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New doctor bails on health district

Dr. Zachary Hale "is bailing" on the Morrow County Health District, CEO Victor Vander Does told the board at their regular meeting Monday night in Boardman.

Dr. Hale, who lives in the Tri-Cities area, was scheduled to come on board full-time in June, after he had received certification, which enabled him to provide care to Medicare patients. His previous employer did not require that certification. Hale has worked as a fill-in physician at Pioneer Memorial Clinic in Heppner. Vander Does said that Hale plans to provide emergency room care in Prosser, WA.

A nurse practitioner from Florida who had also indicated interest in working for the district has also said no, said Vander Does, and a board member said she has learned that another doctor who continues to show some interest in a position with MCHD does not intend to take that position.

Vander Does said that provider staffing for March continues to be adequate. However, the district's contract with Dr. Ken Wenberg is due to expire the end of February and Vander Does said he does not yet know Dr. Wenberg's plans.

Dr. Ed Berretta, Physician's Assistant Sheridan Tarnasky, Nurse Practitioner Sue Peeples, and Dr. Sam Datta are current providers. Dr. Alter is back from Africa and will begin working for the district the first week in March, probably alternating with Dr. Berretta, said Vander Does.

Also at the meeting, the board learned from Chief Financial Officer Nicole Mahoney that the district had to cut a $49,000 check to repay Medicare for a previous settlement payment. However, on the positive side, the district received $30,000 in a retrospective payment from their worker's comp plan for having a good worker's comp record.

Mahoney also reported that the district anticipates a Medicare rate settlement adjustment which will reduce the amount of money the district will receive from Medicare as of March 1. She said that most deductions result from an increase in utilization.

In other business, the board:

-approved a $185,000 flex lease, $5,000 more than originally planned, to purchase a telephone system, an ambulance and a defibrillator.

-approved the only bid received for purchase of a new ambulance for $110,088 for the Boardman area. The district received a $1,000 discount for picking up the ambulance-an employee who has relatives in Iowa, where the ambulance company is located, has volunteered-and a $1,300 discount for paying for the vehicle at pickup. The vehicle is the same as the Heppner ambulance, said Vander Does.

-learned that board members, Linda LaRue and Larry Mills, have filed for their current positions four and five.

-learned that Vander Does attended a hearing in Salem on the proposed swing bed program and reported no objections to the program, which would allow Pioneer Memorial Hospital to once again provide long-term care. Vander Does said that he countered a statement that no small businesses would be affected by the plan, citing examples of businesses that would be positively affected. Vander Does said that the district's plan is a go now and plans to consult an architect for proposed renovations that would convert two rooms into rooms appropriate for long-term care.

-approved the Home Health evaluation as presented by Molly Rhea, director of Nursing, Home Health and Hospice.

-learned that the Boardman Senior Center has received a defibrillator from St. Anthony Hospital, but people there are unsure as to how to use it. Vander Does said he would look into providing training in the use of the machine.

-heard a reminder from Rhea that the district

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HEPPNER 50¢
Gazette Times

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Mustang girls in state playoffs

The Mustangs varsity girls' basketball team will be playing in the second round of the Class 2A state playoffs at the Pendleton Convention Center on Thursday, March 1, at 1:30 p.m. The Mustangs will play Nestucca, the number two seed from the Northwest League. See page 4 for state tournament brackets and the complete story on their win over the Central Linn Cobras on Saturday night, March 24.

UMESD Superintendent Murdock resigns to take publisher post at East Oregonian

George Murdock, superintendent of the Umatilla-Morrow Education Service District (UMESD) for the past eight years, has been named editor and publisher of the East Oregonian in Pendleton.

The announcement was made by John Perry, chief operating officer of the East Oregonian Publishing Company, which, in addition to the East Oregonian, also owns and operates the Capital Press, the Daily Astorian, the Chinook Observer, the Blue Mountain Eagle, and the Wallowa County Chieftain, as well as a number of specialty publications. The East Oregonian Publishing Company is headquartered in Salem, Ore.

The announcement followed a national search for a new publisher for the newspaper, which has served the area since 1875. The East Oregonian is the largest daily newspaper in Eastern Oregon.

Prior to coming to the UMESD, Murdock was superintendent of schools in Pasco, Wash., from 1993-99 and deputy superintendent of schools in Walla Walla, Wash., from 1982 until 1993. He was a journalism teacher, assistant principal, and principal at W. F. West High School in Chehalis, Wash., between 1966 and 1982.

Murdock is a graduate of Washington State University, where he was named the outstanding senior in the department of communications and holds a masters degree from Linfield College. He attended high school in Toledo, Wash.

After graduation from Washington State University, where he majored in journalism, Murdock was employed by the McMinnville News-Register. He is an avid writer and has published three books. During the time he has been at the UMESD, Murdock has written a regular column for the East Oregonian.

Long active in community and professional affairs, Murdock serves as executive director of the Oregon Small Schools Association and is immediate past president of the Oregon Association of Education Service Districts. In 1997, he was named Washington State Superintendent of the Year, and in 2002 he received the Alumni Achievement Award from WSU. He has been active with the Pendleton Chamber of Commerce, the Pendleton Rotary Club, Leadership Pendleton, United Way of

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Ione School Board hears weight room proposal

The Ione Community School Board, at their regular meeting February 20, heard a presentation on a proposed Booster Club plan for a weight room at the school from Keith Morter, who stressed the importance of a speedy decision.

The board postponed a decision, however, until they receive a site plan and more detailed information.

The board learned that enrollment as of Feb. 12 was 143 students, with 56 in grades K-five, 37 in grades six-eight, and 50 in grades nine-12.

In other business, the board:

-heard a report from Superintendent Bryn Browning that Mr. Insulation gave the district a recommendation on replacing and upgrading the high school gym windows and an estimate of around $20,000 for the complete job. Browning said she would seek estimates for removing the windows and capping off each side of the gym.

-learned from Browning that ADT was at the school to access the fire system and recommended how to service the older facility fire alarms. A bid for installation of a system that would simultaneously sound both the elementary and high school buildings is anticipated shortly. The fire alarm pull service is expected to be completed this summer.

-learned that the Ione Education Foundation has awarded two grants-one for new globes for each classroom and the library and another for individual CD players for each elementary classroom to accompany the current literacy program.

-learned that Howard Mullins and teacher Dale Holland took the school's geology class to the newly donated 40-acres above the Emert Addition to locate the final two corners of the property with the use of GPS units purchased with an Ione Education Foundation grant. IEF recently received a donation of a 40-acre parcel.

-heard a site council report that the school is attempting to increase the number of surveys returned by asking that parents bring theirs to the spring conference. Once the parent's name is checked off, he or she will receive a "small incentive". Parents who do not attend spring conferences will need to return their surveys prior to the end of the school year or they will not receive their child's report card.

-heard a site council report indicating that students taking distance education courses regularly require addition tutoring, since they are not actually meeting the professor. Suggestions included having the students meet their professor on campus at least once, working with the students ahead of time to ensure that they know how to request assistance from their professor via e-mail and time management.

-learned that Eric Jepsen was an All Northwest Musicians finalist; Kayla LaRue took first place in the Elks Most Valuable Student contest; Emily Rietmann took first place in the Odd Fellows United Nations Tour contest; and the school's speech team is now a member of the Oregon State Athletic Association.

-learned that school representatives met with other small school districts from the ESD on literacy curriculums, administering and implementing progress checks.

-learned that Feb. 9 was the first professional development under the new plan.

-learned that 10 students in grades 10-12 met with Dr. Sandra DeBano and Sarah Carlson from the OSU Research Station for Introduction to Entomology, a course offered on Fridays through the end of the school year taught by Carlson. Students will earn credit through Blue Mountain Community College.

-learned from ESD about the proposed legislation to fund data projectors and document cameras for each of 708 classrooms in Umatilla and Morrow counties.

-learned that the International Club will travel to Germany and the Czech Republic during spring break.

-approved the Umatilla-Morrow ESD local service plan and management services contract. "We re getting a heck of a good buy," said board member John Rietmann.

-approved contract renewals.

-approved amendments to the interscholastic athletic policy revisions and high school classes, courses for eight-graders.

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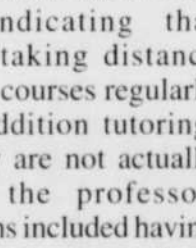
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