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of the City of Heppner and the County of Morrow

Heppner
GAZETTE-TIMES
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Morrow County School District hears biodegradable food tray proposal

-Continued from page One
classes.

In other business, the board:

-approved a variety of policies with the exception of policy concerning cyber-bullying, which will be modified and presented to the board at the next meeting. The board agreed to expand verbiage concerning cyber-bullying to include activity conducted in the home, such as on the internet or cell phones, which could harass or harm students or staff and "disrupt the educational process."

-heard from Burrows that he and other administrators are meeting to tackle problems in the way the state reimburses schools for educating students. Burrows said this was of utmost importance for MCSD, since many MCSD students leave for extended periods for family holidays and miss a substantial amount of school. He said that the district loses a great deal of money because, according to the state funding formula, these students can not be fully counted. Neither are districts reimbursed for summer school and credit recovery classes, he said. "If we're responsible for educating kids, then we should get funding," said Burrows.

-approved 2008-09 school calendar Option A which calls for a post-Labor Day start and a two-week Christmas break. Under this option, teachers will begin work on August 25 with students beginning September 2, Christmas break from December 18 to January 5, students ending Wednesday, June 10, and teachers ending June 12. Administrators had previously said that a post-Labor Day start and a longer Christmas break will result in more class time for students whose families take extended holiday trips and consequently will result in more funding for the district. "We leave probably \$40,000 on the table when we take a short break," said Burrows.

Other options included a pre-Labor Day start with two weeks at Christmas; a post-Labor Day start with 1-1/2 weeks at Christmas and a pre-Labor Day start with 1-1/2 days at Christmas. Option A was overwhelmingly approved in a staff survey. While the board unanimously approved Option A, board member Barney Lindsay argued that parents should be surveyed to determine their preference. "We're elected by the patrons," he said. "After all, we are serving them and their children." The board subsequently discussed the difficulty of conducting such a survey. A staff survey is mandated by contract.

-accepted a resignation from Forrest McKinis from the Heppner High School boys' basketball extra duty coaching position.
-approved appointing Lindsay as an Oregon School Board Association Legislative Policy Committee representative.

-scheduled a work session to deal with budget issues at 6 p.m., prior to the Boardman town hall meeting planned for Monday, April 21, at the Port of Morrow.

-heard the following announcements: OSBA spring regional meeting, Blue Mountain Community College Student Union building, April 15, 6 p.m.; Boardman town hall meeting, Port of Morrow, April 21, 7 p.m.; Irrigon town hall meeting, Stokes Landing Senior Center, April 28, 7 p.m.; first budget meeting, district office, May 5, 7 p.m.; next board meeting, Irrigon High School, May 12, 7 p.m.; Heppner town hall meeting, Heppner Elementary School, May 19, 7 p.m.

-held an executive session to deal with personnel and legal issues.

Marriages

Morrow County Clerk Bobbi Childers has released the following report of marriage licenses issued:

-April 11: Luis Javier Diaz, 29, Boardman and Gabriela Rodriguez, 23, Boardman.

~ 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.

Why I voted "no" on Senate Bill 10

Dear Editor,

Citizens have likely read news reports of local government officials protesting recent changes to Oregon's ethics laws. The new law requires all local officials, most of who serve without pay, to disclose personal information about their sources of income and the names of their family members, including their spouse and children.

City councils, county boards, and planning commissions in 25 cities in Northeast Oregon fall under this new law. Understandably, many people are resigning from their positions rather than having to publicly share personal details about their private lives.

Last year, I predicted that this new law, also known as Senate Bill 10, would threaten the ability of citizens in Eastern Oregon to participate in city councils and volunteer commissions. Unfortunately, I was right.

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.

During the Senate Bill 10 debate, I worked to pass an alternative version that would have protected local officials and volunteers from these strict reporting requirements. My alternative legislation would have subjected state officials to strict gift limits, more frequent reporting requirements and more expensive penalties for ethics violations. The majority party rejected my efforts, and instead passed legislation that is now threatening civic participation across Oregon.

During the 2009 legislative session, I will be introducing legislation that creates a new two-tiered system for public servants. The first tier would retain the tougher standards for legislators and other state officials. The second tier would include practical accountability measures for local government officials and volunteers, but would prevent the mass exodus we are witnessing today.

Again, I believe we need strong ethics laws to assure accountability and transparency. However, the Legislature can't expect to increase confidence in government while it is imposing unreasonable barriers to local public service.

As always, I appreciate the opportunity to serve as your State Representative.

Rep. Greg Smith
State Representative
House District 57

Transparency is the price of admission

Oregonians deserve to know whether decisions made on their behalf benefit the decision-makers

The entire planning commission of Elgin resigned the other day. So did four planning commissioners in Maupin. Some kind of virus seems to be racing through the volunteer corps that governs rural Oregon. We suspect it's a case of cold feet.

These people -- including some stalwarts of public service -- quit in the face of new ethics requirements that kick in next month. By April 15, they would have had to file statements identifying all sources -- though not actual amounts -- of any income over \$1,000, plus those of close relatives or members of their households. The disclosure forms go on to address property holdings, honoraria and certain types of debt and investments.

Whoa, Nellie, where are we here: Nazi Germany? Not quite.

Return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear -- Watergate. In the wake of the scandal that brought down President Nixon, citizens across the country began to ask more and more pointed questions about public officials and the things -- not all of them pretty -- that they do. In this national movement, Oregon was a pioneer.

In 1974, voters here passed a ballot measure to form an Ethics Commission. In what may be a first -- and a last -- in Oregon history, communities that didn't much like the sound of the new law were allowed to exempt themselves. Almost 100 communities and six counties opted out.

The ethics law has often been tweaked -- and regularly been circumvented -- ever since. Last year, legislators finally made long overdue substantive changes to it. They put strict limits on gifts to public officials. They increased fines for ethics violations. And they banned certain kinds of entertainment. No more luaus with lobbyists.

Then, capping what turned out to a watershed year for clean government in Oregon, they swept into the system all those communities that had been left out for 33 years.

We recognize that much civic business in Oregon is conducted by volunteers. Nowhere is this more true than in small, rural communities. And we're wary of any change that might inhibit volunteers from fully participating in decision-making affecting their communities. But we hope these people can come to understand that the benefits of helping grow their communities far outweigh any costs of filling out a six-page form.

Yes, these will be public documents. But the new law does not require them to be posted on the Internet until 2010, and there is talk of tweaks by the 2009 Legislature that might allow for redaction of certain information, such as home addresses.

Helping to make civic decisions is indeed a public service; it is also a privilege. And transparency is the price of admission. Oregonians, all of us, have an abiding interest in government being as open as possible. That's because when people are making decisions, their neighbors need to know whether those decision-makers are in any way benefiting personally.

It's that simple. And it's that right.

Reprinted from the Monday, March 31 edition of The Oregonian newspaper

Support for MC commissioner re-election

Letter to the Editor:

This is a letter in support of John Wenzholz re-election as Morrow County Commissioner, and to ask both Democrats and Republicans to join me in voting for John.

When I served on the Morrow County Court, I witnessed first-hand John's energy and dedication to serve the people of Morrow County as their Commissioner. I actively support his re-election.

John is a tireless worker in many areas, including Public Works, Public Safety, Public Transportation, Economic Development, County Taxes, and Budget. He supports economic development and family-wage jobs, van pooling for south county residents to north county jobs, and equitable Tipping Fee distribution. He staunchly defends equal treatment for all citizens of Morrow County in all situations, and does not hesitate to take an unpopular position if he knows it is right.

Under his leadership, our public transportation has become a showpiece in the state of Oregon. In the field of public safety, John was instrumental in Morrow County's CSEP Program becoming a national model of efficiency. He is currently chair of the CSEPP Governing Board, as well as their delegate to the National Close Out Program, and member of the Local Re-Use Authority (LRA). These positions assure Morrow County will have a strong voice as the chemical munitions destruction program winds down and UMCD property is returned to the two counties. Loss of John's energy and dedication to Morrow County, as well as his institutional knowledge of these critical programs would be a serious loss to our county.

In about three weeks, your ballots for the primary election will be arriving in the mail. Please vote for John if you have a democratic ballot. I am also asking all republicans to join me in writing John Wenzholz name in on their republican ballot (there is no republican running). This will help assure John serves another term as Morrow County Commissioner, keeping his energy, integrity, and knowledge working for Morrow County in the coming four years.

Ray Grace
Heppner

City of Heppner announces the availability of housing rehabilitation funds for qualified homeowners

The City of Heppner, with the assistance of Greater Eastern Oregon Development Corporation (GEODC) is announcing the availability of housing rehabilitation funds for qualified homeowners in Heppner. These funds are available to qualified low-income homeowners, at zero interest, for a deferred payment loan up to a maximum of \$25,000, to correct health, safety and

structural deficiencies. These funds are made available through a housing rehabilitation loan program that the City of Heppner implemented in the mid- 1990's. Funds originated through the Oregon Housing & Community Services Department through Community Development Block Grant funds. Karen Kendall, GEODC Economic Devel-

opment Specialist, will be discussing the program at the April 14th City Council meeting in further detail. Interested parties should call 1-877-351-9030 to request additional information and/or sign up for the program as funds are limited and applications will be processed on a first-come first-serve basis. Applications will be received through April 30.

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