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Morrow School Board reverses decision on Lexington attendance

The Morrow County School Board voted to reverse its decision concerning the Lexington/Pine City attendance area at its regular meeting Monday night in Boardman. The board voted four to three to repeal the blanket inter-district waiver which allowed students living in the Lexington-Pine City area to attend Ione schools if they wish. Bill Kuhn made the motion, with Kuhn, Heppner, John Renfro, Lexington, Ken Matlack, Irrigon, and Craig Miles, Heppner, voting in favor of the motion and Julie Weikel, Boardman, Pat McNamee, Irrigon, and Barney Lindsay, north Lexington area, voting against the proposal. Lindsay had earlier proposed that MCSD allow the students in question to attend Ione Schools if they had already attended school at Ione, which had been approved by the board. Prior to the Monday night vote, Weikel said that she was opposed to students being held hostage because of money and McNamee said he was in favor of leaving the exception for the Lexington/Pine City students as it was. Craig Miles suggested that the two entities work on a compromise, "Before we do anything to strain relations with Ione." "We made a decision," said Miles. "I'm not sure as a board we want to be reversing ourselves."

Mike Armato, of Heppner, speaking in support of the reversal, commented that the MCSD's responsibility is to the students who reside in the district. "The change in policy was not created by the Morrow County School District. It was created by Ione's secession. You can blame the Ione School District," said Armato. He also said that SAT scores of Heppner students were above those at Ione. Armato and Kuhn were earlier proponents of a plan to close Ione High School and merge it with Heppner High School to save the district money without cutting curriculum and teachers during a severe budget crunch prior to Ione's secession.

According to board discussion Monday night, the board believed that the Ione School District was allowing students outside the ISD to attend school in Ione without release from MCSD. State regulations specify that if a district does not release a student from attending in its

district, state school support funds do not follow that student—neither district would get the funds. According to the state budget, currently each student brings \$5,219 to his attendance district. Morrow County School District had built its budget based on earlier projections with \$4,848 in state school support per student.

A suggestion that the two districts split the monies in question was not pursued because of concerns over legality.

The board also voted to recommend for approval to the Umatilla-Morrow Education Service District three petitions for boundary changes requested of MCSD. Two petitions were from families residing in MCSD who requested to have the boundary changed so that they would reside in the ISD attendance area. A third was from a family residing in ISD who requested to have the boundary changed so that they would reside in MCSD. All three families resided near the boundaries. Kuhn made the motion to approve the changes, commenting that this action "will be the end of it."

The board voted in favor of opening the Irrigon Junior/Senior High School in September of 2005. At the bequest of an Irrigon delegation, the board considered opening the school in September 2004, but on the recommendation of Columbia Middle School Principal Ron Anthony and Riverside High School Principal Dirk Dirksen, agreed to the September '05 date. Their major concern was appropriate staffing for the two schools, with shop capabilities, proposed FFA classes and athletic scheduling also figuring in the equation. The new configuration will include grades seven through 12 and all grades would be affected, rather than a phase-in of students, which had been suggested earlier. "There is a promise (that it would be a phase-in)," said Weikel. "I would suggest the board might change the name of the Morrow County School District the way we're changing things," retorted McNamee, referring to the board's reversal on that issue and the Lexington/Pine city issue.

The name Irrigon Junior/Senior High was recommended by a committee, with the names

Columbia River Junior/Senior High and Columbia Junior/Senior High also considered.

In other business, the board:

-heard from Judge Frank Yraguen, who was charged with resolving the differences between ISD and MCSD concerning the division of assets and liabilities. Judge Yraguen said that initially he believed ISD would owe MCSD, but further examination of the value of the buildings resulted in MCSD owing ISD in excess of \$100,000. He said he based his valuation of the buildings on replacement costs and on assets and liabilities rather than the district's bond levies. "The cost doesn't equal the value," he said. Judge Yraguen also said that a dispute between

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HES to hold Fall Carnival

Heppner Elementary School will be having its annual Fall Carnival on Thursday, Oct. 23 from 6-8 p.m. It will be held in the new gymnasium and is being sponsored by the Parent Teacher Club.

Bingo, hoop shoot, duck scoop, junk food walk, face painting and a fish pond are just a few of the games and activities planned for kids, and kids at heart, to enjoy.

Hot dogs and popcorn will be available for those who work up an appetite and the Adopt A Teacher Foundation will be selling pieces of pie for dessert.

City still gets low interest water

The Heppner City Council learned Monday the city is still eligible for \$4 million in low interest loans to complete a renovation of the city water system.

There had been concern that an earlier-qualified-for one percent loan may not be available after the council scaled back the proposed water renovation project. To qualify for the low interest loan, the city will decline \$1 million in interim financing and pay \$42,496 for legal and administrative fees.

In other business the council discussed the possibility of purchasing the former Klamath First Bank building on Main St. in Heppner for use as a new city hall facility. The Bank of Eastern Oregon recently purchased Klamath First and members of the council indicated the building might be for sale. The council decided to wait and not spend \$9,000 for a city hall renovation study.

The council read a letter of resignation from Morrow County Sheriff Randy Rayburn. Rayburn has been patrolling Heppner since the city signed a contract with the sheriff department to patrol the city. Rayburn was reported to have gone to work for Bruce Young Logging of Heppner. The council heard that Jerry Roberts, a former Hermiston police officer, would help with patrol in Heppner. Roberts has been working at the new county ATV park.

The council voted to put a new yield sign at the intersection of Gilmore and Pioneer Drive.

HEPPNER

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Pioneer Memorial Nursing Home to close Nov. 10

Pioneer Memorial Nursing home will close its doors on Nov. 10 after 50 years of operation, according to Morrow County Health District CEO Victor Vander Does. (See letter to the editor, page two.) Vander Does said that the district can no longer afford to operate the facility, citing low occupancy, with "no potential for more residents" and government reimbursement at below cost of operation.

The closure will not affect Pioneer Memorial Hospital nor the clinics operated by the hospital. In addition to Pioneer Memorial Clinic in Heppner and Irrigon Clinic, the district subsidizes a private clinic operated by Dr. Robert Boss in Boardman. The district also operates ambulance services.

Vander Does said that the low occupancy at the

nursing home is the result of a number of factors. People are healthier and are staying in their homes longer, he said. Vander Does, Director of Nursing Tammy Henderson and Sandy Hanna, resident care manager, say that nursing home occupancy is down everywhere. Another contributing factor is that Morrow County has a limited population from which to draw. Assisted living facilities also provide another option.

MCHD met in a special meeting in Boardman, on Oct. 8, to decide the fate of the nursing home, which was home for 12 residents. MCHD also expects to lay off 18 full-time equivalent employees, probably around 12-15 employees, as a result of the closure. The whole district has a total of 60 full-time equivalent employees.

Henderson and Hanna said the news was met by employees and residents with "mixed emotions—anger and sadness." "Some were surprised, some weren't," they said. The layoffs affect nearly every department—certified nursing assistants—15 full and part-time employees to five full-time, dietary—from five to 1.4, housekeeping—from three to one, maintenance—from two to one, business office/medical records—five to four, administrative—from four to three. One registered nurse will be absorbed back into the hospital because of nursing shortages there. A savings is also expected by not having to hire agency nurses to fill in.

Residents have until Nov. 10 to find a new facility. Vander Does said that some of the residents may be eligible

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Lexington Grange gives books to HES



Wilbur Jackson, Master of the Lexington Grange presented reading books to the first grade class at Heppner Elementary School.

Ione High to celebrate Homecoming

Ione High School will be celebrating its Homecoming on Thursday, Oct. 16 and Friday, Oct. 17.

Dress for Oct. 16 should show Cardinal pride. The events of the day will begin with a three-legged race at 12 noon. Evening events will begin at 6 p.m., with Powder Puff football. Macho Man volleyball will be held from 6:30-7 p.m. Beginning at 7 p.m., the volleyball team will sponsor a pizza feed. Finishing up the evening will be a bonfire/pep rally at 8 p.m.

Homecoming Day, Friday, Oct. 17, will see activities begin at 4:55 p.m., with the honoring of the senior girl volleyball players and their parents. The volleyball game against Echo is scheduled to begin at 5 p.m. At 6:30 p.m.,

past state champion teams will be recognized.

Senior football players and their parents will be honored at 6:55 p.m., with the football game against Echo beginning at 7 p.m. The Homecoming King and Queen will be crowned at halftime.

The Homecoming dance will be held from 9 p.m.-12 a.m.

This year's Homecoming court includes: freshmen, Mason Bradfield and Kayla LaRue; sophomores, Kyle Palmateer and Abby Key; juniors, Arthur Ekstrom and Barbara Holland; and seniors, Johnny Collins, Emily Key, Tim Doherty and Tina Tuzarova. Crown bearers, from the kindergarten class, are Rachel Holland and Brendan Thompson.

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