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School board approves six-classroom addition to Windy River Elementary

The Morrow County School Board, at its regular meeting Monday night in Heppner, voted to build six more classrooms on to the Windy River Elementary School building in Boardman.

The elementary school building, constructed with six original classrooms, was designed to be easily modified to add on additional rooms. Two classrooms will be added to one wing, which already has six classrooms, and four classrooms will be added to the other side, which currently has four classrooms. Windy River currently has around 150 students in the fifth and sixth grades.

MCSD Superintendent Mark Burrows said that Boardman school population had been growing rapidly, seeing a four percent growth rate from 1998 to 2001 and a six percent growth rate from 2001 to 2004, before slowing to one-and-a-half percent from October 2004 to October 2005.

Burrows estimated that at a five-percent growth rate, the six classroom additions would accommodate the Boardman elementary student population for five-plus years. At a one-and-a-half percent growth rate, the additions should accommodate students for around 10 years.

Burrows also presented projections if the board approved construction of only four additional classrooms, however the cost for the two additional rooms was only around $200,000 more, so the board opted for more rooms now to save construction costs later.

WRE Principal Thad Killingbeck assured the board that the rooms would not go to waste until they are put into use as classrooms. "Certainly the rooms would not be idle," said Killingbeck. "We would use them from day one and then, as needed, converted to classrooms," he said. He said that the rooms could be used for labs or for other instructional purposes and not merely for storage.

Plans are to move students to WRE from Sam Boardman Elementary.

Becker Construction won the bid with $487,338 for the base bid of four classrooms and $228,870 more for the two additional rooms for a total of $716,200, which was low bid. W.C. Construction bid $744,693 for the base and alternate bids combined; McCormach Construction bid $798,700; and Knerr Construction bid $940,800.

Assistant Superintendent Wade Smith said that not only was Becker Construction the low bid, but the district had worked with the company before. Becker Construction is currently building the Irrigon High School's new PTE building, which will be used for the Ag and PE complex.

Burrows said that Becker Construction has estimated that the project will be completed by June. Burrows added that he expects that the project will be done by the start of school in September.

The monies for the first four classrooms had already been budgeted and the additional $228,700 will come from next year's budget. "This is incredible," said board member Pat McNamee. "We have the money without going out for a bond."

Burrows said the school facilities at Irrigon appear to be sufficient for the time being, since Irrigon,

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Lexington Council extends telephone building deadline

The Lexington Town Council, at its regular meeting Tuesday, Jan. 10, approved a month-long extension to allow additional time for someone to step up to provide a solution to the dilemma over the fate of the old Lexington telephone building.

The building is currently on Jim Nelson's property. Nelson told the board that he would allow the building to remain on his property an additional month, but after that he may opt to destroy the building. Nelson also offered to move the building, but the council has received no definite offer for a resting place for the structure. "I would get it moved at no cost and set it down on town property," said Nelson. Mayor Val Doherty said that a county official has indicated that the county may also be able to move the building. The council also heard that Dean Hunt has indicated that he, too, has located a place to place the building.

If a place is located, the building would still require extensive renovation. Talk centered on obtaining a grant to restore the building, but that may require more time than is available. According to interested citizens at the meeting, the Morrow County Historical Society has also indicated interest and may be able to provide some funding for renovation.

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

Community members and business honored at Town and Country

Doris Brosnan

Duane Neiffer

Gwen Healy

Don McElligott

Al Riney

Heather Rill

John Ripple, representing MCGG

Morrow County Fair and Rodeo Court Queen Heather Yocom is crowned by last year's Queen Jessica Wainwright. Left is Princess Josie Williams.

South Morrow County community members gathered Thursday, Jan. 12 for the annual Town and Country Banquet where six citizens and one business were presented with the Chamber of Commerce's annual awards. The theme for the evening was "Volunteers are Top Hat" and the guest speaker for the evening was "The Portland Oregonian" columnist Jonathan Nicholas. Also introduced during the evening was the 2006 Morrow County Fair and Rodeo Court. On the court this year are Queen Heather Yocom and Princess Josie Miller.

Al Riney was honored as this year's Man of the Year. Riney grew up in Condon and worked as postmaster and owner/operator of Liberty Theater before becoming manager of ranching operations for an outfit in Mikkalo. "Retiring" to Heppner in 1999, Riney has become an active part of the community.

He has helped with landscaping and building construction at Willow Creek Terrace Assisted Living and Oregon Trail Library. He also worked on machinery and grounds for the Farm Museum and Heritage Plaza. He serves as chairman of the building and grounds committee at Willow Creek Country Club and serves in leadership roles and as a worker in the Masons and the Odd Fellows, helping with many projects. He has helped with the St. Patrick's Day Celebration and served as a parade judge. He also volunteers in the Heppner Garden Club. He worked three years on the cemetery restoration project. When he is not volunteering in construction projects, he brings enjoyment to others while playing in the Blue Mountain String Band.

Honored as this year's Woman of the Year was Doris Brosnan. Brosnan, who grew up in Heppner, but spent some time away, returned with a can do attitude and helped support many Heppner and Willow Creek Valley projects. Some of her many projects include working with the Willow Creek Economic Development Group, serving as director of the Dinner at the Cemetery event and introducing the idea of Mr. Bill's Trivia Show to raise money for the Mural Fund. She is also instrumental in keeping the Morrow County Chronicles alive, working as editor and writer.

She has also served on numerous boards and committees including the Flood Commemoration committee, St. Patrick's Day committee, the St. Pat's Hotel board, Willow Creek Terrace Board and numerous others. She is also a member of the Heppner Chamber of Commerce and St. Patrick's Catholic Church. These are just a few of the many projects that Brosnan helps create, support and keep running.

This year's Citizen-Educator of the Year award was presented to newly retired Duane Neiffer. Neiffer has not only spent the last 24 years educating Morrow County youth, he has been instrumental in their extracurricular activities as well. Neiffer spent 15 years teaching in Heppner, seven years in Ione and went to Hermiston for two years. During his career he has received many awards including, Grant Rigby Memorial Teacher Award, Region 5 Outstanding High School Science Teacher, Inspirational Teacher Award from Eastern Oregon University and the Holes Memorial Award.

When he's not in the classroom Neiffer finds himself active in his church and the community. He has served as a 4-H leader, Sunday school teacher, freshman and JV basketball coach in Heppner, golf coach in Heppner and a bowling coach.

Honored as this year's Youth of the Year was Heppner High School senior Heather Rill. Rill's achievements encompass school, 4-H, volunteerism

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Willow Creek Economic Development Group annual meeting Jan 26

The Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group will hold its annual meeting Thursday, Jan. 26 at 12 noon at John's Place in Heppner.

Guest speaker for the meeting will be Dan Desler of Western States Land Reliance Trust.

Desler is the owner of a Eugene development company and will speak about his plans for development at the South Morrow Industrial Park (formerly Kinzua mill site) near Heppner.

Western States Land Reliance is a non-profit organization, which is close to purchasing the industrial park from the Port of Morrow. The trust plans to operate the co-generation electric plant at the site and has also indicated it may site other compatible businesses there as well.

In other business at the annual meeting, the current WCVEDG president David Sykes will be turning over the gavel to next year's president George Koffler and all members are welcome to attend and vote for next year's president and a board of directors, as well as discuss any business they wish to bring before the group.

In other business, there will be a review of WCVEDG's current effort to apply for tax-exempt status with the Internal Revenue Service. Becoming tax exempt will allow WCVEDG to accept a wider range of grants to be used for local economic development.

The lunch will be hosted by WCVEDG, however, those wishing to attend should be sure to RSVP to secretary/treasurer Marcia Kemp by Tuesday, Jan. 24 at 676-2100.

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