

~ 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.

Sick of Politics

Guest Editorial

By Louis Carlson, former County Judge

When Ed Glenn, spokesman for the five cities of Morrow County, spoke at the Chamber of Commerce in Heppner, he was asked if 75% of the total Tippage Fee that the cities are asking for would continue to fund county services such as 4-H Clubs, Extension Service, Neighborhood Centers and the like. After a bit of stammering (unlike Ed) he declared that he could not assure city funding for such projects as Extension, water master and predator control etc. even though such program were rural and community by nature.

Mayor Glenn gives best shot

To his credit, Ed spoke the truth. To think that a coalition of the five cities of Morrow County agreeing upon any thing other than sunrise and sunset would be a stretch of the imagination in anyone's language. In truth, Ed did bring out a lot of fiscal issues that do make sense. The one set of figures that struck me was the accumulation of carryover in the Tippage Fee Fund of upwards of \$1,000,000.

I ask the question, what in the world would justify this exorbitant accumulation of carryover in the Tippage Fund especially after the county had taken its fair share out of tax offset? These remaining dollars should have been designated in some manner to each of the communities to offset the imposition of Willamette Valley garbage injected into our pristine Morrow County soils. If these figures are correct, there may be some extra funding from the Tippage Fund carryover that could be used for other purposes, namely for each community's discretion.

Time Passes

Years ago, the court in its wisdom, declared that part of the Tippage Fund should be used for a tax offset to preserve countywide programs. This was a result of the sluggish increase in the county's valuation and because of increased cost to operate the county, i.e. fuel cost, paving oil, labor contracts and the like.

This thought process seemed reasonable to the taxpayers and acceptable until some of the cities spent themselves in to a tax capped situation as the result of Oregon's Measure 58. After reaching the cap, those cities could not raise a dime of new taxes for services other than through a bond issue. This presented a financial problem and thus the cities took a new look at tapping into the Tipping Fees for their increasing needs.

Hold on says the County Court. We are already providing additional cash to the individual communities by providing tax offset to individual and a process for the cities to tap into the Tipping Fee.

Foul, cried Mayor Paustian of Heppner. If the county can confiscate Tipping dollars, why can't the cities? The good mayor says that the cities have absolutely no hope of financial growth because state laws have capped out increased taxation based upon a certain percentage of their valuation. "We have no place to turn to except the Tipping Fee for financial help."

Nonsense says Judge Tallman

"You have had ample opportunity to have a share of the Tipping Fee through the 'Needs and Issues Program' that was specially designed to accommodate cities and their respective communities. In fact, last year your communities received in excess of \$235,000 for the above mentioned services plus another \$245,000 offered under the 'Needs and Issues Program' of which all cities were encouraged to participate in."

The fact is, both parties are so isolated from each other and are playing games at the expense of the citizens of Morrow County. The people of Morrow County are sick of politics, nationally as well as locally. Well meaning citizens intend for the spoils of the landfill need to be shared among all citizens of the county. However, these same citizens believe that it is the duty of our elected officials to come to a conclusion and very soon.

The question is not if, but how much and by what process? I am convinced that there is a fair and equitable process by which this can be accomplished. The Greater Eastern Oregon Development Corporation is now contracted to work with the County Court to receive applications from each of the cities, organizations and communities for worthwhile projects to be funded by the Tipping Fee.

GEODC has proven to be non-political, fair and balanced through receiving applications, evaluating the applications and determining which applications should be funded. The County Court has not had any influence on how this process unfolds each and every year.

The only unanswered question then becomes one of appropriate funding for the "Needs and Issues Program." This will require a negotiated debate between a representative from the County Court and a representative from the cities. Compromise, a little statesmanship and some good will at this juncture will prove to be a healing process that this county could certainly use. The alternative may see some new faces entering the political field.

Concerns about Tipping Fee distribution

Letter to the Editor:

Morrow County voters will face an important issue in the March election.

The five cities in Morrow County have decided that they are entitled to 75% of the money generated by licensing fees from the Finley Buttes landfill.

Historically, this money, which in round numbers is about \$1,000,000 per year, has been controlled by the County and used, in part, to help fund the road department, the county fair, extension service, neighborhood centers, wildlife services, and others, with some back-filling of items in the County's general fund.

The County also has a process called the Needs and Issues Inventory, which is used to grant money directly to cities and groups to help with specific projects. In 2007, \$235,000 was granted in this process, also from the Finley Buttes licensing fees.

The cities, however have decided that they should receive this money directly and disburse it themselves, beginning with 25% of the total, increasing to 50% the second year, and going to 75% the third year.

I have several concerns with that approach. I feel that the current Needs and Issues process is working fine. Secondly, two legal issues need to be addressed. The first is the question of whether this election will even be binding on the County Court, since the contract is between the County and Finley Buttes Landfill Company, not between the cities and Finley Buttes. The second legal issue is whether the cities have legal authority to disburse money outside their boundaries, as they have promised to do to address rural needs and projects.

Each city has proposed setting up some process for disbursing its portion to needed projects. In Heppner's case, they are proposing a committee comprised of three people from within the city limits and two from the surrounding rural area. As one of the residents from that rural area, I am concerned with the three-to-two majority of urban residents. In fact, since the population in Morrow County is split 60 - 40, with 60% being rural and the minority of 40% being urban, I am opposed to the minority urban imposing their will on the majority, the rural citizens. I must wonder, also, how much of the money would make it to rural areas.

I believe that this money needs to stay with the County Court and the present system continued. I would far rather trust three county commissioners elected by all the citizens of the county to be fair than five city governments, none of which represent me or any other rural residents.

I think the cities' proposal is a bad idea and is motivated not by fairness, as they claim, but by the prospect of more money to bail them out of present difficulties.

It comes down to whether you trust the County Court to continue to do the right thing, or whether you trust five cities with five different agendas to represent you.

Please, join me in voting "no" in March.

Dan Brosnan
Heppner

Come join us to celebrate with
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Hors d'oeuvres provided

Red Hat Rowdies to meet

The Red Hat Rowdies will meet at noon on Thursday, February 21, for a no-host luncheon at Sweet Productions.

All interested ladies are invited to attend. Attendance is not mandatory but Red Hats are encouraged to come.

Rietmann elected president of South Morrow County Scholarship Trust

Bill Rietmann of Ione was recently elected president of the South Morrow County Scholarship Trust for the 2008 year at the SMCST's annual meeting in Heppner on January 28. Barb Hayes was elected vice-president, Del LaRue was elected Treasurer, and Sharon Harrison was elected secretary. Board members are Missy Cutsforth, Martha Munkers, and Carrie Grieb.

The South Morrow County Scholarship Trust was established several years ago to provide funds to grant scholarships to graduating seniors from Heppner and Ione High Schools.

Applications for this year's scholarships are available in the form of a computer disk at both high schools, starting in March. Deadline to turn them in will be April 15.

NOAA issues monthly climate summary for Heppner

According to preliminary data received by NOAA's National Weather Service in Pendleton, temperatures at Heppner averaged colder than normal during the month of January.

The average temperature was 31.3 degrees which was 3.0 degrees below normal. High temperatures averaged 40.2 degrees, which was 2.1 degrees below normal. The highest was 55 degrees on the 4th. Low temperatures averaged 22.4 degrees, which was 3.9 degrees below normal. The lowest was 3 degrees, on the 21st.

There were 27 days with the low temperature below 32 degrees. There were 6 days when the high temperature stayed below 32 degrees.

Precipitation totaled 1.68 inches during January, which was 0.22 inches above normal. Measurable precipitation -at least .01 inch- was received on 13 days with the heaviest, 0.78 inches reported on the 28th.

Snowfall totaled 8.6 inches with at least 1 inch of snow reported on 2 days. The heaviest snowfall was 7.0 inches reported on the 28th. The greatest depth of snow on the ground was 7 inches on the 28th.

The outlook for February from NOAA's Climate Prediction Center calls for below normal temperatures and above normal precipitation. Normal highs for Heppner during February are 47.1 degrees and normal lows are 29.4 degrees. The 30 year normal precipitation is 1.23 inches.

The National Weather Service is an office of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department.

Boardman DHS to hold foster and adoptive parent classes

Foster and Adoptive Parent Foundations classes will be held at the Boardman DHS office on March 21 and 22 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. for anyone interested in helping children in -need. This is a free class. To register call 541-481-9482, ext. 224.


Divorces


The Morrow County Circuit Court at the M.C. Courthouse in Heppner has released the following report:

- January 23: Ronald LeRoy Jeffreys and Helen Mary Jeffreys.
- January 23: Steven Dean Woods and Jeanine Kay Michael.

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