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Gazette Times

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Easter Bunny visits Heppner

The Easter Bunny made an appearance at Heppner City Park on Saturday, April 15. Joining him were Cheyenne Smith, Mahaley Huddleston and Emily Smith.

Ione School Board declines support of speedway tax

Ione School Board members, at their regular meeting Monday night, declined to second a motion in support of the proposed speedway district excise tax. Board member Joel Peterson, in making the motion, said that the raceway could provide an economic boost to the area and possibly more students for the district.

Board member Anne Morter said that she was concerned about the time lag between the issuance of the bonds and the commercial development of the speedway district which would provide bond repayment. She also mentioned a clause in the contract which prohibits county employees from speaking about the agreement.

Also at the meeting, the board approved a three-year contract with Superintendent Bryn Browning.

In other business, the board:

-approved a contract with the city of Ione to provide lawn mowing for school grounds for $8,000 annually.

-approved a contract with Apollo Sheet Metal in Kennewick to provide preventative maintenance for the school's heating and air conditioning system for $9106 for the first year. The cost of the maintenance agreement was determined to be cheaper than the cost of obtaining service from Apollo as needed.

-accepted the first reading of a policy on general school administration.

-approved the second reading and adopted a policy on fiscal management.

-received a management letter concerning the district's annual audit, from Maxwell & Company, Certified Public Accountants, located in Eugene. The letter said that "the review process for student activity purchases was not consistently applied" and recommended two levels of review on all purchases. The letter also noted that "the budget resolution adopting the supplemental budget contained no information regarding the appropriation category modified by the supplemental budget." The resolution must state the appropriation category, such as instruction, support services, etc. Maxwell & Company recommended that the district review the "Local Budgeting Manual publication prepared by the Oregon Department of Revenue."

Maxwell & Company also reminded the district that Oregon requires construction-type donated services to be disallowed to protect union jobs. "This type of work must be done on a paid basis and at union scale," said the letter.

Financial services for the district are provided under contract by the Umatilla-Morrow ESD.

-approved a pool agreement between the district and Willow Creek Park District, which has yet to be approved by WCPD.

-tabled a decision on a resolution recommending that the Oregon School Boards Association hold mail-in balloting, rather than requiring that voting be held

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Doherty announces DA candidacy

Valerie Doherty

Valerie Doherty has announced her candidacy for district attorney. Doherty has been a resident of Morrow County since 1963, graduating from Heppner High School in 1971. She then received her bachelor's degree with majors in science and psychology in 1976 from the University of Oregon and received her doctorate of jurisprudence in 1981 from Willamette University College of Law. She currently resides in Lexington and serves as the Lexington mayor.

Doherty began her career in a partnership with Herman Winter and Michael Sweeney in Heppner. While there, most of her work centered on criminal cases and family law. She then served as Morrow County deputy district attorney for 10 years and later as full-time county counsel. In 1997, Doherty returned to private practice, working almost exclusively in criminal law, both as retained counsel and under contract with the state for court-appointed work. This is where Doherty currently finds herself, working mostly in Umatilla County, although she appears regularly in Morrow County. She has also handled cases in Gilliam, Union and Wallowa counties.

"I've learned a lot 'out there,' but it's time, now, to bring it home to Morrow County and put it to good use. Experience does count," said Doherty.

Doherty also speaks some Spanish, which helps her communicate better with many of her clients. She feels that it is important for people to know that they can call on the telephone and make an appointment or get the answers they need.

As DA, Doherty also plans to help fight the drug problem. "I know, as DA, that I can't stop drugs [abuse], but I also know, as DA, I can make life supremely difficult for persons involved in them." She has spent the last 10 years, "finding the weaknesses in the prosecution's cases" and now wants to fix and eliminate the weaknesses.

Doherty will face Elizabeth Ballard, Hermiston, and John Ballard, Hermiston, in a three-way race in the primary election May 16. If one of the candidates wins by a clear 50 percent-plus-one vote, he or she will win the election. If there is no 50 percent-plus-one win, the top two candidates will go on to the general election scheduled for Nov. 7, 2006.

Lexington Council hears raceway presentation

Port of Morrow Commissioner Marvin Padberg told the Lexington City Council, at their regular meeting April 11, that he not only supports the proposed raceway plan that will be built in the Boardman area, but that the project would provide needed economic growth for the county. "We're so dependent on agriculture," said Padberg, an Ione farmer. "This will bring in a non-agricultural business." "It could very well double the (county's) tax base," he said.

Lexington Mayor Valerie Doherty, a local attorney, said that she sees what could be potential problems in the contract between the raceway developers and the county. According to Doherty's interpretation, the contract requires that the county issue bonds to fund raceway development, however the funds from the eight percent excise tax, that county voters are being asked to approve May 16, are not earmarked to repay the bonds. Instead the monies would go directly to the developers. "I understand how it (the contract) is intended to be," said Doherty. "But I'm not certain that the contract we're seeing says that."

Padberg and raceway developers, who were present at the council meeting, disagreed, saying that the bonds will be secured by a letter of credit that they have obtained and the contract will not put the county at risk.

Doherty also voiced concern about a secrecy clause in the contract, which forbids county employees from making public pronouncements or issuing press releases about the contract.

In other business at the meeting, the council:

-approved a request by Columbia Basin Electric to have Lexington maintenance personnel to read the electric company's meters for a $100 per month reimbursement on a temporary basis. The council approved the request for three months, although they didn't believe the reimbursement amount would cover the actual cost.

-approved a three percent cost-of-living raise

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Ione residents to vote on local option tax

Registered voters living within the City of Ione will be voting on a three-year local option tax. The tax will be used for general operating expenses for the City of Ione. The tax will be for $10,000 for three year for a total of $30,000. The estimated tax impact would be $1.17 per $1000 for the first year.

General operating expenses would include such things as utilities, fuel, other expenses to keep the city running, as well as a possible increase in the hours worked by the city recorder. The current lack of funds is due in part to the increased and unforeseen expenses that have been created as prices for fuel, electricity, etc., have increased.

"The city does the best it can with that it has," said Gayle Eynetich, city recorder.

Ballots will be mailed out to voters on Friday, April 28 and need to be returned by the election date of May 16.

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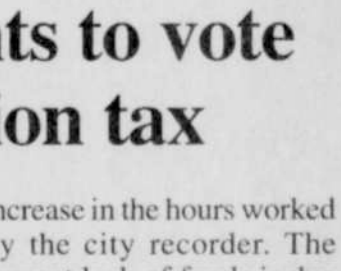
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