

HEPPNER

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Tazette imes

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Ione School District approved raise, two-year contract for Superintendent Browning

The Ione School District, at their regular meeting Feb. 21, approved a two-year contract and a \$600 raise, plus a cost-of-living increase for administrator Bryn Browning. "For two years she's done an excellent job and we're very pleased with her performance," said ISD Board member John Rietmann.



Bryn Browning

Also at the meeting, the board approved a one-year contract for 2006-07 for first year licensed

probationary teacher Brandi Orem, third year licensed initial two-year contract for 2006-08 for teacher Michelle Stone; and two-year contract extensions for 2006-08 for teachers, Barbara Collin, Dale Holland II, Jim Raible, Ryan Rudolf, Thomas Shear, Lindsay Oregon, Karen Holland, Linda Neiffer, Dean Robinson and Steve Schaber.

Browning told the board that:

-Ione students Amy Jepsen and Tyler Brown took second place in the Elk's Scholarship contest and Kristal Temple, also Ione, took third. Laurie Murray and Mikel Britt of Heppner High School were

first in the contest and Heather Rill, also Heppner, was also third. According to teacher Dean Robinson, two girls were selected for third place because not enough boys applied.

-enrollment as of Feb. 13 was 164 students; -ISD received \$69,552 in Title I funds from Morrow County School District;

-changes have been made for the district's website, including a tab for teacher pages and a syllabus for each teacher, course catalog and course schedule;

-the shop class is gathering their scrap wood, cutting it into uniform sizes and tying it into bundles to

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Melville returns from Afghanistan



Mahaley Huddleston, ASB Vice President, accepting the flag donated by David Melville.

By Laurie Murray

Heppner High School teacher David Melville recently returned from his tour of duty in Afghanistan. Melville, a Chinook helicopter pilot taught junior high math for a year before being called to active duty.

On his visit home, Melville and his family stopped at the school to say hi to faculty and students and to bring a flag that was flown and dedicated in honor of Heppner Jr. and Sr. High School. Melville is home for good in Hermiston and is happy to be with his family.

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

Dr. Datta announces intent to leave district

Dr. Saumyajit "Sam" Datta, a physician employed with the Morrow County Health District in Heppner and very popular with local patients, announced at the district's regular meeting Monday night that he intends to seek a job elsewhere. "I'm looking for a job outside for professional growth and for the family," said Datta, who added that he would like to become more involved in long-term care. He said that employment for his wife, Dr. Deepshikha Datta, a pathologist, is also a factor.



Dr. Sam Datta

Dr. Datta's announcement was greeted with regret, but not surprise, by board members and district staff. "He has been a gift to Hospice," said Molly Rhea, R.N., director of nursing, Home Health and Hospice at Pioneer Memorial Hospital in Heppner. "I'm very sorry to see you go, but sure wish you well," said board Chair Larry Mills.

Dr. Datta, who is originally from Calcutta, India, began working for the district in May of 2000 on a work visa which stipulated that he work in a rural area. He had lived with his family, which includes two young children, in Heppner until their fairly recent move to Hermiston.

Dr. Datta said that he and his wife are considering employment in the Tri-Cities, WA, Portland and Sacramento, CA.

Speedway VP to speak at Economic Development meeting

Steve Brucker, Sr. Vice President Operations for the Oregon International Speedway, will be the guest speaker at the Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group meeting Wednesday, March 8.

Brucker will give a program explaining the NASCAR style speedway proposed for construction in the Boardman area (see related story).

The WCVEDG meeting starts at 8 a.m., at Heppner city hall and the public is invited to attend.

Booster clubs receive over \$3000 each from dinner

The totals have been calculated from the combined Heppner and Ione Booster Club dinner held Feb. 4 and each club will receive \$3419.06. The clubs appreciate the overwhelming support of both communities and look forward to a great dinner next year.

Also at the meeting, the board learned from chief financial officer Nicole Mahoney that the district earned \$429,320 in gross patient revenue for January, "the highest in almost three years and that was when we had the nursing home open," said Mahoney. The district ended the month with a \$92,855 gain.

In other business the board:

-discussed the possibility of reinstating intermediate long-term care at Pioneer Memorial Hospital via the "swing bed" program. The district previously provided long-term care at Pioneer Memorial Nursing Home, but the government reimbursement rate was so low, the nursing home could not stay afloat. The nursing home received \$111 a day per Medicaid patient, however costs amounted to \$185 per day per patient. Under the swing bed plan, a higher reimbursement rate, perhaps even as much as 200 percent, would allow the program's viability, however the details and accessibility of the program have not yet been determined. "I think it's worth a shot," said MCHD CEO Victor Vander Does. "I think we ought to support the heck out of it," added Mills.

-decided to not approve a request from the city of Irrigon for funding to establish a skate park in Irrigon. The estimated cost of the proposed park is \$360,000. The city of Irrigon is seeking a 60 percent grant from Oregon State Parks, amounting to \$216,000, which would leave \$144,000 yet to raise. Those who donate \$500, \$1,000, \$5,000

or \$10,000 would receive a plaque. Options also include the cost of a tree for the park at \$300 and donations of labor, equipment or time. Vander Does and the board said that they felt the request was "outside of their mission," but added that they support the worthwhile project and would consider contributions such as first-aid kits or a first-aid station for the park. Mills asked Vander Does to write a letter to the city of Irrigon to that effect.

-approved the disposal of surplus items as Vander Does sees fit.

-learned that Dr. Kenneth Wenberg, a physician who has a private practice in Heppner and also works at the Pioneer Memorial Hospital emergency room, has obtained malpractice insurance for his clinic and thus will continue to be allowed admitting privileges at PMH.

-discussed the impact the proposed Boardman race track could have on the health district. If the track is completed, the district could receive 34 percent more tax monies, since the completed facility would be taxable at around \$300-\$400 million, according to estimates. The race track would also impact the district in terms of care required for the possible 1,200 construction workers employed at the track during the construction process and then race track patrons once the facility is operational. However, Vander Does said that it has not yet been determined whether the health district or the

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Group works to bring mega motorplex to Morrow County

A speedway capable of hosting NASCAR/IRL/NHRA type events is in the works on a 2,700-acre development west of Boardman on land adjacent to Interstate 84 and the Columbia River. Plans are to have the track ready for its first event in 2008.

The Port of Morrow and Morrow County commissioners have signed agreements with Oregon International Speedway (OIS) to bring the first destination speedway development to Morrow County and Oregon.

"This speedway will bring people to Morrow County who will spend time, be entertained and spend money that will stimulate our economy," said Terry Tallman, Morrow County Commissioner. "Construction of the speedway will bring jobs to our county."

The first phase of the development, estimated to cost \$330 million, will include an 81,500 seat grandstand, 60 luxury and garage suites, a 1.2 Mile high banked Super Speedway, 5/8 mile oval track, two mile road course, drag strip and

Go Kart road course. The complex will also feature a state-of-the-art motorsports country club, RV park and campground, space for retail stores and restaurants, plus utilities, infrastructure and road development needed to support the speedway.

"The speedway will diversify our economic base," said Gary Neal, Director of the Port of Morrow. "It will be a catalyst that will provide other entrepreneurial opportunities for new businesses to open shop in Morrow County."

OIS is one of several groups in Oregon and Washington vying to bring a premier speedway to the Pacific Northwest.

Oregon International Speedway will fund the Morrow County project with a combination of private funds and public purpose bonds that are secured and repaid by OIS. OIS is a group of motorsports industry investors led by Bill Gardner, former NASCAR Cup team owner and owner of DiGard Racing. Amongst the

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MCGG GREEN FEED STORE in Heppner



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~ Morrow County Grain Growers ~

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