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Volunteers put in batting cage at little league field

Patricia and Bill Gentry (left and right) work with son Jerry to build batting cage at Waterland Field.

Volunteers for Heppner Little League begin work on the batting cage at George Waterland field. Money was raised to add the cage last spring. The majors field is used by three Heppner teams the largest group of players in Willow Creek little league. Heppner Little league is now seeking funds to add a shed for the pitching machine and conditioner for the ground. Tax deductable donations can be made to Heppner Little League P.O. Box 362 , Heppner.

Ione cleans up after Saturday flood

Ione streets, businesses and residential areas have been dried up and cleaned up after Saturday's rains caused flooding in the town, said Ione Mayor Mark Bruno.

A downpour of rain hit Ione Saturday, causing the streets to fill with water and also caused flooding at Collier's Market and Ed Rolling's shop. The flood control ditch also filled with water and concrete that had been put in the ditch had to be removed to allow for drainage. However, the flooding in the streets was not caused by the blockage, said Bruno.

The water in Rolling's shop was pumped out and has finished drying up on its own. The water in Collier's Market was also cleaned up and the store was open again for business Monday morning.

Marcus Collier, owner of the market, was unavailable for comment, but according to Bruno the water appeared to come from the roof of the building and had no other place to go than the store. Bruno also believed that there was no damage to the market.

"Usually you can watch things," said Bruno, "but things happened so quickly." All the rain seemed to fall within a short 90-minute span.

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

MCHD approves proposed $5.8 million budget

The Morrow County Health District Board Monday night approved a proposed $5.8 million budget for the 2005-06 fiscal year.

Out of the $5.8 million budget, only $874,000 comes from taxes, including the new local option levy voters approved last year. The remainder of the income, $4.9 million, comes from patient revenues generated through private pay, insurance, Medicare and Medicaid, interest, donations and grants.

The budget includes a $2.8 million budget for Pioneer Memorial Hospital operations; $595,000 for Pioneer Memorial Clinic; $475,000 for capital purchases; $384,000 for Home Health and Hospice; $216,000 for the Irrigon Clinic; $82,000 for the Boardman Ambulance; $70,000 for the new Boardman migrant clinic and contracted services; $50,000 for the Irrigon Ambulance; and $11,000 for county emergency medical services. The budget also includes $701,000 for revenue deductions and bad debt; $142,000 for contingencies, $230,000 for capital lease principal reduction and $53,000 for long term debt principal reduction.

MCHD Chief Financial Officer Nicole Mahoney outlined a plan to combine financing for new capital purchases under a new flex-lease, which would save the district money. The new flex-lease includes purchase of a new x-ray system, which would include both digital and conventional x-ray equipment, a computer upgrade and an ambulance.

Mahoney also presented a change in the reporting of the budget from modified accrual to strictly cash, which the board approved. The cash system method that the board approved does not include beginning and ending asset amounts.

Last year's adopted budget was $5.3 million under the cash system. The 2003-04 actual expenditures were $4.9 million; the 2002-03 actual expenditures were $5.6 million and the 2001-02 actual expenditures were $6.2 million.

MCHD CEO Victor Vander Does reported that a $34,000 settlement in lieu of taxes from Tillamook dairy operations is expected to be received in November.

In other business, the board:

-voted to donate a surplus handicap-accessible van to Morrow County for the Irrigon community.

-learned of a dramatic increase in medical insurance costs for district employees through the district's insurance plan. The district has plans to negotiate with the employees' union concerning the increase, which amounts to around 39 percent. "I'm sure that we're going to increase the cap some," said Vander Does. "But if they want more insurance coverage maybe they'll forgo cost of living (increases)." "It's an ugly situation," he added. Vander Does said that if the district absorbed the entire cost of the increase, it would cost MCHD in the neighborhood of $100,000.

The current cap on the district's contribution is $360 per employee. Current medical insurance cost for an employee only is $323 per month, which will be increased to $451 per month; cost for an employee and spouse will be increased from $677 to $1002; cost for an employee and child will be increased from $624 to $835; and cost for an employee and family will be increased from $773 to $1192. The deductible is currently $1000. Of 56 employees on the payroll, 43 are insured through the district plan. The district is planning to get a quote from an additional insurance provider. Another option is to go with a higher deductible.

-approved purchase of x-ray equipment from Turnkey for $85,000 to be purchased through a flex-lease plan over a three-year period.

-approved Dr. Kenneth Wenberg's reappointment to the district's medical staff.

-learned that the county has estimated $1.04 billion as the assessed valuation, according to information received from Greg Sweek, county assessor. This amount is used to calculate the district's tax revenue. MCHD Board Chair Larry Mills said that he believed the $1.04 billion amount was a conservative estimate.

-learned of plans to renovate the sidewalk at Pioneer Memorial Hospital to make it safer.

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IUCC votes to change name and denominational affiliation

At a general congregational meeting on Sunday, April 24 the members of the Ione United Church of Christ voted to change the name of the church to the Ione Community Church and also to become a multi-denominational church for at least a one-year trial period. The Ione Community Church will continue to affiliate with the United Church of Christ, but will also affiliate with the Disciples of Christ and the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches. The name change is a permanent change but the congregation will vote again at the end of one year to determine whether or not the denominational change will become a permanent change as well.

This vote was the culmination of a process of self-evaluation and exploration of other denominations that the church entered into most of a year ago. The resulting changes will broaden the options that individual members of the church have in regard to their personal denominational affiliation. The Ione Community Church will remain true to its roots as a rural community church. ICC believes that their mission in the community is, and has always been, to provide a Christian fellowship that is welcoming to all community members and aspires to help each individual who worships with us to attain his or her own personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. ICC believes that these changes will help better fulfill that mission.

The Ione Community Church invites anyone who is interested to visit the church, attend services or just talk to our members about how it is going. Regular worship services are on Sunday mornings at 11 a.m., Christian Education classes are from 9:45-10:45 a.m., for ages 3 through adult and the Ione Christian Youth group (ICY) meets at 7 p.m. on Wednesdays at the church as well.

WCVEDG contracts local woman for business recruitment support

Doris Brosnan was recently contracted by the Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group to work on business recruitment to the Heppner, Lexington and Ione areas, WCVEDG President David Sykes announced last week.

Doris Brosnan to do business recruitment

Over the past three years, 127 inquires have been received from businesses expressing an interest in moving here. These include inquiries from over 30,000 targeted mass mailings sent out by WCVEDG, to the many emails received from the group's South Morrow Industrial Site website (www.heppner.net/industry). WCVEDG volunteers have been unable to keep up with the recruitment efforts, Sykes said.

"Doris will play a vital role in doing contact and follow up work on these businesses and we are very pleased to have her working with us. It is an important job and she brings the needed enthusiasm and dedication to the task," he added.

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