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Rep. Smith voted against controversial ethics law

By David Sykes

State representative Greg Smith (R), Heppner, says a recently implemented ethics law is the most "ill conceived piece of legislation, that criminalizes volunteers".

Smith, who twice voted against the legislation in the last session, says the Democrat controlled Oregon Legislature "poked us in the eye" here in Eastern Oregon, and rammed a piece of legislation down our throats that "is just wrong".

The ethics legislation that went into effect April 15 has caused widespread resignations among city and county planning commissions and city councils across rural Oregon. The law requires volunteers to fill out quarterly forms revealing the names of spouses and relatives, people owed money and other information many people consider intrusive and none of the government's business. Failure to complete and file the form on time subjects the volunteer to fines up to $5,000.

Rep. Greg Smith

Smith said the Democrats in the legislature; especially the "Portland Democrats" are using the law to solidify their base without regard to the effects on the small towns in Oregon.

"I support tough ethics requirements for state elected officials, such as myself. However, I don't believe the state should discourage honest, law abiding citizens from serving in their communities. This is why I voted "no" on Senate Bill 10," Smith said in a letter to the editor this week.

Smith said there is nothing that can be done now about the law, but said he would introduce legislation in the next session that would create two-tiered legislation with less disclosure for volunteers. "One thing you have to remember," Smith said," is this is just phase one. Cemetery, library and other boards are next."

Resignations rolling in after implementation of new state ethics law

By Autumn Morgan

The new state ethics law has had significant effects on the planning commissions and city councils throughout Morrow County. Resignations have been rolling in throughout the county. The new ethics law requires volunteers to fill out quarterly forms revealing the names of spouses and relatives, people owed money and other information that is being considered invasive. Failure to complete and file the form subjects the volunteer to a fine up to $5,000.

The Morrow County Planning Commission has received letters of resignations from Betty Burns, Roger Britt, and Art Kegler and Joel Peterson.

The Heppner Planning Commission received resignations at a meeting on Monday night from Larry Mills, Dave Fowler, Kandy Boyd, JoyceKay Hollomon, and Suzanne Jepsen. "I have enjoyed my 16 years as a member of this commission, but must now move on to other volunteer work," said Jepsen. "I feel that it would not be in my best interest, or my family's, to disclose all of our private information that these forms requests," said Hollomon. "I feel it is an invasion of our privacy and is unfounded for holding a volunteer position. I enjoy being a volunteer for our community projects have been for over 40 years."

In Lexington, all four of the city council members, Mindy Wilson, Dale Wilson, Curtis Papineau, and Dwyla Yocom, turned in resignations.

In Irrigon, Mayor Pro-tem Arnold Theisen and Mayor Charles Neumann resigned from their city council positions. From the planning commission, Linda Neumann and Tiffany Lehue turned in their resignations.

No resignations were reported from Heppner City Council, Boardman City Council and Planning Commission or Ione City Council. Although all the members signed the forms, some of the council members were "upset with the form because they felt it was somewhat invasive."

Morrow County School District hears biodegradable food tray proposal

By April Sykes

The Morrow County School Board, at their regular meeting at Windy River Elementary School in Boardman Monday night, heard a proposal which, if approved, could help the school district "go green."

Judy Brown, A.C. Houghton Elementary School teacher and a member of the Irrigon Community Education Committee, proposed that the district replace Styrofoam lunch trays with biodegradable sugar cane pulp trays. The trays would reduce the number of Styrofoam trays in landfills, but come at more than double the cost and would require composting.

The sugar cane trays are microwave safe and are a renewable resource, said Brown.

ACH Principal John Sebastian said that ACH uses approximately 500-600 trays a day, 150 days a year, which amounts to around 75,000-90,000 trays a school year. "That's a lot of Styrofoam in our landfills," said Brown. "I can see a lot of good publicity out of this if Morrow County goes green."

During one school year at ACH, for example, the biodegradable trays, at .09 cents per tray, would cost approximately $6,750-$8,100 compared to approximately $3,000-$3,600 for Styrofoam trays at .04 cents per tray.

The board approved using the new trays at ACH for a month-long trial period.

Also at the meeting, MCSD Superintendent Mark Burrows told the board that the district had received preliminary writing scores. "We're delighted," said Burrows. "It was one huge performance leap." Burrows said that Riverside High School scores were up 30 percent and 86 percent of students at Heppner High School passed the writing tests. Burrows commented that results a year ago were "dismal" with less than 50 percent of the students passing. Now, he said, around 80 percent are passing.

Administrators told the board that the scores have improved because of the district's emphasis on writing skills. "Everyone teaches writing now," said Principal Chris Davis. Writing instruction is no longer limited to language arts classes, but is stressed in all classes, they said.

District high school principals reported on Advanced Placement classes they intend to implement starting the next school year at the direction of the superintendent and board. AP classes were proposed at all three district high schools and could include a variety of classes, including calculus, U.S. government and history, English language and composition, English literature and composition, chemistry and Spanish, depending on the various schools' needs and the number of students needed to sustain the particular

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Ione kindergartners raising chicks

Ione Kindergarteners show off chicks that they are raising in their classroom. *-Contributed Photo*

Kindergarteners in Ione, waited 21 days to see what would happen with the eggs they were incubating. They marked off the days and watched the eggs to see what would happen. Then one morning they came in to hear peep, peep, peep, coming from the incubator.

The class was able to watch several little wet chicks come out of the eggs. The first and second grades also joined in watching new baby chicks hatch. Now the kindergarten is learning to care for their chicks. The class is a big hit with all the other pet lovers in the school. The chicks get lots of tender loving care.

Ione's Preschool also joined the class for some time with the chicks. The kindergarteners were able to answer all their questions about hatching chicks. They also read the books they had made to the preschoolers.

Along with the egg hatching study, the class is also doing other egg experiments. They have made rubber eggs, egg in a bottle, and an egg membrane ball. They have also studied the parts of an egg, made books about animals that hatch from an egg, and have shared this information with others.

City to continue with sheriff police services

By David Sykes

The city of Heppner and Morrow County Sheriff Department have tentatively decided to continue with a contract having the Sheriff Department provide police protection in the city limits.

Several years ago in a cost cutting measure, Heppner disbanded its police department in favor of contracting with the county sheriff. Monday the city council and Sheriff Matlack tentatively agreed to continue with the relationship.

Most provisions of the agreement would remain the same, however because of increased fuel costs and wages payment to the county would increase by $7,545. The city also buys a new patrol vehicle this year at a cost of $22,500. If the city and county were to void their contract, and the city re-establishes its police force, the county would give this vehicle to the city.

Not counting the patrol vehicle the city will pay $153,876 for police coverage in 2008-09. The amount covers the cost of two deputies and material and services such as uniforms, training, gasoline and repairs.

At a March 27th meeting of the city police commission, several council members asked Deputy Randy Rayburn why the city would pay for a vehicle that would end up patrolling the north end of the county. Rayburn said vehicles are assigned to individual deputies which improves vehicle maintenance and deputy response time. Sheriff Deputies are rotated every four months on patrol throughout the county.

Council members also wanted to know if there were problems with deputies not being available in Heppner at certain times. Rayburn said the city is contracted for 320 hours of patrol time per month, and that deputies are called out in emergencies. He said there are two deputies living in Heppner and one lives outside of town.

The council did not accept the contract, however, after discussions with Sheriff Matlack, agreed to hold a work session and would most likely continue the relationship.

In other business at Monday's meeting the council heard from Judy Buschke of the Housing Authority. She said the remodeling project is moving forward, but kind of slowly. She said four contractors had been certified to bid on the project when it goes out to bid.

Buschke said the housing authority has been considering placing a surveillance camera in the center because of possible problems occurring after hours. The center shuts down at 8 p.m., but some problems have been reported and a camera would monitor the building.

The council also heard from Public Works Director Brian Harmon, who said the recently completed sewer plant upgrade project, had come in $1,811 under budget. The total project cost $126,349 (see article in last week's Gazette-Times). The last upgrade at the treatment plant was in 1994 Harmon told the council.

HHS Mustang Three Man Scramble held

The Mustang Three Man Scramble had a full house with 27 Three Man teams enjoying the 70 degree weather on Sunday at the Willow Creek Country club. Gross winners were: 1st place team of Tayler Hodges, Weeb Williams and Dan Mills; 2nd place team of Slater Mitchell, Josh Coiner and John McCabe; and 3rd place team of Joe Pranger, Dave Pranger and Tom Bedortha. Net winners were: 1st place team of Troy Morgan, Tim Dickenson and Daye Stone; 2nd place team of Kelly Fox, Mike Doherty and Mike Schrader; and 3rd place team of Sean Murray, Eddie Ramirez, and Jason Howelling. *–Photo by Sandy Matthews*

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