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Gazette Times

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Ione School Board explores financial options

By April Sykes

The Ione School Board, at their regular meeting held January 20, due to the Martin Luther King holiday, discussed the district's options in the event of a reduction in state school funds.

The board learned that, depending on the governor's budget, the district could possibly lose $24 thousand to over $100 thousand in state funds, due to a lagging economy. The consensus was that, while not desirable, the district may be able to cope with a $24,000 loss, but a $100 thousand loss would be devastating. The exact amount of reductions will be determined when the governor's final budget is in place.

The ESD said that one option to adjust to a reduction in this year's funding could be to pay some 2008-09 bills after the close of the fiscal year. According to the law, school districts must have a balanced budget.

The board also discussed future payments for new windmill projects located within the district. The district may or may not benefit from these projects, depending on how the monies are received. If payments are made to the district in one manner, the funds would have to be deducted from state school payments and the district would not benefit monetarily. If payments are made in another manner, the funds may not have to be paid back to the state. The district and the Umatilla-Morrow Education Service District are exploring this issue further. The ESD also planned to meet with the Morrow County Court, which may oversee some of the dispersal of windmill project funds.

Also at the meeting, newly appointed board member, Bill Jepsen, took his seat on the board. Jepsen was sworn in as a new board member at the previous meeting December 23. He fills the board seat vacated with the resignation of John Rietmann.

In other business, the board:

-received the following financial update from the ESD as of December 31: the district received basic school support totaling $112,268, which is lower than in previous months due to the repayment of the Oregon Department of Education's small high school grant of $16,751; with the repayment of the small high school grant and the reduced state school funding, the district is "very close" to its budgeted ending fund balance; individual special revenue funds are reporting deficit fund balances. "With the exception of the Pool Fund, all funds will be made whole by approved grant dollars," said the ESD update.

-approved a contract with David McKay and Willamette ESD for project management services for the bond measure project.

The next board meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 17, due to the President's Day holiday February 16.

Health district receives applications for CEO position

By April Sykes

The Morrow County Health District learned, at its regular meeting in Ione Monday night, that the district has received several applications for the district's CEO position. Current CEO Victor Vander Does earlier announced his intention to retire. Vander Does said that four serious candidates have emerged within the applicants with three weeks still remaining until the application process is closed.

Board chair Larry Mills said that a tour committee should be established for the final interviews. The tour to the candidates would include a tour of the hospital, the district house, the town and the schools, if appropriate. He recommended that the whole board be present for the final interview.

The board also learned that the hospital's new long-term care facility has 11 people on the waiting list for admission with three interested in coming on as soon as possible. Director of Nursing, Home Health and Hospice, Molly Rhea, said that the long term care facility could possibly have three openings within the week.

In other business, the board:

-learned from board member LeAnn Rea, who is also a Morrow County Commissioner, that the county has said that they will do "everything in their power" to enable ambulances and health care employees to reach patients at their homes in the event of snow storms or other bad weather situations. Rea said that the county said they would provide snow plows, if possible.

-accepted the low bid of $15,095 from Campbell Motors for a 2009 Toyota Corolla. Vander Does said the district received three bids.

-heard from Vander Does concerning a matching grant for digitizing equipment to enable the district to send x-rays to a radiologist.

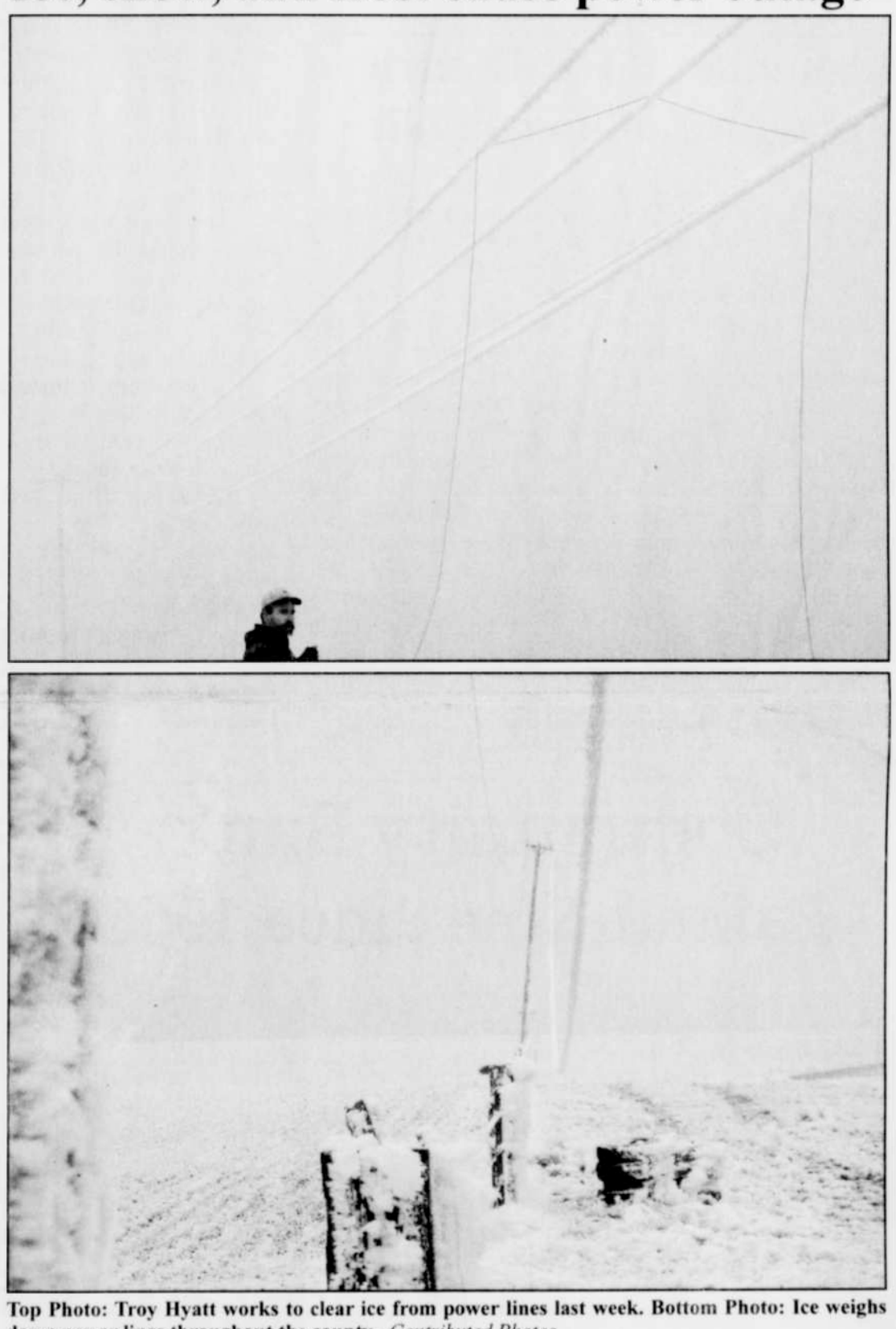
-heard from Vander Does concerning the new heating/ventilating/air conditioning unit installed at Pioneer Memorial Hospital. Vander Does said that the new unit was an upgrade to the existing HVAC system with the exception of a new controller which now enables the system to be controlled by one computer.

-learned that the next meeting will be held February 23 in Boardman and that additional meetings will be scheduled for the CEO interview and selection processes.

-learned from Chief Financial Officer Nicole Mahoney that the district lost $26,803 for the month of December with a $147,734 loss for the year, amounting to a $24,622 average monthly year-to-date loss. The district had $521,870 in total operating revenues in December, which included $56,802 in tax revenues, and $506,365 in total operating expenses and an additional $38,495 in operating losses. Molly Rhea told the board that the month of January has been much busier than December.

-received the following report: Pioneer Memorial Hospital had one swing bed admission, 17 admitted for observation, two admitted to the long term care nursing facility, 462 total outpatients, 53 emergency room encounters, 1531 lab tests, 108 x-ray procedures, 35 CT scans, 30 EKG tests, two treadmill procedures, five colonoscopy procedures, two endoscopy procedures, 50 respiratory therapy procedures; pharmacy administered 915 drug doses for $64,936 in revenue; Home Health had 154 visits; Hospice had two admissions; Pioneer Memorial Clinic had 420 patient visits with 38 new patients, 52 patients seen by a nurse and nine no-shows; Irrigon Clinic had 214 patient visits with 35 new patients, 71 seen by a nurse and 14 no-shows; Heppner Ambulance had 23 page-outs with 16 transports for $16,470 in revenue; Boardman Ambulance had 33 page-outs with 20 transports for $21,999 in revenue, Irrigon Ambulance had 25 page-outs with 16 transports for $14,635 in revenue.

Ice, snow, and frost cause power outage



Top Photo: Troy Hyatt works to clear ice from power lines last week. Bottom Photo: Ice weighs down power lines throughout the county. *-Contributed Photos*

Columbia Basin Electric Coop has been scraping ice off power lines day and night for the past week. But the recent snow and frost added to the ice on the power lines and became too much on Saturday night, knocking out power in the Heppner area. Columbia Basin responded and was able to switch the feed to restore power. While the Heppner area only had to deal with the power outage for a couple of hours on Saturday night, Columbia Basin is still dealing with broken cross-arms and wires from Lexington to the John Day River.

Heppner Drama Club looking for donations

The Heppner Drama Club is preparing for their 2009 spring performance of "A Broadway Review."

To prepare for the performance the Drama Club is in need of donations from the community. The Drama Club is looking for the following items: wigs of any kind; a roll-a-way bed, garment bag, singe pole coat rack, small vanity with chair or bench, standing sewing mannequin bodice, old candelabras, a fog machine, approximately eight cornstalks, and some 2x4s and plywood.

For more information or to donate any of these items contact Jodi Chapa at 676-8022 (day) or 676-8161 (night).

Ione School holds mock inauguration

Flag bearers march into the Ione Community School gym during the mock inauguration put on by the students. More photos can be found on Page THREE. *-Photos by April Sykes*

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MONDAYS AT 5:00 P.M.

AT MCGG GREEN FEED & SEED IN HEPPNER:
WINTER CARE LAWN FOOD
50 lb. bag Regularly $19.00
On Sale $13.50
Morrow County Grain Growers Green Feed & Seed
242 W. Linden Way, Heppner • 676-9422 • 989-8221 (MCGG main office)