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Gazette Times

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Patrons say school district too slow in funding Irrigon school sports facilities

The Morrow County School Board heard concerns at the regular meeting Monday night about the perceived delay in bringing the Irrigon Junior/ Senior High School sports field/facility program up to speed.

Irrigon citizens expressed frustration that funding for athletic field/ facility improvements was not as forthcoming as was expected. They maintained that the district should have anticipated better the start-up costs involved. Irrigon citizen Meredith De Haven charged the district with sending the money that rightly belonged to Irrigon to Heppner and Ione schools for years, while the Irrigon community had no school.

IJSHS Principal Tom Crane wrote the district a letter which he presented at the meeting voicing his concern that he was left out of the loop in the budgeting process for sports facility improvements. He said in the letter that he has gathered information about the history and needs of IJSHS, has talked to many people to get information and has established a field/facility committee to gather information that would help the school administration determine IJSHS priorities.

Crane said that he was told by assistant superintendent Wade Smith that "the money in the budget was for improvements and not necessarily for just field lighting. I was 99 percent assured that the $25,000 in the 06/07 budget would be replaced if we spent that money on fencing. He (Smith) provided extra money to get the first phase of the perimeter fencing done. I was also told that we were waiting on a grant to help finish the PTE (PE and technology) building. That grant did not come, so finishing the building became the number one priority at IJSHS," said Crane.

Crane said that a three-year plan recommended by the administrators at IJSHS includes the following:

-07-08 Finish heating, air conditioning and lighting in PTE-$35,000; lighting upgrade in gym-$10,000 (Umatilla Electric Co-op matching dollar for dollar grant); sports field lighting/scoreboard installation-$50,000 (funding/material request turned into UES).

-08-09 Permanent concession stand to include restrooms and crow's nest.

-09-10 Track (research on grant applications has been started).

District Superintendent Mark Burrows responded that the budgeting process was not yet over and the district would send the sports field/ facility budget back to Crane for his input. Crane had earlier submitted his resignation to the board, saying that he had accepted a position elsewhere starting this fall so he could be closer to his child.

Crane also responded to remarks from the Irrigon citizenry alleging that the IJSHS Booster Club "runs the school." Crane said that he told Burrows and the booster club that he would not agree to be on the booster club board and would not be a dues paying member. Rather, he said that he or IJSHS Vice Principal Chris Davis would attend the booster club meetings as a resource to discuss ideas. "We have had a very good relationship with the boosters, chamber and other groups both inside and outside of the school. As with each town in the district, we are all trying to help our students and staffs succeed," said Crane.

After the meeting IJSHS Booster Club member Dan Young reiterated that the "booster club does not run the school." He said that the problem he encountered was that there were a small number of parents who volunteer to support the kids in a variety of activities. He said that those involved parents seem to show up at every meeting or event, versus a large number who choose not to get involved.

Also at the Monday night meeting at Windy River Elementary in Boardman, the board approved hiring Matt Combe to the Heppner Elementary principal position, replacing Jack Thompson, who has resigned to take a position elsewhere. Combe is currently administrator at the Morrow Education Center in Irrigon.

Riverside Junior/ Senior High School Principal Dirk Dirksen reviewed a plan which requires students who have not passed their benchmark tests to take additional benchmark classes, rather than electives. If a student then passes his benchmark test, then he may return to an elective class at the end of the quarter.

In other business, the board:

-gave approval for district administration to negotiate with the Chartwell company for food service management district-wide. An OSEA representative expressed concern that current employees' jobs may be in jeopardy and asked the district work to retain their current employees.

-saw an enrollment report as follows: A.C. Houghton Elementary, Irrigon, grades pre-kindergarten through fourth-347; IJSHS grades seven-12-312; Heppner Elementary grades k-six-195; Heppner High School grades seven-12-228; Irrigon Elementary grades four-nine-128; RHS grades seven-12-391; Sam Boardman Elementary grades k-three-322; WRE grades four-six-230; Morrow Education Center/ Morrow County School District students-52; Morrow Education Center/ Umatilla School District-36; total-2241 students.

-approved the following 2006-07 classified/confidential personnel recommended for rehire for 2007-08 (Heppner/Lexington area only listed):

- Heppner Elementary: Lorna Botefuhr, special ed assistant; Deb

-Continued on Page three

50 % turnout not met either

Voters say no to county road levy

The $10 million Morrow County Road Levy, which would have provided funds for a five year fix-up of deteriorating county roads, went down to defeat at the hands of voters Tuesday 791 yes to 1167 no.

The levy would have been defeated even if the vote had been reversed, however, as the required 50 percent plus voter turnout to pass money measures was not met. Only 45 percent of eligible voters in the county returned their mail in ballots. According to Morrow County Clerk Bobbie Childers there are 4563 eligible voters in the county and only 2055 voted.

In other contested voting Craig Miles won a spot on the school board with 65 percent of the vote in a 3-way election for position one. Position three was taken by Bill Kuhn, who garnered 66 percent in a two-way race. Dan Daltoso took position 4 with 55 percent in a three-way race. Pat McNamee won 76 percent of the vote to win potion 5 in a two person contest. Many of the other contests were either non contested or no candidates filed.

Stansbury Street closure "not going to happen"

Closing off Stansbury Street, the street the cuts between the two elementary school buildings in Heppner, "is not going to happen" the Heppner city council learned Monday night.

Closing the street off permanently has been talked about off and on for several years, and was recently proposed again by school Principal Jack Thompson. Thompson had hoped that the state highway department might include the cost of closing the street and extending Elder St. around by the tennis courts to hook up with Court Street, would be included in its budget when other work is done in the area.

Those hopes were dashed, however, when the state sent a letter nixing the idea.

Thompson has been to the council and talked to city officials about closing Stansbury over fears of a child being hit by a car crossing between the two school buildings.

The city plans on putting up stop signs during school hours and other traffic measures to alleviate fears of an accident when children cross between the school building and the gymnasium.

The council also discussed other traffic and safety concerns including cars speeding on Gale street, cars not coming to a complete stop at stop signs, and other automobiles observed not stopping for pedestrians at cross walks.

Morrow County Sheriff Ken Matlack was at Monday's council meeting to discuss the city's contract with the department providing police coverage, and he also addressed some remedies for the council's safety concerns.

On the contract Matlack said he would like the basic contract with the city to remain the same, but there would probably be increases in what the city pays the sheriff department when final negotiations with the union are completed and he knows what kind of pay raises will be given to deputies this year.

In other business the council learned that its application for a grant to help out with upkeep costs at the St. Patrick's Senior Center housing had been turned down. The city has hired a profession grant writer to work on obtaining money to help keep the Center profitable. The city voted to have the grant writer resubmit the grant at a cost of $2,500 to $3,000 to the city.

In other action the council voted to have city crew and neighbors work to make repairs to the Kirk Street Bridge. The bridge is a dedicated city street and therefore the responsibility of the city to maintain.

The council also voted to approve the appointment of Larry Mills and Joyce Kay Hollomon to fill vacancies on the planning commission.

Area graduation information

Graduation ceremony for Ione Community School will be held Friday, June 1, at 7 p.m. Baccalaureate services will be held Wednesday, May 30, at 7 p.m. at the Valby Lutheran Church.

Graduation ceremony for Heppner High School will be held Saturday, June 2, at 2 p.m. Baccalaureate services will be held Thursday, May 31, at 7 p.m. at St. Patrick's Catholic Church.

Ione Mayor says he was "forced out of office"
See letters to editor page 2

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

Vandalism at City Park

Public Works employees for the City of Heppner recently reported that vandalism has been discovered at the City Park.

Wyden visits Heppner

US Senator Ron Wyden (left) visits with Kenneth Turner at the St. Patrick's Senior Center in Heppner Saturday. Wyden was here to hold a Town Meeting to discuss issues with local people. Previous he held a private meeting with government officials and others at the courthouse. A small crowd heard the senator discuss energy, farm programs and other issues.

At the MCGG GREEN FEED STORE in Heppner:
Rototillers and Lawn Thatchers for rent
Firewood permits now available!
- - Spring hours through June: 8-5:30 Mon-Fri / 8-4 Sat - -
Morrow County Grain Growers Green Feed & Seed
242 W. Linden Way, Heppner • 676-9422 • 989-8221 (MCGG main office)