

Sentenced to 90 days in county jail

McCabe pleads guilty to 4 counts theft

Sonja Rae McCabe, 40, of Heppner, plead guilty to four counts of Theft in the First Degree (Class C felony) and one count of Official Misconduct (Class A misdemeanor) on Friday, May 21, at the Morrow County Courthouse in Heppner.

Wasco County Circuit Court Judge John V. Kelly sentenced McCabe to 90 days in the Umatilla County Jail with no early release, work release or electronic monitoring. Upon release from custody, McCabe will be placed on 24 months of supervised probation with a condition that she continue her mental health treatment and take all prescribed medications for her recurrent depression and general anxiety disorder. McCabe was further ordered to perform 240 hours of community service and make \$4,000 restitution to the only un-bonded victim, the Heppner Senior/Junior High Booster Club. The remaining three victims have made bond claims to cover most of their lost funds. "Under the terms of the bond claims made by the victims, any restitution ordered by the court would have gone to the bond companies," said Morrow County District Attorney David C. Allen.

The sentencing hearing took approximately two hours. McCabe's mental health treatment provider, psychologist Dr. Terrel Templeman of Pendleton, testified that he believed that McCabe was suicidal and feared that a jail sentence would exacerbate her condition and recommended against imposing a jail sentence upon her.

Allen commented that Heppner was a trusting community and McCabe had betrayed that trust.

Representatives of three of the victims also made statements. At the sentencing hearing, it was learned McCabe stole in excess of \$80,000 from the four victims. During the proceedings, McCabe was asked by Judge Kelly where all the stolen money went. She replied it was primarily spent on children's school, after school activities, clothes, etc... She indicated she wished she had something to show for the stolen money but does not. McCabe tearfully read a prepared statement of apology to the court, saying that she was ashamed of her actions and sorry for the hurt and embarrassment she had caused her family and the community. (See letter to the editor, page 2.)

While the defendant was charged in a 221-count indictment, Allen said, "There were actually 120 separate criminal acts here. Sometimes a single occurrence was charged as several crimes. For instance, one check may have resulted in one count of theft, one count of forgery and one count of official misconduct."

Under the terms of the plea agreement, McCabe had agreed she would serve at least 60 days of jail. The State recommended she serve 180 days in jail. In deciding to impose the 90-day jail sentence, Judge Kelly indicated the jail was being imposed because the citizens of Morrow County deserved to see a punishment imposed. She was then transported to the

Umatilla County Jail. She had requested that she be allowed to attend the eighth-grade graduation of her son that weekend, but the judge ordered McCabe to be taken into custody immediately.

McCabe's attorney, Dennis Hachler, told the court that she was a devoted mother to her four children and had done much volunteering for her community and reiterated that she was very ashamed of her actions. McCabe has been living in the Redmond area, working for her brother-in-law, who operates an electrical contracting business, who testified that she was a good worker and vital to his business. He said that a long imprisonment would jeopardize her position with his business.

Kit George, Heppner, representing the Heppner Cemetery Maintenance District, told the Gazette-Times following the trial that McCabe's sentence "is probably fair based on the sentencing guidelines, as our board understands, but the district still came out a loser because we could not recover all of our losses."

"I feel good," Judy Barber, Heppner, commented to the Gazette concerning the Heppner Rural Fire Protection District. "I think our DA did a good job representing the community. I feel bad for Sonja, but I think now she can heal. It's an ugly thing for everyone involved."

"It's as good as we can expect," concurred Don Bennett, also with the HRFD. Kelwayne Haguwood read a statement representing HFRD during the proceedings.

"I've known Sonja my whole life," Heppner Fire Chief Rusty Estes said to the G-T. "It's a lose-lose for the community. Everyone loses, no one wins."

"I'm satisfied," said Cindy Doherty, representing the Heppner Junior/Senior High School Booster Club. "I think it's a sad day."

HEPPNER

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Gazette Times

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Health District discusses levy options

The Morrow County Health District Board, plagued with a continuing shortfall of funds, discussed putting a levy before the voters in the November election at their regular Heppner citizens tackle feral cat issue

Concerned citizens Margaret Flaherty and Melissa Jo Monaco have been dialoging with other concerned citizens who are feeding feral and abandoned cats in the Heppner area.

In searching for a solution, Flaherty contacted The Pioneer Humane Society of Pendleton, who has ran the Oregon Neuter Mobile, to see if bringing the mobile to Heppner would be feasible. However, due to high costs, \$1000 down payment plus \$800 a day, it was determined to not be a viable solution.

Flaherty and Monaco also contacted City Manager Jerry Breazeale regarding steps that could be taken in addressing the situation. He said that citizens could address the police commission regarding their concerns.

The Police Commission will be meeting this Thursday, May 27, at 8 a.m. at City Hall. Anyone interested in discussing humane solutions to this issue are asked to attend.

Another avenue being taken in the feral cat situation is adoption. Anyone interested in adopting kittens may contact Monaco at 676-8013.

meeting Monday night in Heppner.

The board instructed MCHD CEO Victor Vander Does to meet with Morrow County Assessor Greg Sweek to determine the tax rate required to generate an additional \$250,000 to \$300,000 yearly for the district. The board also deliberated whether to put up a three, four or five year levy.

The district lost \$338,112 this past year and \$28,621 in April, despite continued efforts to cut costs and the closure of Pioneer Memorial Nursing Home

which was hoped to help staunch the loss.

The board also discussed changing the district's employee insurance package from \$200 deductible to a higher deductible, perhaps as much as \$1,000, because of recent notice of a steep increase, over 20 percent, in insurance costs. The change must be approved by the employees' union.

Also at the meeting Morrow County Sheriff Verlin Denton and M.C. Sergeant Jeanine Dilley,

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Old coal chute filled in



An old chute used years ago to load coal under the Masonic Lodge on Main Street in Heppner was filled in this week. The cement on the sidewalk on Willow Street next to Gardner's Men's store, which is located on the bottom floor of the lodge, was cracking and opening up a large hole in the sidewalk. It was becoming a danger to pedestrians so the cement was cut out and the hole filled with rock and gravel. A new sidewalk was poured on Tuesday, and pictured above working on the project are left to right- Merlin Hughes, Al Riney and Gene Orwick.

IUCC to host 42nd annual Auction and BBQ

The 42nd annual Ione United Church of Christ Auction and Barbecue will be held Friday, June 5 in Ione at the Willows Grange Hall. The theme for the auction is: Fun, Faith and Fellowship. John and Kerry Rietmann are the co-chairs this year.

Spotlighted at the auction is a quilt pieced by Yvonne Morter and quilted by Helen Heidemann of Ione. It will be auctioned at 2 p.m.

Everyone is invited to come and join in the fun day filled with Country Store browsing complete with baked food items, handmade and craft products, as well as New to You- books, videos, games and toys for kids, sewing and craft needs and many other items in the Country Store. The Store opens for browsing at 9 a.m. and the bell rings for sales to begin at 10 a.m.

There will also be the wonderful Pit-Cooked Beef Barbecue dinner at 12:30 p.m. Prices remain the



Yvonne Morter (left) and Helen Heidemann (right) display the quilt to be auctioned at the IUCC Auction and BBQ on June 5.

same as the last several years- \$6 for adults, \$3 for youth 6-12 years and preschool age children eat free. The women of the church are back in the kitchen this year cooking up a wonderful array of dinner items to tempt your palate.

The outside auction begins at 10:30 a.m. and will feature many bargains from gift certificates from area businesses to used furniture, farm chemicals, antiques and collectibles. A

swimming pool and the beautiful handmade quilt will also be auctioned. Ken Grieb, auctioneer will be calling the sale again this year.

There's something for everyone at this sale. Come early to check out those wonderful bargains and check over the merchandise loaded on the trucks ready for bidding. You'll find this a fun day to greet old friends and find a few new ones.

WE WILL BE CLOSED
Monday, May 31st for Memorial Day
Have A Safe And Happy Holiday!



Morrow County Grain Growers

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