determination. Although Monday night the Morrow County School Board, by lack of a motion, let stand an earlier decision against consolidation of Heppner and Ione Schools, the Ione community is still going forward with plans to withdraw from the district. A meeting to discuss secession was set for Tuesday night at 6:30 p.m. at the Ione School with organizers planning to collect signatures on petitions advocating withdrawal from the district.

Organizer Jerry Rietmann, Ione, maintains that decisions about the Ione School should be made within the Ione community and feels certain that Ione families will be better off with their own school district. "We will lose our town, if we don't have a school," said Rietmann, who adds that a good school is crucial to drawing new business to the area, especially a proposed new windmill project, and retaining the businesses already in existence.

"We had a certain amount of security—Ione passes levies," said Rietmann. They always needed Ione to pass their

levy. "We're wanting to leave on the basis that it doesn't work any more. Maybe we don't need a county school district any more, he added." Prior to Measure 5, voters in school districts passed levies to provide operating funds for schools and Ione, with its high voter turnout, consistently passed school levies. Since the passage of Measure 5 and other tax measures, schools are funded by the state and funding is determined through a complex formula factoring in the number of students attending the schools, with additional monies for English-as-a-second language students, special education students, pregnant and parenting students, small rural schools and other factors.

Rietmann stresses that if Ione, with approximately 7.2 percent of Morrow County students, secedes from the district, only a proportionate amount of funding will follow them—approximately 7.3 percent of the Morrow County tax base. As a part of the Morrow County School District, Ione and Heppner schools have of late endured bare-to-the-bones staffing and curriculum cuts, following the district's policy of "equity" in which schools operate on approximately the amount of state funding they receive. The issue of consolidation of Heppner and Ione schools arose as a result of a Heppner community meeting to arrive at solutions to the equity cuts, but the Heppner community now says it does not recommend consolidation of the two schools. Rietmann says that if the Ione community decides to withdraw, Ione schools would end up with basically the same curriculum as they have now.

Rietmann says that if Ione secedes from the district, the school buildings will revert to the new district, as will buildings currently under construction. School bonds will also continue as previously, he says.

Rietmann says that a lawyer has been retained and consultants have been hired to

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## School board says no to Heppner, Ione school consolidation

There will be no consolidation for Heppner and Ione schools for the 2003-2004 year, Morrow County School Board Chair Julie Weikel told a crowd of around 100 people, mostly from Ione, at the MCSD Board meeting Monday night in Boardman. The board did not entertain any motions on the consolidation issue for Heppner and Ione schools, thereby letting stand an earlier resolution that said the board would not consider consolidation, "at least for now". A decision to consolidate had to be made Monday night in order to implement changes for the upcoming year, so the issue is moot at least for a year.

At the meeting, Joe McElligott from Ione and Mark Rietmann and Jay Gibbs from Heppner presented reports from their respective communities, saying Heppner and Ione accept the "equity" cuts proposed by the board and presented ways their respective communities hope to have the cuts implemented. The board's idea of "equity" is that each school's expenditures be restricted to the amount of state funds it receives. Schools are funded by the state in a complex formula, which includes the number of students who attend, with additional monies for English-as-a-second-language students, special education students, pregnant and parenting students, small rural schools and other factors.

During deliberations on the consolidation issue, board member John Renfro was interrupted by an angry Mark Rietmann, member and former chair of Heppner-Lexington Advisory Committee, when Renfro said that the Heppner community had indicated they were in favor of consolidation. Rietmann yelled, "The Heppner community does not recommend consolidation," before being told by Weikel that he was out of order. Board member Larry Mills, Heppner, reiterated for Rietmann that the Heppner community was not in favor of consolidation and told the board and audience that the board's earlier decision should stand. "As far as I'm concerned, the issue is settled. I personally don't want to revisit it," said Mills.

Board member Gary Frederickson indicated that he favored consolidation at least temporarily because of the more varied curriculum offered by the larger schools, even if it came to sending Ione students to Heppner or even to Riverside High School. "It's very easy to see the educational benefit for students. As a board we have a charge to look at the best educational opportunities for students," said Frederickson. "I think it's a tragedy that we can't haul those students to Heppner... and if we need to, bus those students to Riverside." That statement prompted board member John Rietmann to jump in the fray, saying that the Ione parents should be the judge of what is best for their children and sought self-determination for communities facing the prospect of consolidation. "The idea of what is best for the students is the issue," countered John Rietmann, who added that now the equity cuts have been made in south county schools, "one area is not detracting from another." He said he felt that the Ione School after cuts is "operational" and suggested that the schools "operate with the cuts, do the best you can and wait for parents in the community to make the decision."

Board member Burke O'Brien, Heppner, concurred in letting the earlier decision stand,

but added that the Ione community may "do just as well" if they withdrew from the district. "I believe parents in Ione are intelligent enough to see if their kids are suffering," said O'Brien, to applause. Weikel and board member Pat McNamee did not offer comments on the issue.

The Ione community planned a meeting for Tuesday night to determine whether to initiate procedures for the Ione Schools to secede from the Morrow County School District.

In other business, the board:

-heard a report about the Irrigon school building groundwater issue from Nan Hall of Heary International. Hall said that \$172,000 has been spent to solve the problem of groundwater at the Irrigon site and she expects around another \$100,000 to be spent, out of a \$404,000 budget.

-discussed coordinating the bell schedule for Ione High School, Heppner High School and Riverside High School so that it would be easier to implement V-tel classes among the schools. Heppner and Ione high schools begin at 8 a.m., but Riverside begins at 7:30 a.m. to coordinate busing at RHS, Columbia Middle School and the north end elementary schools. The issue will be investigated further, along with policies and procedures concerning V-tel, distance learning, "cyberschools" (internet classes) and who, the student or the district, will pay for the classes.

-discussed sale of the district's Learning Center Building in Irrigon to Union-Baker ESD, which provides alternative school in that building. The building has an assessed valuation of \$320,000, but an appraisal will be required before a sale can take place.

-heard from Superintendent Dr. Jack Crippen on the state funding estimates for 2003-04, which are not encouraging.

-learned from Dr. Crippen that RHS Principal Duane Yecha will become the director of programs, a new position. Dirk Dirksen will become the new RHS principal and Bill DeBoard will continue serving as vice-principal, dividing his time between RHS and CMS. The upcoming retirement of Sam Boardman Elementary Principal Susan Tolar will leave one administrative position open.

-heard a request from the City of Lexington to acquire the MCSD Lexington District Office Building to use as Lexington City Hall, for office space, a park, storage space and other uses and declared the building as surplus property.

### Les Schwab has new manager

Keith Herbison has taken over the position of manager at the Les Schwab in Heppner, as former manager Glenn Bridgman and family was transferred to the Tri-Cities.

Herbison, 39, comes to Heppner from Springfield where he has lived for the last six years, with wife Rica and children Brittney, 15 and Brock, 11. Rica, Brittney and Brock will move to Heppner after the school year has finished. Herbison has also worked with Les Schwab in LaGrande.

Before getting involved with the Les Schwab business, Herbison worked for 11 years in the logging industry helping to run a two-man, owner/operator business.

-learned of upcoming cuts and possible mergers of ESDs due to budget restraints.

-discussed upcoming negotiations for certified and administrative employees, whose contracts expire June 30 of this year, and classified employees, whose contract expires June 30, 2004.

-received two options for the 2003-04 school calendar, both of which begin after Labor Day. Option A calls for a Sept. 2 student start date, a two week Christmas break from December 22-January 4, a March 22-26 spring break and a June 10 student end date, with the Ione graduation on June 4, Heppner graduation on June 5 and Riverside graduation on June 6. Option B calls for a Sept. 2 student start date, a one-week-plus Christmas break from December 24-January 4, a March 22-26 spring break and a June 8 student end date, with graduation dates the same.

-accepted resignations from: Fred Monaco, from his advanced math teaching position at HHS (the math position will be taught by Jeannie Collins); Mariza Fonseca, from her position as Sam Boardman Elementary School English as a second language ed assistant; Alice Flanagan, from her position as A.C. Houghton Elementary School one-on-one special ed assistant; Pedro Torres, RHS head boys' soccer coach.

-accepted retirements from: Les Payne, HHS teacher; Johnna Shimp-Jones, ACH teaching position; Joyce Gordanier, ACH head cook.

-approved employment for Kelly McDaniel, SBE ESL ed assistant, replacing Mariza Fonseca.

-approved interim agreements from: Les Payne to finish the 2002-03 school year from March 1-June 13; from Johnna Shimp-Jones to finish the 2002-03 year from January 6-June 13; from Joyce Gordanier to finish the 2002-03 school year.

-learned from Heppner Schools Principal Wade Smith that the Heppner Elementary Knowledge Master team finished second out of elementary schools in the state and 69<sup>th</sup> out of more than 300 schools competing nation-wide.

-accepted a \$250 donation from the Bank of Eastern Oregon to the Sam Boardman Elementary School Accelerated Reader program.

-heard the following announcements: policy rewrite and revision workshops at Riverside High School at 1 p.m., Feb. 12, 8 a.m., Feb. 13 and, if necessary, through V-tel at 8:30 a.m., on Feb. 19; next board meeting, Monday, March 10, Ione School, 7:30 p.m.; deadline for filing for elected positions, March 20.

### City of Heppner receives new water fountain



Craig Canham (left) and Roger Ehrmantraut work on installing a new water fountain at the corner of Main and Willow in Heppner. The fountain was donated to the city by the St. Patrick's Committee in memory of the Irish settlers in Morrow County. The fountain will be dedicated St. Pat's weekend, Friday, March 14.

Rica works with the Springfield School District in their insurance department. Brittney is a high school freshman active in cheerleading and volleyball. Brock is a sixth grader and enjoys baseball and BMX riding.

Herbison, who was raised in Baker, enjoys hunting and fishing and loves being able to come back closer to the area. "It's like coming home," he commented.



Keith Herbison

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MONDAYS AT 5:00 P.M.

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CUSTOMER APPRECIATION DAY

Saturday, February 15th

Polaris Factory Reps will be there!  
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