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Superintendent Ostheller receives 'green light' from Ione School Board

By April Sykes

The Ione School Board, at their regular meeting February 17, gave Principal/Superintendent Karl Ostheller "a green light" to continue his current contract with the district. Ostheller is six months into a three-year contract with ISD,

Also at the meeting the board authorized David McKay with the Willamette Education Service District to negotiate a contract not to exceed $83,500 for architectural services with LSW Architects. The district is preparing for construction and remodeling to the school which was approved by district voters in an earlier bond levy.

In other business the board:

-approved a contract with the Umatilla Morrow ESD for the local service plan.

-approved the budget calendar as follows: March 2-teacher/staff 2009-10 budget requests due to superintendent; March 24-publish first notice of budget committee meeting; April 7-publish second notice of budget committee meeting; April 13-budget committee meeting, 7 p.m., with election of officers, presentation of budget message, presentation of budget document, citizen input and review of budget document; May 26-final meeting and target date for budget committee to approve budget; June 2-publication of notice of budget hearing and summary of budget and funds; June 8-budget hearing, 6 p.m., regular board meeting, adoption of budget, appropriations and levy tax.

-received the following financial update: the board learned that the district received basic school support totaling $126,559 and Common School Funds in the amount of $5,134; individual special revenue funds continue to carry deficit fund balances which will be made whole by approved grant dollars with the exception of the pool fund.

-learned from Beth O'Hanlon, chief financial officer, that the only instance an entity can spend the unappropriated ending fund balance is when there is a natural disaster. O'Hanlon made the inquiry to the Oregon Department of Revenue in light of the current economic downturn and the anticipated reduction in state funding.

-received a report from Ostheller as follows: student enrollment is at 165, a two-student increase from the previous month, with 60 students in kindergarten through grade five, 29 in sixth through eighth grade and 66 in grades nine to 12; the district received nine proposals from architectural firms interested in the building project with four of those firms selected for an interview; the school had a water pipe leak at the drinking fountain by the baseball dugout and subsequently learned that the main shut-off valve was broken and needed replacement which was completed; the school had leaks in the roof following the last snow, one in the kitchen and one in the high school hall near the gym doors, but there have been no repeat problems after the snow melted; one of the steam heaters in the high school was leaking more than usual and it will be examined during an HVAC service visit; author Jerry Pollatte, sponsored by Scholastics, visited the elementary school on Feb. 2; both girls' and boys' teams participated at district contests.

-learned that the next board meeting will be held on Monday, March 16.

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Health District completes Morrow Equity Loan

By David Sykes

The Morrow County Health District signed the papers for a $250,000 loan from the Morrow Equity Fund at its meeting Monday night. The loan will retire an existing loan from the Bank Of Eastern Oregon and give the health district a better interest rate at one percent for 10 years. The money was used on the recently completed long term care nursing home upgrade and hospital remodeling project.

The Morrow Equity Fund is a $500,000 fund controlled by the Morrow County Court to be used as low income loans for business development in the county. The court had earlier voted against loaning the district the money, but following last November's election, the district reapplied and was granted the loan.

In other business at the meeting the board heard bad news from the district financial officer who announced the district lost $141,131 in January. The district is losing an average of $41,266 per month, the board was told.

District Administrator Victor Vander Does, who is in the process of retiring, recommended that the district hold off on any major expenditure until later in the year to see if economic conditions improve. "Because the economy is in such bad shape people are hunkering down," he told the board. "I would recommend we don't pursue anything major and tighten up on expenses. I am not comfortable moving ahead with major projects right now," he said.

In a related matter the district has been receiving applications for Vander Does replacement and has begun scheduling meetings to review the applications to begin the interviewing process. The board agreed to meet March 17 at 7 p.m. in Heppner to begin going over the selection process.

WCVEDG elects 2009 officers

The Willow Creek Valley Economic Group held its annual meeting last Thursday and elected David Sykes as the 2009 president. George Koffler was named vice president and Marcia Kemp was elected secretary/treasurer.

Other business at the meeting members heard a talk by guest speaker Kimberly Lindsay, executive director of Community Counseling Solutions, which will own and operate the new Secure Residential Treatment Facility. Lindsay discussed the new facility and its positive impact on the economy of the Willow Creek Valley through added jobs and purchasing.

Wight to speak at Chamber lunch meeting

Shelley Wight, Public Health Educator from the Morrow County Health Department will be the speaker at this week's Chamber lunch meeting. The meeting will begin at noon at John's Place. Wight will review the "Non-Smoking." The meal cost is $9.

Heppner band shows their team spirit

The Heppner band, consisting of high school and junior high students, rock & roll with enthusiasm at the district basketball games in Pendleton. *–Photo by Sandy Matthews*

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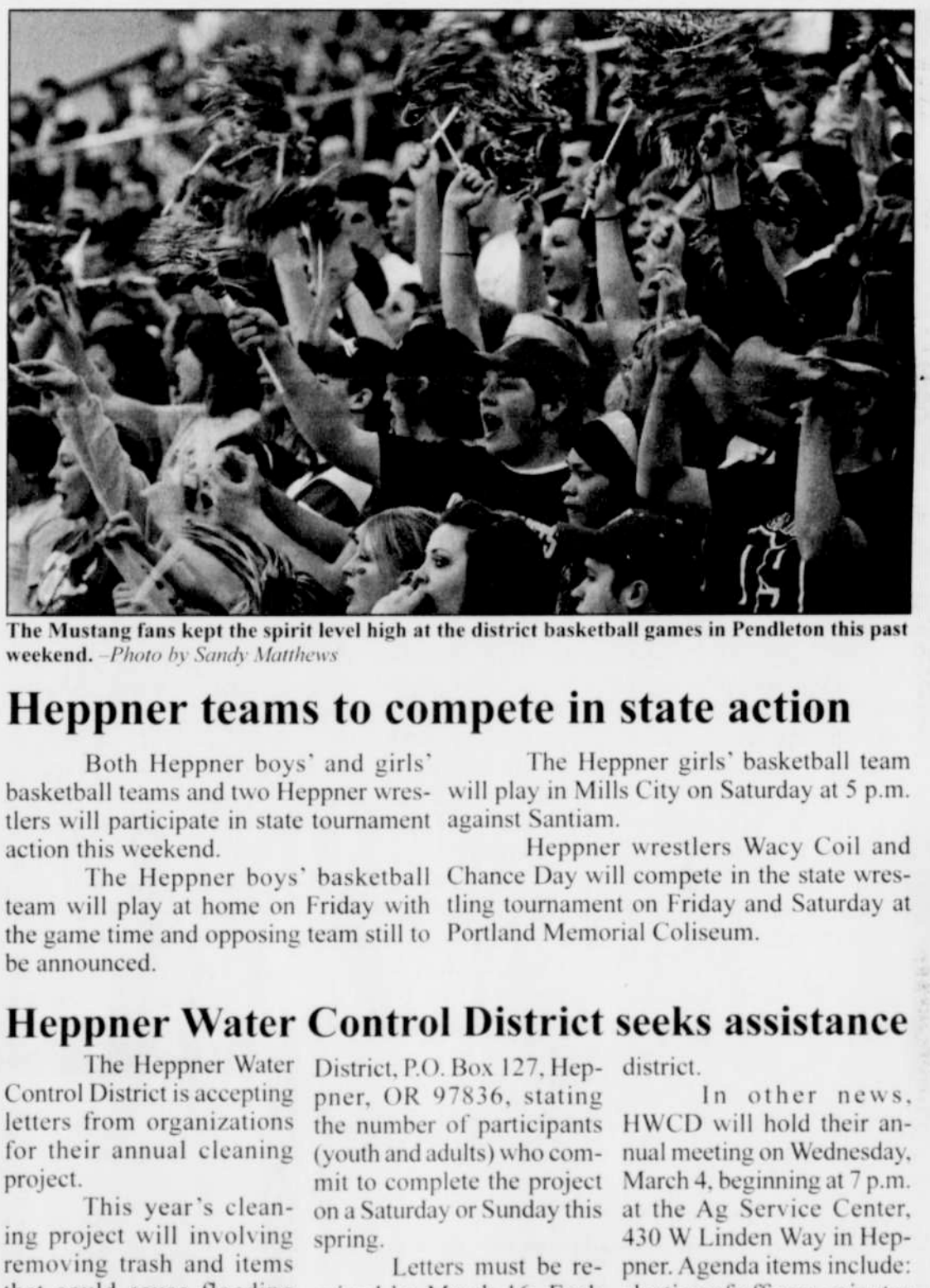
Fans turn out in full force for district tournament



The Mustang fans kept the spirit level high at the district basketball games in Pendleton this past weekend. *–Photo by Sandy Matthews*

Heppner teams to compete in state action

Both Heppner boys' and girls' basketball teams and two Heppner wrestlers will participate in state tournament action this weekend.

The Heppner boys' basketball team will play at home on Friday with the game time and opposing team still to be announced.

The Heppner girls' basketball team will play in Mills City on Saturday at 5 p.m. against Santiam.

Heppner wrestlers Wacy Coil and Chance Day will compete in the state wrestling tournament on Friday and Saturday at Portland Memorial Coliseum.

Heppner Water Control District seeks assistance

The Heppner Water Control District is accepting letters from organizations for their annual cleaning project.

This year's cleaning project will involving removing trash and items that could cause flooding along Willow Creek in Heppner. The project will also involve removing hazards to those who use the creek for recreation.

Interested groups are asked to send a letter to Heppner Water Control District, P.O. Box 127, Heppner, OR 97836, stating the number of participants (youth and adults) who commit to complete the project on a Saturday or Sunday this spring.

Letters must be received by March 16. Each interested group will be contacted to discuss the details and the board will make the final decision. "This is an excellent way to help fund your group or club project," stated a representative of the district.

In other news, HWCD will hold their annual meeting on Wednesday, March 4, beginning at 7 p.m. at the Ag Service Center, 430 W Linden Way in Heppner. Agenda items include: election of officers, minutes of the previous meeting, treasurer's report, creek cleaning project, 2009-2010 budget discussion and expiring director positions.

Meetings of the district are open to the public.

Rep. Smith to hold town hall meeting in Irrigon

A town hall meeting with Representative Greg Smith will be held from 6-7 p.m. on Friday, March 6, at the Stokes Landing Senior and Community Center. Rep. Smith will be talking about the budget shortfalls facing Oregon.

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