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Gazette Times

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Wilgers to retire from district attorney's office

By Autumn Morgan

The office of the district attorney has officially changed hands six times over the last 23 years, and Vi Wilgers has been there for those changes. She has worked in the district attorney's office since 1985 and will retire on Friday, February 13, after almost 24 years of service.

From managing the office to taking care of all types of legal papers, Wilgers' knowledge of the inner workings of the district attorney's office is extensive. She has worked with seven different district attorneys, six of whom were considered official since one was deployed with the National Guard and a replacement had to be brought in, since her employment in 1985. She has also worked with four deputy district attorneys. "If I didn't love this job, I wouldn't have stuck with it for 23 years," said Wilgers.

Vi Wilgers will retire from the district attorney's office on Friday after 23 years of service. A public reception will be held in her honor on Thursday at noon at the courthouse. *-Photo by Autumn Morgan*

Wilgers has lived in Heppner for the past 33 years and has no plans to leave after her retirement is official. Her son Wayne lives in Hermiston and her daughter Annette lives in Pendleton.

Once she gets used to not going to the courthouse for work every day, Wilgers plans to do a little traveling and spend time with her siblings. "I'm excited about my retirement," said Wilgers. She also plans on concentrating more on some of her hobbies which include playing the violin, painting, and arranging flowers.

"It has been a pleasure working for the DA's office," said Wilgers. "I have made great friends throughout the state and the county has been great to me."

No replacement has yet been hired.

A retirement reception for Wilgers will be held at noon on Thursday, February 12, at the courthouse. The community is invited to attend.

School district to seek three-year levy

By April Sykes

The Morrow County School Board, at their regular meeting in Boardman Monday, authorized Superintendent Mark Burrows to proceed with plans for a three-year serial levy which will be presented to the district's voters this May.

The local option levy, if passed, will offset losses the district expects to see from anticipated reductions in state school funding resulting from projected cuts to the state's education fund. The district expects to get firmer figures by February 20 when the state releases the newest fiscal outlook, said board member Bill Kuhn. "It's a waiting game," commented Kuhn, who said that the state legislature is waiting to see if Congress will give them any stimulus money from the federal bailout package.

"Right now," said Burrows, "a loss of $500,000 (to the district) is a conservative estimate. This (the levy) will give patrons a chance to weigh in."

The district's levy will ask for $1 per $1,000 assessed valuation. If the levy is passed, a homeowner with a $50,000 home could expect to pay around $40 per year; a homeowner with a $100,000 home would pay around $70 per year; and one with a $150,000 home would pay around $110 per year, said Burrows.

The district did have some good news at the meeting. The board learned that Business Week Magazine and Great Schools Organization gave Riverside High School the #1 Top Academic Performance in Oregon award for "schools in low socio-economic areas" and also named the school the #1 Most Improved School in Oregon "for all schools".

Burrows commended RHS Principal Dirk Dirksen and school employees in RHS in recognition of their achievement and Dirksen presented employees with plaques.

Burrows said that five schools in each state received awards from Business Week, except in Oregon where four schools received honors, since Riverside garnered two awards.

Also at the meeting, the board:

-viewed a presentation from Heppner High School students who traveled to Washington, D.C., for the inauguration.

-approved a request from HHS Vo-Ag students for an educational field trip to attend the vo-ag convention in October, which includes visiting ag-related industries in Tennessee and Kentucky and participating in a volunteer community service program.

-approved public service contracts for 2009-10 from Umatilla-Morrow ESD...

-approved a cooperative sponsorship for RHS and Irrigon High School girls' and boys' tennis program.

-heard a brief report from principals concerning plans for students who have not yet met their benchmarks.

-heard a report concerning a National Science Teachers convention.

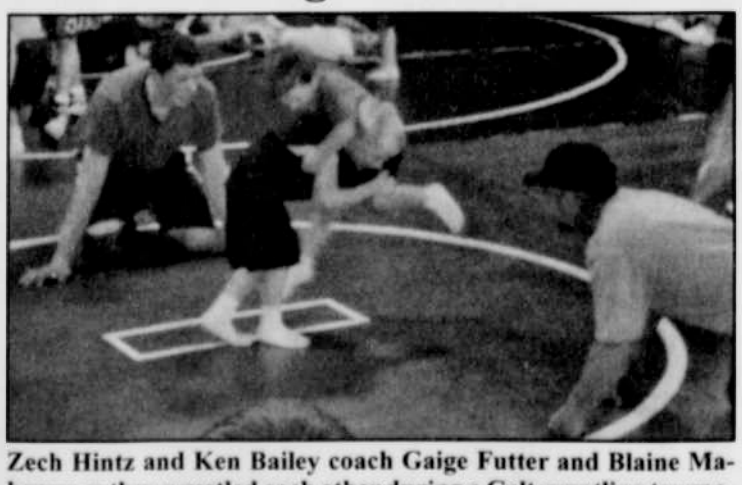
-approved the following employment action: resignations/retirements-G. Ann Thomas, RHS counselor; Dave Pedro, RHS head tennis coach; Abel Burnett, Irrigon Junior/Senior High School head boys' basketball coach, head football coach and assistant track coach; employment/promotion-Martha Carmon, Sam Boardman Elementary assistant coach; Keli Bither, SBE special ed assistant; Danica Harjo, addition half-time temporary contract to cover SBE kindergarten class for the remainder of the school year; extra duty contracts-Robin Graff, RHS head softball coach; Rhonda Boor, RHS assistant softball coach; Amy Tolar, IJH assistant track coach.

-received the following attendance report: A.C. Houghton Elementary School, Irrigon-343 students; Heppner Elementary School-187; HHS-224; Irrigon Elementary School-117; IHS-319; RHS-389; SBE-310; Windy River Elementary School-230; Morrow Education Center-Morrow County School District-83; Morrow Education Center-Umatilla School District-37; total-2239.

-heard the following announcements: President's Day holiday-February 16; next board meeting, March 9, ACH, 7 p.m.

-held an executive meeting to discuss personnel, legal issues and negotiations.

Colt wrestling tournament held



Zech Hintz and Ken Bailey coach Gaige Futter and Blaine Mahoney as they wrestled each other during a Colt wrestling tournament held last Wednesday at Heppner High School. *–Contributed Photo*

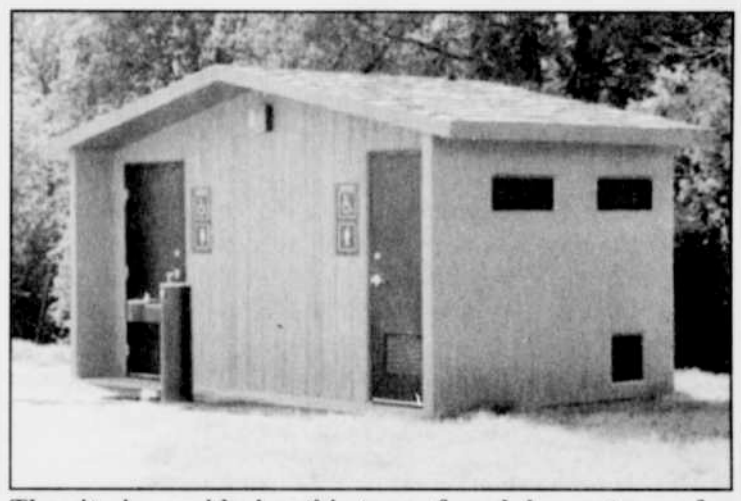
ALL NEWS AND ADVERTISEMENT DEADLINE:
MONDAYS AT 5:00 P.M.

City considers new restrooms for Hager Park

By David Sykes

The Heppner City Council on Monday opened bids for construction of a new restroom building at Hager Park, but may end up approving a modular type restroom, the same used in Forest Service Campgrounds, as an alternative.

The city is not directly paying for the restroom facility as a group of citizens has been raising funds for the project. They reportedly have $7,500 more to raise. The restroom would be located at the end of Hager Park near the Little League field.



The city is considering this type of modular restroom for Hager Park. The model is called the Cortez. *–Contributed Photo*

Two bids from local contractors, one for $45,549 and the other for $51,113, were received by the city for "stick" type construction; however the council opted instead to look closely at the modular type restroom made by CTX Company, which supplies restrooms for Forest Service campgrounds.

The model favored by the council is called the Cortez and cost about $34,000 delivered. According to the company's advertising "The Cortez's standard features include sink, toilet bowl, electric hand dryer and interior and exterior entry lights. The Cortez is ideal for both urban and rural areas that experience extreme vandalism."

The city estimated it would cost about $2,500 to put utilities to the restrooms and a parking lot would cost an additional $7,500, which backers hope will be paid for with a grant from the Ford Foundation.

The council did not make a decision, and instead agreed to have the city Beautification Committee take a look at the restroom proposal.

Water rates going up

In other business the council heard a report from City Manager Dave DeMayo, who said the city will most likely raise water rates in the coming months. He said later that rates could go up by $4 per month, and then six months later be raised another $4. The utility commission will discuss the raise at its February meeting.

The increase is necessary to begin paying off the loan the city received to put in the new water system completed several years ago. Repayment of the bonds was delayed while the city resolved a lawsuit with the contractor on the project.

The city needs to raise $130,000 per year in water fees to pay off the note, DeMayo said, and it reportedly now only collects between $74,000 and $78,000 per year in water fees.

In other action the council heard a report that the St. Patrick Senior Center remodeling project should be done by February 20, and there are currently three vacancies and four on the waiting list. When remodeling is completed, operation of the center will be shifted from the city to a management company to be paid $798 per month. "It will be a benefit to the city to be out from under this (the management responsibility)," Mayor Les Paustian said. "It will give the city manager time to do other things."

Seat belt "blitz" scheduled

The Morrow County Sheriff's Department, which handles patrol duty for Heppner, announced Monday that it will be holding a seat belt blitz from Feb. 9 until Feb. 22. There will be several overtime shifts added to look for no seat belts buckled violations in Heppner, Lexington and Ione. The fine for no seat belt is $99 or $128 in a school zone.

It was also announced that deputies Ivan Dike and Jon Lehman have been rotated in to work the Heppner area. They will be working Heppner until May.

City sets 2009 goals

The Heppner City Council adopted its goals for 2009 at its meeting Monday night. The council had held a goal setting session last week.

Goals included the following:

1. Ensure that the infrastructure of Heppner is prepared to support the expansion of residential housing in areas that are prime candidates for development (i.e. Heppner Valley Heights, the area south of Lakeview Heights and the vicinity of the Rasmussen Lott Addition).

2. Continuation and completion of the following 2008 PW projects:
a) Install a flow meter in the incoming sewer main at the Wastewater treatment plant.
b) Continue to fence water wells and reservoirs to prevent tampering.
c) Continue to cleanup the public works yard.

-Continued on Page TEN

OPEN HOUSE
*Lots of In-store specials
Friday, February 13
*BBQ Lunch 11:30
*Door Prizes
NAPA TOOL & FILTER SALE
February 9th -20th
Morrow County Grain Growers
Lexington 989-8221 • 1-800-452-7396 For farm equipment, visit our web site at www.mcgg.net