

Bessie Wetzell
U of O Newspaper Library
Eugene, OR 97403

Morrow County School District selects Yecha as superintendent

The Morrow County School Board, in a four-three split Monday night, selected former Riverside High School Principal Duane Yecha as the district's new superintendent. Yecha, who is currently superintendent for the Reedsport School District, will fill the position that was left vacant when former superintendent Jack Crippen resigned. George Murdock, Umatilla-Morrow ESD superintendent, has filled in as an interim superintendent since Crippen's resignation.

Board members Julie Weikel, Pat McNamee, Bill Kuhn and Craig Miles cast their vote for Yecha, while board Chair John Renfro, Barney Lindsay and Ken Matlack voted for the other candidate, Mark Burrows of John Day, in a separate earlier motion. A third candidate for the position, Mark Mulvihill, dropped out of the running.

After their selection, Renfro stressed that the entire board will be unified in its support of Yecha.

Yecha received bachelor's and master's degrees from Washington State University, completed his administrative program at Portland State University, his basic superintendent program at Lewis and Clark College and is currently enrolled in a superintendent program at George Fox University and pursuing his doctorate at George Fox. He was principal at Riverside High School from July 1994 to June 2003. He was also principal at Lakeview High School and Daly Middle School, both at Lakeview.

In other business, the board postponed action on five requests for Irrigon students to attend Riverside High School during the 2004-05 school year. If the requests are not granted, the students would be required to attend Irrigon Junior/Senior High School this fall.

Previously, middle school students in Boardman and Irrigon attended school at Columbia Middle School in Irrigon and Boardman and Irrigon high school students attended school at Riverside High School in Boardman. This fall Irrigon students in grades seven through 10 will attend school at Irrigon Junior/Senior High School and Boardman seven-12 students and Irrigon juniors and seniors will attend Riverside Junior/Senior High School. In 2005-06 Irrigon students in grades seven-11 will attend school in Irrigon and Boardman seven-12 students and Irrigon seniors will attend school at Riverside. In 2006-07 both Irrigon and Boardman will have fully functional seven-12 facilities.

Board members Craig Miles and Pat McNamee said Monday night that they believed parents should be able to choose where their children attend school within the district, however other board members expressed concern that granting the transfer requests would open a floodgate of requests from other Irrigon parents who are unhappy with their children attending the new Irrigon junior/senior high school. Their complaints range from a feared reduction in curriculum to a

lack of varsity sports at the Irrigon school this fall. "I'm not for an open enrollment policy," said board member Bill Kuhn and that sentiment was echoed by board member Ken Matlack. They indicated concern about the impact numerous transfers would have on staffing, transportation and space available in the two schools.

Currently intra-district transfers are left to the superintendent's discretion and only Irrigon juniors and seniors would be provided transportation to and from school in Boardman. Other Irrigon students who are granted transfers would still have to provide their own transportation to and from school and athletic contests, even if the student's sibling or neighbor is provided busing.

The Boardman-Irrigon Community Education Committee asked the board to revise the attendance policy to say that the decision as to which school a student attends would lie between a student and his parents.

The board decided to postpone action until they have studied the issue further and consulted with a lawyer.

In other business, the board:

-postponed action on raising the extracurricular pay-to-participate fees for 2004-05 from \$35 to \$50 for junior high students and from \$50 to \$75 for high school students, pending further study. Riverside High School Principal Dirk Dirksen told the board that the district anticipates additional costs over the current budget in beginning a new sports program at Irrigon Junior/Senior High School. "Right now there's not enough to make ends meet," he said, adding that there will be more programs to run beginning this fall. "That comes as a surprise to me," responded board member Bill Kuhn. "I don't even know why we are charging students to participate in sports," commented Renfro. Heppner Elementary/Junior Senior High Principal Wade Smith explained that a JV program will have to be created at Irrigon and cuts may have to be made, possibly at Heppner.

Deputy clerk Rhonda Lorenz explained that the program is around \$40,000 over budget and that a raise in pay-to-participate fees would generate around \$13,000. She said that cuts in some current programs may also be required to balance that

continued page 2

HEPPNER

50¢



VOL. 123 NO. 15 10 Pages Wednesday, April 14, 2004 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

Council moves on new city hall purchase

The Heppner City Council voted Monday to move ahead with the proposed purchase of the Klamath First Bank building on Main Street for use as a new city hall, but at the same time voted unanimously to reject an offer from the Heppner Gazette-Times for purchase of the present city hall building for use as a newspaper office.

The council said it would make an offer to the Bank of Eastern Oregon, which now owns the Klamath building, for \$325,000. The offer is contingent on the city arriving at an acceptable sale agreement with the Gazette and a satisfactory inspection of the Klamath First building by a qualified building inspector.

The Gazette had earlier made a written offer of \$107,140 for the present city hall building with payment including a trade of the current Gazette building plus \$40,000 in cash. The council, under advisement from the Parks and Lands committee, rejected that and made a counter offer for a price of \$112,140, with payment to include the current Gazette building and \$45,000 in cash.

The city has indicated it would use the Gazette property for future expansion of the fire department, which is next to the Gazette.

Overall most council members at the meeting said they heard positive comments about the purchase and move. "At some point you have to take a stand and do what is best for the city," said council member Cindy Dougherty. Council members Kay Robinson and Merle Cowett both said they had only one negative comment. Tom Wolff, however, said he had received a number of calls both for and against. "The newer people to town and the business owners on Main Street mostly said yes," Wolff said, and the older persons in town mostly said no.

New Pooper Scooper law

The council voted unanimously to enact a "pooper scooper" law requiring dog owners to clean up after their pets on city streets and elsewhere. The law will take affect immediately and carries a fine of \$50.

"It is unlawful for an owner or keeper to allow a dog to deposit solid waste on any property other than that of the person owning or keeping said animal, but it shall be defense to this action if the owner or keeper promptly removes the solid waste deposited by his or her animal on any property other than that of the owner or keeper," the law states in part.

In a related dog issue it was reported that four dogs may have been poisoned in Heppner. One council member said she knew of dogs belonging to Dean Robinson, Dick Paris and Ginger Keithley dying of suspected poison. Police said they had not received any reports of poisoning.

Water system needs treatment

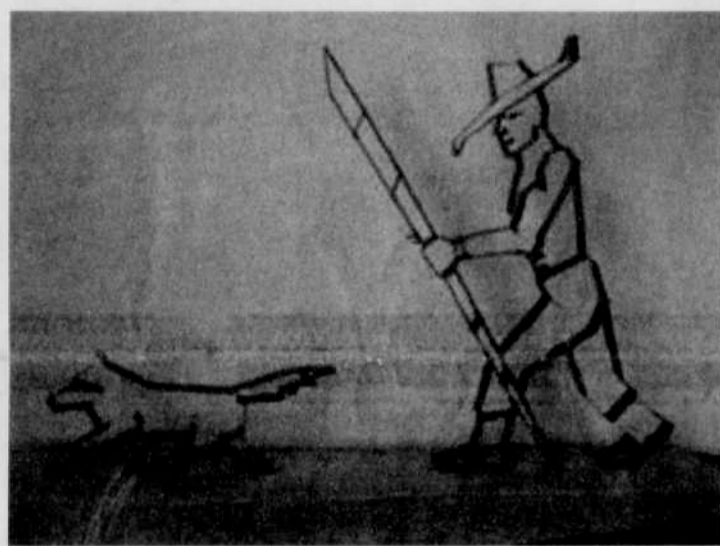
The council heard that the city water system has been tested since September with unacceptable levels of coliform bacteria and that the city must install chlorine treatment in the water system. The State of Oregon Department of Public Health directed the city to take action against the contamination.

Mr. Bunny comes to Town



Lane Wilhelm, age 5, gets a hug from the Easter Bunny on Saturday, April 10 at City Park during the Heppner Elk's Club Easter Egg Hunt.

'Onward' sculpture proposed for Heritage Plaza



A miniature of a proposed sculpture is on display at city hall. "A sculpture dedicated to the pioneer spirit, honoring all those who display courage and fortitude in new endeavors especially those who established the Willow Creek Valley and our communities, after their long journey. Also in remembrance of man's special relationship with the animals who help sustain us and provide companionship in our way of life. The sculpture will be made of copper and will stand over eight feet tall when complete," says Mark Bruno of Ione who designed the sculpture. Funding to pay of the sculpture, which is estimated to cost \$9,000, has not yet been found. The sculpture depicts a sheep herder and his dog.

McCabe enters not guilty plea in embezzlement case

Sonja Rae McCabe plead "not guilty" in front of Judge John Kelly of The Dalles at the Morrow County Courthouse Thursday, April 8, to 221 counts of theft in connection with as much as \$100,000 allegedly embezzled from numerous Heppner organizations. Around 40 people filed into the courthouse to witness the proceedings, many representing those organizations, which include the Willow Creek Country Club, Heppner Junior/Senior High School Booster Club, Heppner Cemetery Maintenance District and the Heppner Rural Fire Protection District.

McCabe's attorney Dennis Hachler, Pendleton, asked Judge Kelly for additional time in which to file

any motions. However, he said that while he and Morrow County District Attorney David C. Allen had not yet come to an agreement, they may still be able work out details prior to a trial. Hachler also said that he may file a motion for a change of venue.

During the court proceedings, it was mentioned that restitution is one item that Hachler and Allen plan to discuss. After bond monies have been paid to the injured parties, some monies alleged stolen may still be outstanding.

A pre-trial hearing was scheduled for May 7. At that time, if no motions are filed a trial date could be set.

Bail was initially set at \$500,000, but McCabe, 40, Heppner, was released on her own recognizance to family members.

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

Spring! It's Springtime!
Get Your Potting Soil and Fertilizer at MCGG
Morrow County Grain Growers
Lexington 989-8221 • 1-800-452-7396 For farm equipment, visit our web site at www.mcgg.net