

~ Letters to the Editor ~

The Heppner Gazette Times will print all letters to the Editor with the following criteria met: letters submitted to the newspaper will need to have the name of the sender along with a legible signature. We are also requesting that you provide your address and a phone number where you can be reached. The address and phone number will only be used for verification and will not be printed in the newspaper. Letters may not be libelous. The GT reserves the right to edit. The GT is not responsible for accuracy of statements made in letters. Any letters expressing thanks will be placed in the classifieds under "Card of Thanks" at a cost of \$10.

There are some things worth fighting over – like when government shafts the people it exists to serve.

Since getting elected to Heppner's city council, I've tried to pick my fights carefully. However, there are some things worth fighting over – like when government shafts the people it exists to serve. Read on.

If my information is correct, it was back in the mid-1980's when the Morrow County government was first approached by some barge company to authorize the Finley Buttes Landfill as the repository for metropolitan Portland's solid waste.

Recognizing that the politics of turning a piece of our county into the garbage dump for Oregon's largest city carried a certain stench with it, the county commissions of that time diligently slogged their way through Boardman, Irrigon, Ione, Lexington, and Heppner, holding public hearings which they used as a forum to sell the proposal to the public based on the notion that a) the landfill site occupied a remote location, and b) the money paid to the county ("tippage fees") by the enterprise would be made available for the benefit of its citizens. Sounds like they did their homework well. In July 1987, the county passed their "Solid Waste Management Ordinance," and everybody sat back and waited for the new landfill to get established and start generating revenue.

In February 1993, the county commissioners dutifully followed up on their promise and passed a resolution (a formal statement of position or intent by a government body – something less than a law or ordinance, but more than an idle election campaign promise) that actually spelled things out: 50% of the tippage fees (less administrative costs) would be split equally among the county's five communities, 40% would be split among those same communities based on population, and the remaining 10% would be retained by the county. So,

maybe the mega-garbage dump wasn't such a bad idea, we're all going to get some additional money for needed public projects, and everybody's happy, right?

Wrong. In July 1994, the county commissioners passed a second resolution that revoked the first one outright and plopped the money right back into the county's general fund for their exclusive use. And that's the way it's been ever since – instead of going to the cities as first promised, 90% of the tippage fee revenue (which currently, by the way, adds up to about \$1 million annually) is now a windfall to the county's general fund, and the remaining 10% is being carefully doled out by the commissioners to the five communities, a few dollars at a time, in a magnanimous gesture to demonstrate what great guys they are.

Last Wednesday, February 7, the current commissioners met with representatives of the towns to hear their case for adhering to the original formula for splitting the tippage fee revenue as first promised, and otherwise take public testimony. Held on the commissioner's home turf at the county courthouse, the meeting was a farce. The courthouse was stacked with what seemed to be every former Morrow County commissioner since the passage of Oregon's statehood act, along with various and sundry farmers, ranchers, and others with a vested interest in county programs and services. Like a really bad opera, they popped up one by one singing the praises of county government and railing against the audacity of the cities for daring to rock the boat. Outnumbered and clearly out of their element, the city representatives were mute for the most part, except for their appointed spokesman. You've got to had it to the commissioners – they may indeed suffer from selective moral dwarfism (particularly when

serious money is involved), but they're astute enough at basic political gamesmanship to orchestrate a meeting in such a way that it flows smoothly toward the outcome they want. Which is exactly what happened. Reinforced by supportive crooning from their predecessors and others, the three incumbent commissioners unanimously agreed that a) the cities' case had insufficient merit, b) the money belongs to the county anyway (notwithstanding the promise to split most of the revenue among the five communities), c) the cities' appeal couldn't come at a worse time, in view of budget woes and what-not, and d) we all is quite content with the present arrangement, thank you, and by God, we're keeping the dough. Bang. Meeting adjourned.

A little side note here to deflect a bogus argument you'll probably hear in coming days. During the aforementioned meeting, the commissioners predictably dredged up the point that keeping their revenue-sharing promise would cause irreparable harm by forcing reductions to valuable county programs and/or elimination of county jobs (translated: unacceptable shrinkage of their little bureaucratic empires). This is a stale diversionary tactic based on the premise that county programs and services are somehow more valuable than city programs and services, and should be dropped from the debate immediately. In truth, the county has needs, the cities have needs, everybody her got needs, but none of us have the resources to fully meet them. And which is more important: repairs to a chuckhole-ridden street, an additional cop to patrol that street, a county planner, or new playground equipment for a worn-down city park? All produce a public benefit and all have value (except, of course, for the planner). All levels of government want more money to

accomplish their respective mandates, both real and imagined. And the people, quite correctly, resist giving up their money because a) they need it for themselves and their families, and b) they're fully aware that, although government is very efficient at sucking up everybody's private income, it's inherently wasteful and horribly inefficient when it comes to spending it. Instead, they force elected officials to weigh costs and benefits, and make tough funding decisions. So let's drop the whining about "needs" – it's irrelevant. The issue at hand is not needs, it's basic morality, or rather, the lack of it.

Of course, ethically challenged politicians are as old as the hills. We even joke about them – the contortions in reasoning some of them go through to rationalize their behavior is frequently hilarious. However, when it happens at the local level and you're the victim, it becomes a bit more personal and stops being funny. With respect to the good citizens of Boardman, Irrigon, Ione, Lexington, and Heppner, you've just kissed off, by duly elected county representatives, to the tune of somewhere between \$100,000 - \$200,000 (depending on the size of your town) worth of good that could have been done for each of your communities ... unless of course you're willing to band together and fight back.

As of this writing, there's a move under consideration by the mayors of the five affected communities to launch an initiative measure forcing the county commissioners to perform at least in part on their original promise. For anybody that's forgotten their high school civics lessons, the initiative is a dandy little constitutional mechanism that enables the people to override their wayward political representatives and pass enforceable laws by direct popular vote. Anyway, the

mayors, apparently a very civilized and kindhearted bunch, are pushing for only 75% of the money originally promised to the five towns. Myself, I'd recommend recovering every last penny, both to get the maximum benefit for our communities, and to teach the good ol' boys at the courthouse the lesson that they shouldn't make promises they don't intend to keep. But however the matter is approached, I'm convinced that the initiative process is now the only available remedy, and worthy of your support. And remember, your mayors aren't going to accomplish this by themselves. They'll need you to call in expressing that support, tell your neighbors what's afoot, sign a petition to get the measure on the ballot, and cast your vote for the initiative. The entrenched county commissioners have taken their stand, and they're gambling with the citizenry will be too apathetic or divided to take them on. Now it's your turn to show them they made the wrong bet.

After getting the misappropriated funds back to your communities, there's the question of what to do about the three fun-loving commissioners who've just thumbed their collective noses at the town dwellers who helped elect them. File for an immediate recall election and toss them out on their ears? Or just dump them like so much garbage as they come up for re-election and pray that they behave themselves in the interim? I suppose you could also re-elect them, which strikes me as something akin to a group of nuns inviting a few serial rapists over to the convent for dinner. Good heavens, it's no wonder that so many people accord politicians the same level of esteem they usually reserve for used car salesmen and con artists.

Glenn Baker,
Councilman
Heppner City
Council

Special elections

Continued from page one

- Position 3 – four-year term
- Position 4 – two-year term
- Position 5 – four-year term
- Position 6 – four-year term;
- Irrigon Community Education Committee
- Position 2 – four-year term
- Position 3 – four-year term
- Position 4 – four-year term
- Position 6 – two-year term;
- Boardman Community Education Committee
- Position 2 – four-year term
- Position 3 – two-year term
- Position 4 – two-year term
- Position 5 – two-year term;
- Morrow County Health District
- Position 5 – four-year term
- Position 4 – four-year term;
- Heppner Water Control District
- three positions at large – four-year terms;

All candidates for these positions are required to file a Filing of Candidacy for Special District Nomination form, with the Morrow County Clerk by March 15, 2007. Petitions may be picked up at the Morrow County Clerk's Office or go to the Secretary of State's website at www.sos.state.or.us/Election Division/Publications and Forms/District Election Manual. Use fillable pdf forms SEL 190 and SEL 191. Include SEL 220 if you are filing a Statement of Organization.

A \$10.00 filing fee or 25 signatures of eligible Morrow County voters are required. File with the Morrow County Clerk at 100 S. Court Street, P.O. Box 338, Heppner, OR 97836. www.morrowcountyoregon.com

CLERK
For more information, call (541) 676-5601.

GOOD LUCK IONE CARDINALS!

THESE INDIVIDUALS AND BUSINESSES CONGRATULATE THE IONE CARDINALS' BOYS BASKETBALL TEAM AND WISH THEM GOOD LUCK AT DISTRICT!



Ione Cardinals Varsity Boys (L-R): top row-Coach Jim Swanson, Kip Krebs, Kevin Fowler, Clay Morter, Montana Marlatt, Coach Dennis Stefani; bottom row-Stormy Kendrick, R.J. Ramos, Paul Hams, Matt Hams, Matt Coleman, Justin Archer, Alan Rietmann.

- Adena, Mason, Lucus & Mariah
- Allen & Nancy Anderson
- Allstott Construction
- Anda Kay B.E.O. Financial Services
- Arlotta, Abby & Katy Arnsperger
- Ashley, Cathy, Adam & Meghan McCabe
- Bailey Heavy Equipment
- Bank of Eastern Oregon Member F.D.I.C.
- Barney Rea
- Becky Tullis
- Beryl & Susie Stillman & Children
- Betty Gray
- Betty Rietmann
- Betty & William Bergstrom
- Bill & Nancy Jepsen Family
- Bill Rietmann
- Bink, Lynn Dee, R.J. & McKenna Ramos
- Boardman Foods
- Bob Baker
- Bob Hubbard
- Bob Perry
- BPOE No. 358
- Brian & Lori Sullivan & Family
- Brian & Peggy Doherty Family
- Brian, Sharon, Andrew, Alyssa, Alan, Alex & Anthony Rietmann
- Bruno Construction
- Butch & Helen Heideman
- Buzz, Jeanette Logan
- Chad, Karl, Sierra, Jordyn & Kendall Robie
- Chuck & Tobie Williams
- Clint, Sarah, Alex & Julianne Carlson
- Collier's Market
- Columbia Basin Electric Cooperative
- Craig, Paul & Matt Hams
- Craig, Janet, Steven, Emily & Rachel Holland
- Daily Bread Farms: Joel, Lea, Gus, Oskar & Babali
- Dale, Karen, Barbara, Stephanie & Thomas Holland
- Dana & Tonya Heideman
- Darrell & Paula Emmel Family
- Darrin & Henry Padberg
- Dave Barnett
- Dave & Beth Heagy Family
- Dave, Debbie & Mike Radle
- Dave & Patty McNary
- David Stevens & Cynda
- Dean & Florene Robinson
- Deacon, Erin & Jacob Heideman
- Dean's Pendleton Athletic
- Del & Linda LaRue
- Dennis Stefani & Misti & Sydney
- Dennis, Janet, Jennifer, Curtis, Jason & Brendan Thompson
- Devin Oil Co.
- Dick & Jannie Allen
- Donna Bergstrom
- Donna, Susan, Andra, Stormy, Skyler & Shadow
- Dick & Nancy Snider
- Dick & Rosie Graham
- Dobyns Pest Control
- Don & Eunice McElligott
- Dorothy Stefani
- Dot Halvorsen
- Duane, Linda, Jacob, Adam & Paul Neiffer
- Dustin, Karen, Ashley & Hannah & Hunter Padberg
- Earl, Rhonda & Kate Garrett
- Eastern Oregon Orthopaedic Surgery & Sports Medicine LLP
- Eric, Brandi, Morgan, Matthew, Madison & Mason Orem
- Frank & Cathy Halvorsen
- Fred & Faye Walton, John & Nik Gar Aviation
- Gene, Kathy & Tony Bolin
- Gene & Kristy Crowell
- Gerald & Linda Wilson
- Glenn, Kelly, Tracy & Jennifer Griffith
- Gregg, Shelly, Tanner, Evan & Ola Rietmann
- Hank & Kathi Pointer
- Henrik Crawford
- Heleen Pettijohn
- Henry & Robin Krebs & Missy
- Heppner Family Foods
- Heppner Gazette-Times
- Heppner Heating
- Howard & Dianne Mullins
- Ione Community Band
- IRT LLC
- Jarrod, Alison & Gracie Ogden
- Jason, Tara & Cameron Proudfoot
- Jerry, Lisa, Ann & Emma Rietmann
- Jim & Gayle Eymetich
- Jim & Gina Jepsen
- Jim, Eileen, Miranda, Colin & Taylor McElligott
- Jim, Monica, Adrienne, Luke & Tyan Swanson
- J. Keithley Construction
- Joe & Darla Vandever & Teonna
- Joe & Jeri McElligott & Family
- Joe, Anita, Caitlin & Zac Orem
- Joe, Donna, Emily & Mary Rietmann & Terry
- Joe, Linda & Stacey Halvorsen
- Josh & Bryn Browning Family
- John & Jean Jepsen
- John & Linda Brnstow
- John, Barbara, Johnny & Adam Collin
- John, Heien & Arthur Ekstrom
- John, Janna, Jonathan, Beth, Joel, Christian, Jamie & Julianna VandenBrink
- John, Kerry & Brenna Rietmann
- Juanita Schultz
- June Crowell
- Justin, Stacie & Payton Miller
- Katherine Lindstrom
- Keith & Judy Rea
- Keith, Yvonne, Austin, Malinda, Brittnee & Rebeka
- Kelly, Debbie, Richard, Derek & Dalton, Nicola & Cameron Cambell
- Ken, Christopher & Kelley Klinger
- Ken & JeanAnn Turner
- Kerry & Ina Peterson
- Laurel Cannon
- Lee & MaryAnn Palmer
- Lee, Wendy, Justin & Stefanie Archer
- Les Schwab Tire Center
- Les, Kim, Olivia, Kelly, Lacey, Seth & Katelyn Thompson
- Lexington Auto Body & Towing
- Lloyd & Shirley McNary
- Loa & Mark Henderson
- Loa McElligott
- Loren & Della Heideman
- Lorrene Montgomery
- Lott's Electric
- Louis & Betty Carlson
- Loyal & Betty Burns
- Marc, Lindsay, Gracie, Sallie & Hattie Orem
- Marvin & Tanna Padberg
- Mike's Mobile Staughter
- Mike, Tobey, Lauren, Kaitlin & Alexis Garrett
- Morrow County Grain Growers
- Monty & Susan Crum
- Murray Drugs & Country Rose
- Nancy, Kristen & Kara Miller
- Office Pub & Grill
- Oregon Trail Pro Rodeo
- Pea Ridge Embroidery
- Peg Leg Farms
- Perry & Kathy Morter
- Peterson's Jewelers
- Pettijohn's Farm & Builders Supply
- Ralph, Ann, Clay & Beth Morter
- Ramos Brothers Ranch
- Rick & Anita Peterson & Family
- Robin & Melissa LaRue & Family
- Rod, Glenda, Jenna & Paul Taylor
- Ron & Karen Hagewood
- Rudy & Jackie Bergstrom
- Ryan & Allison Rudolf, Jill & Thomas
- Scott, Cindy, Brenda, Camie, Brad, Kemmery, Logan, Larissa & Lucas Burright
- Sherrell Chevrolet
- Seitz Aviation
- Skip & Barbara Pettijohn
- Skye, Penny, Cayle & Kip Krebs
- Slater, Darcee, Cason, Marlee & Landon Mitchell
- Stacey, Theresa, Paul, Kevin, Matt & Gunner
- Steve & Vicki Wagenblast
- Steve, Camille & Sara Peck
- Steve, Rose, Grace & Cameron Crum
- Steve & Terri Schaber & Kyle & Kaylee
- Sunflower Junction
- Sweeney Mortuary
- Taylor's Restaurant
- The Dumler Family
- Tom & Anne Bedorha
- Tom, Arlynda, Bill, Charissa & Sierra Gates
- Tom Shear
- Treve & Elizabeth Peterson Family
- Tri County Propane
- Vandever Brothers, Inc.
- Vince & Donna Alleman
- Virgil, Debbie & Karl Morgan
- Wayne, Dianna & Shawn Hams
- Wheatland Insurance
- Woodside Enterprises
- Wright Chevrolet

Big Sky District Tournament: Ione Cardinal Varsity Boys play Cascade Locks on Thursday, February 15 at 7:30 p.m. at the Umatilla High School in Umatilla.