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HEPPNER Gazette Times 50¢

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Future of Heppner St. Patrick's celebration concerns local leaders

Community leaders gathered at Heppner City Hall April 26 to grapple with the succession of leadership for the annual St. Patrick's weekend festivities. The annual festival, started by community leader and Irishman the late Jim Farley of Heppner, just concluded its 23rd year.

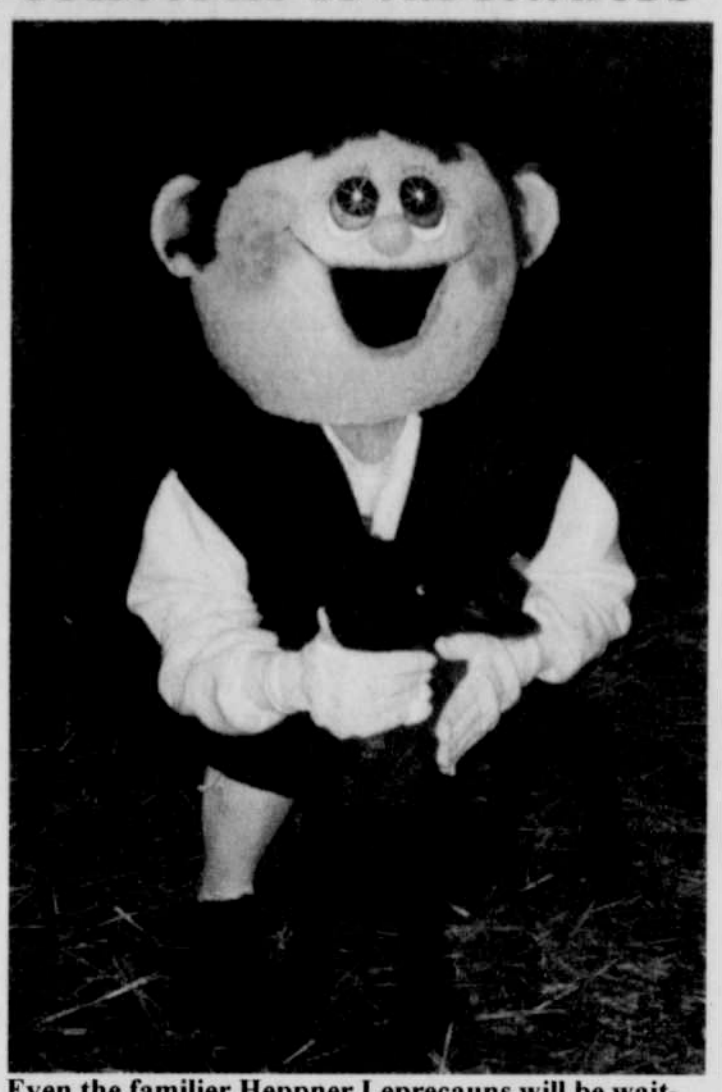
Chamber executive director Claudia Hughes and Cara Osmin have spearheaded the event for many years, but have indicated that they, along with other key volunteers, plan to resign in the near future from the sometimes overwhelming task. Hughes has indicated that she also plans to resign as executive director for the Chamber, but has not yet set a definite date to resign from either position.

Heppner Mayor Tim Van Cleave suggested that the annual festival be overseen by a board comprised of Heppner City Council members and Heppner Chamber of Commerce members, which would ensure year to year continuity for the event. It was also suggested that the Chamber executive director remain as festival chair.

Nancy Snider, who was present as a community member and also as a representative for Wheatland Insurance, told the group that that makeup was similar to what was used in Ione for their annual Fourth of July celebration. She said that a committee oversees the celebration but a chairman is selected to head up the festival each year.

Another issue of concern is that because Hughes has been such a hands-on chair, not a lot of paperwork to pass on to future celebration leaders has been formulated.

Chamber of Commerce President Nancy Gochnauer assured those in attendance that the festival, which has become a time of family reunions for many in the area, will go on. Gochnauer stressed that the current problems are just a "bump in the road," not the end of the celebration. The event, which brings hundreds of people to Heppner, also contributes financially to numerous businesses, organizations and clubs.



Even the familier Heppner Leprecauns will be waiting to hear the outcome of community deliberations on the future of the St. Patrick's Day celebration.

During the discussion Hughes, Osmin and many longtime volunteers in attendance, such as Judie Laughlin, Doris Brosnan, Sharon Harrison and Dick Sargent, received an ovation for their years of dedication.

Liability issues have also become a concern for the festival. Snider, representing Wheatland Insurance, told the group that those entities participating in the festival that go through the St. Patrick's Committee, and therefore the city of Heppner, are covered under the city's liability insurance. However, the St. Patrick's Committee must appoint the chairmen of those entities and money received must be channeled through the committee. Other entities are not covered and must purchase their own liability insurance. One example of an entity, which purchases its own liability insurance, is the motocross event, which is not actually affiliated with the St. Patrick's Committee, but often holds its motorcycle races at the Morrow County Fairgrounds during St. Patrick's weekend.

To avoid liability problems, Snider suggested that independent entities that plan to have events in conjunction with the festival be required to present certificates of liability insurance to the St. Patrick's Committee.

Snider says that the concern is that if someone were injured during the celebration the St. Patrick's Committee would be open to lawsuit.

More meetings to discuss the future of the celebration, liability and other issues will be held later.

Students make signs for industrial park

(L-R): Michael Wellman, Eric Skaggs, Stephanie Smith, Rick Martin, Tayler Hodges, RJ Farrens, Jon Cain and instructor Dave Fowler with new sign the technology class built for the industrial park.

Local teacher Dave Fowler and his technology class at Heppner High School assisted the Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group (WCVEDG) recently by constructing two signs to advertise the availability of building sites at the South Morrow Industrial Park near Heppner.

The students constructed two 4-foot by 8-foot signs, which they then erected at the industrial park last week. The signs will advertise the availability of land for lease.

The city of Heppner recently signed a lease with the Port of Morrow, which owns the property, for four acres west of the former Kinzua office buildings.

WCVEDG has cost estimates and preliminary approval from DEQ to construct metal manufacturing buildings on the site once suitable businesses are found.

"Your work is greatly appreciated," WCVEDG President David Sykes told the students when they erected the sign. "When we find a business to move here, you will know that you helped in that effort."

WCVEDG is reimbursing the school for the materials used in the project.

Columbia Plateau Stage race coming up

The annual Columbia Plateau Stage race is once again coming through Heppner. The race will begin on Friday, May 6 with a race from Heppner to Ione beginning at 1 p.m. The race will continue May 7 and 8 with races up the Rietmann Grade and from Ione to Fossil. The concluding race on May 8 will be from Fossil to Heppner.

Racers from all over the country and beyond are expected to be in the race. The total prize list for the event is $5000.

Registration for the race has already passed, but interested persons are invited to catch a glimpse of the racers along their trail.

For more information about the race you can visit www.columbiaplateau.org.

Tree dedication held in Heppner

Chuck Bailey, Heppner Garden Club chairman (left) and Jerry Breazeale, Heppner City Manager, unveiled a plaque, which explains the existence of a scarlet oak tree at Heppner City Park. The tree was planted to replace two Dutch elms that had died. The elms had been planted in commemoration of George Washington.

Ballots due by May 17

If you have not yet received a ballot for the May 17 election and believe you are registered voter you should contact the Morrow County elections office before May 17. The office can be reached by calling 676-5604.

Ballots for the election need to be returned and received at the election's office or at one of the other ballot drop-off locations by May 17 at 8 p.m. Postmarked ballots received after May 17 will not be counted.

Ballot locations include:

New Boardman City Hall- 200 City Center Circle, Boardman. The office will be open Monday through Friday, May 2-May 16, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on May 17.

Irrigon Annex- 205 NE 3rd St., Irrigon. The office will be open Monday-Friday, May 2-16, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and 8 a.m.-8 p.m., May 17.

Bank of Eastern Oregon- Ione- 280 West Main St., Ione. The office will be open Monday-Friday, May 2-16, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and 9 a.m.-8 p.m., May 17.

Morrow County Road Office- 365 West Hwy. 74, Lexington. The office will be open Monday-Friday, May 2-16, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and 8 a.m.-8 p.m., May 17.

Morrow County Courthouse- 100 S. Court St., Room 102, Heppner. The office will be open Monday-Friday, May 2-16, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., May 17.

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

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