

HEPPNER

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No high school for Irrigon—for now

Irrigon won't have its high school, at least this year anyway, to the dismay of the throng of Irrigon residents packed into the A.C. Houghton Elementary School Library Monday night, May 12.

The Morrow County School Board, in a split vote, vetoed a motion by John Rietmann of Ione to start phasing in a high school in Irrigon this fall. Board Chair Julie Weikel and Gary Frederickson, both Boardman, Pat McNamee, Irrigon, and John Renfro, Lexington, voted against the motion. Larry Mills, who seconded the motion, and Burke O'Brien, both Heppner, joined Rietmann in favor of the plan, which would have created a grade seven through 10 junior high/high school in Irrigon at the current Columbia Middle School starting this September. Rietmann's plan included kindergarten through fourth grade schools at current elementary schools, A.C. Houghton Elementary in Irrigon and at Sam Boardman Elementary in Boardman; a grade seven through 12 facility at Riverside High School in Boardman; and fifth and sixth grade facilities in the two newly-constructed schools at Boardman and Irrigon.

Currently A.C. Houghton and Sam Boardman elementary schools house kindergarten through fifth grade classes, Columbia Middle School, grades six through eight, and Riverside High School, grades nine through 12. Depending on the heating and cooling requirements and costs involved, pending a feasibility report from architects, Heary International, and completion of construction, it could be possible that grades five and six could be moved into the two new buildings this fall.

Rietmann pointed out that the district has already

budgeted \$750,000 for the transition, which he maintained should be used for hiring teachers, and said that he thought the district could access facility grants from the state and possibly other grants. He anticipated a facility grant of up to eight percent, which could translate into \$1.5 million, which, when ratcheted down by the state, could still amount to a half a million. "If we lollygag around, we're going to have six years of transition," said Rietmann, in urging a "yes" vote for the motion. "I think we're breaking faith with the voters," added Mills. "I think we ought to bite the bullet and do it."

Superintendent Dr. Jack Crippen told the board that because of scheduling and other issues, he did not think the plan was possible by the start of school, but said it may be possible by the semester break. Also, he added, "We're not sure that the new Irrigon building will be completed by Sept. 1." He also said that if the changes were made, the athletic program would probably have to be cancelled for that year.

The dissenting board members expressed their concern that the current stagnant student numbers did not warrant a move at this time and reiterated the criteria for establishing a high school in Irrigon set down by the board at the Oct. 9, 2000, board meeting. They expressed fears that the plan would merely take students and teachers from one school and place them in another, stretching the teachers and finances too thin, and would hurt the curriculum and programs at both Riverside High School and the new Irrigon high school.

The 2000 criteria stipulated:

—"that the funding levels currently established are maintained by the state with a cost-of-living adjustment.

—"that the proposed Ballot Measures 91, 88, 8 and 93 do not pass. Any measure or legislative action, which severely curtails school funding, would make the establishment of an additional high school unfeasible.

—"that instructional programs at Riverside High School would not be eliminated or reduced as a result of establishing a new high school. This does not preclude a minor adjustment in program to accommodate scheduling or shifting of resources within elective offerings.

—"that enrollment between the communities of Boardman and Irrigon continue to increase at the five percent average as in the past five years.

—"that the district establish a separate fund during the transition period, using revenues from student growth.

—"that the new high school would be phased in over a period of three years beginning no later than the year following the opening of the new elementary school in Irrigon, so space is available for sixth graders. (i.e. bond passes in Spring 2001; new elementary school completed in December 2002; move sixth grade students to new elementary school in January 2003; eighth graders that are promoted in 2003 would stay as the first freshmen in Fall 2003. The next year Fall 2004 would have freshmen and sophomores at Irrigon High School and the fall of 2005, you would have your full-blown high school. The freshman class of 2002 would graduate from Riverside High School.)"

The 2000 motion was passed by Frederickson, McNamee, Weikel and Rietmann, with dissenting votes by then-board members,

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Off highway vehicle park to open Saturday



OHV Park tour members look at perspective track arena, with the trailhead to the OHV Park's 60+ miles of trails. OHVs will be directed through an In and Out created by large barriers and cattle guards.

OHV Park to hold grand opening

The Morrow County OHV Park will be holding its grand opening Saturday, May 17. The ribbon cutting will be held at 11 a.m. After the ribbon cutting, persons will be able to try out some of the new trails. A picnic lunch will also be available for those in attendance.

The Park is located 26 miles south of Heppner along Hwy 207. It currently has 60 miles of available trails. The Park is open to all OHV classes of vehicles.

An agenda for the opening ceremonies include: A welcome by Burke O'Brien, with Morrow County Public Works and Morrow County Judge Terry Tallman; History of the project by Karen Wolff; a discussion of "Where we are now. What to expect in the future" presented by O'Brien; presentation by the Michael Carrier, Wayne Rawlins and the ATVA Allocation committee; comments from the governor's representative and other dignitaries; concluding with the Ribbon Cutting by Judge Tallman, Carrier and the governor's representative.

Ballots due May 20

Election ballots for the current Morrow County election are due by 8 p.m., Tuesday, May 20. Ballots must be at the offices by this deadline, ballots not received by 8 p.m., will not be counted.

Morrow County ballot boxes will be located at the following sites: in Heppner, at the Morrow County Court House Clerk's Office; in Ione, at the Bank of Eastern Oregon; in Lexington, at the Public Works Building; in Irrigon, at the Justice Court lobby; and in Boardman, at the Behavioral Health Building.

All box locations will be open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on election day, except for Bank of Eastern Oregon, which will be open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Morrow County Courthouse Clerk's Office, which will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

G-T to close for Memorial Day

The Heppner Gazette-Times will be closed Monday, May 26 for Memorial Day. The news and advertisement deadline for the May 28 edition of the newspaper is Friday, May 23, at 5 p.m.



Burke O'Brien (second from left) discusses prospects for the Morrow County OHV Park with tour members at the Grant County line, the OHV Park's south most point.

Morrow County OHV (Off Highway Vehicles) Park will be a new fixture in Morrow County, 27 miles south of Heppner, this 6200 acre park will boast approximately 80 miles of open trails. Members of Morrow County received a tour of the OHV Park, Tuesday, May 6. The Park will host its grand opening May 17 with ribbon cutting ceremony, picnic and trail rides.

The OHV Park will be open to all classes of OHVs, including ATVs, Motorcycles and 4-Wheel Drive vehicles. Special trails will be tailored for each vehicle, along with general trails. Currently, 60 miles of trails are open. Along with special class trails, all trails will be rated for level of difficulty. There will be three levels, ranging from beginning to extreme.

The Park will be open free of charge to those with their OHV licenses and permits. For those who do not have these items, there will be a place made available for their purchase.

Along with the OHV Park trails, a 120-unit RV park is in the works. It is planned to have the RV site completed in 3-5 years. This season, only dry camping will be available.

There are currently two day-use areas in the Park as well. These areas will be open from dawn til dusk and closed during the evening. However, the trails themselves will be open for night riding.

Also being created is a wash down area for the OHVs. A part of the old log area has been maintained that will be made accessible to OHVs and equipped with water. This area will be close to the trailhead. The trailhead was created to manage the traffic in an out of the Park entrance. Created by large cement barriers and cattle guards, there will be an "in" and "out" from the main Park area.

For those who need a rest from riding, fishing ponds have been created. These

areas will be stocked with fish from local areas.

According to Burke O'Brien with the Morrow County Public Works, and project manager for the Park, it is hoped that the Park will be open year round. However, he did state some trails might have to be closed due to water saturation. If the trails get to wet, riding on them could tear up the ground and ruin the trails.

Also part of the OHV Park is Porter Creek, a fish-sensitive stream. OHV Park workers will be working to maintain this creek and keep it from being disturbed.

A park host will be on the grounds, and Morrow County Sheriff's Office will also be patrolling the area. Through grants obtained through the OHV Park, MCSO has been given money to hire a part-time deputy.

OHV Park creators hope that the Park will be enjoyed by everyone in Morrow County and through out the Northwest. According to O'Brien, they want to provide a place for people to enjoy and for an expansion tool for Morrow County.

Available at the opening and to any new riders will be maps of all the trails and of the OHV Park itself.

Adopt A Teacher foundation to go door-to-door

On May 17, volunteers for the Adopt a Teacher foundation will be going door-to-door selling bricks that will be placed at the new Heppner Elementary School. They will also have information on becoming a member of their organization and answer any questions you may have.

"We have so far collected over \$8000 for our foundation," stated an Adopt A Teacher press release. Every little bit helps Heppner schools and stays in the Heppner community.

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MONDAYS AT 5:00 P.M.

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