

## School district to offer early retirement, implements staff/student ratios to cut costs

*-Continued from Page ONE*  
 elementary School would stay static and would not lose any teachers. Heppner High School would lose one teacher. Windy River Elementary in Boardman would also stay static; Sam Boardman Elementary would gain one teacher; and Riverside High School in Boardman would lose a half of a teaching position. In Irrigon, A.C. Houghton Elementary School would lose two teaching positions; Irrigon Elementary would lose half of a teaching position; and Irrigon High School would lose two positions. "Everyone's just going to have to squeeze down," said board member Pat McNamee.

District wide, the plan would result in a cut of five teachers, from 138 currently to 133.

HES currently has a teacher/student ratio of one to 21 with 12 teachers, which is recommended; HHS has a ratio of one to 20 with 16 teachers, compared to 15 recommended; WRE has a ratio of one to 21 with 14.5 current and recommended; SBE has a ratio of one to 22 with 20.5 current to 21.5 recommended; RHS has a ratio of one to 21 with 24 current to 23.5 recommended; ACH has a ratio of one to 19 with 23 current to 21 recommended; IES has a ratio of one to 19 with 7.5 current to seven recommended; and IHS has a ratio of one to 19 with 20.5 current to 18.5 recommended.

The formula is based on a number of factors, including: the number of special education students in each school, the number of English language learner students in each school, if the school has small school status, the number of students in each school eligible for free and reduced lunches, the number of migrant students and each school's student population.

The staffing formula

also recommends an educational assistant ratio of one assistant to each 40 students at the elementary level and a ratio of one assistant to each 50 students at the secondary level.

In other business at the meeting the board:

-heard reports from school administrators concerning their plans to help encourage students to meet their benchmarks.

-approved licensed staff renewals and extensions for the 2009-10 school year. In Heppner schools (Heppner schools listed only), the following 2008-09 probationary teachers will receive contracts for the 2009-10 year: HHS-Joe Lindsay, music; Beth Dickenson, vo-ag; Troy Morgan, math; HES-Michele Stone, second grade music. Also recommended were David Norton, HES/HHS, two year teacher for 2009-10; Wendy Cannin, HHS math/business, three year teacher; and Andrea Nelson, HHS language arts. Contract teachers recommended for extension include: HES-Jannie Allen, Karen Clough, Melissa Coiner, Pam Dowdy, Mary Ann Elguezabal, Sue Gibbs, Mary Haguewood, Sherry Matteson, Sharon Morris, Molly Rill and Karen Smith Griffith; HHS-Jean Collins, Mark Dowdy, John Flaherty, Dave Fowler, Terri Gentry, Greg Grant, Jason Palmer,

Petra Payne, Jean Strange and Dieter Waite.

-received the following 2009-10 school calendar options for board action at a later date:

Option A-pre Labor Day start, Monday, August 31, with two weeks at Christmas, Dec. 17-Jan. 4, and students ending Wednesday, June 9; Option B-post Labor Day start, Tuesday, September 8, with two weeks at Christmas, Dec. 17-Jan. 4, and students ending Wednesday, June 16; Option C-pre-Labor Day start, Monday, August 31, with one and a half weeks at Christmas, Dec. 23-Jan. 4, and students ending Friday, June 4; Option D-post-Labor Day start, Tuesday, September 8, with one and a half weeks at Christmas, Dec. 23-Jan. 4, and students ending Thursday, June 10.

District employees are generally polled for their preference, but board member Barney Lindsay requested that parents be polled as well. It was not determined if or how that could be conducted. Burrows said that although he usually prefers a post-Labor Day start, but because Labor Day is late this year, Monday, September 7, he favors a pre-Labor Day start.

-learned that a PAC committee has been established for the district's

upcoming local option tax consisting of Larry Mills, Heppner, Barbara Huwe, Irrigon, Carmen Velasco, Boardman, and Lisanne Currin, Heppner, treasurer.

-accepted the following resignations/retirements: David Boor, RHS assistant football coach; and Clair Costello, Riverside Junior High School head football coach.

-approved the following termination: Jeff Whitbeck, ACH assistant custodian.

-approved the following extra duty contracts: Kyle Carpenter, RHS assistant baseball coach; and Rebecca Renfro, RHS tennis coach.

-held an executive session.

-viewed a presentation on the Bal-A-Vis-X program which incorporates balance, auditory, vision and exercise aspects using ball bouncing activities.

-heard the superintendent's and principals' reports.

-received the following announcements: March 19-deadline to file for open district positions, end of third nine weeks; March 23-27-spring break; April 4-local option meeting, RHS, 10 a.m.; April 11-local option meeting, ACH; April 13-next board meeting, WRE, 7 p.m.

## HHS announces February Students of the Month



Heppner High School recently announced their February Students of the Month. The character trait for February was diligence. Pictured from left to right are: Marie Owen (7<sup>th</sup> grade), Justin Pranger (9<sup>th</sup> grade), Tessa Gould (8<sup>th</sup> grade), Lacie Wagoner (11<sup>th</sup> grade), Josh Shank (12<sup>th</sup> grade), and Jared Miller (10<sup>th</sup> grade). -Contributed Photo

## Water rates to increase \$1 per month

By David Sykes

The Heppner city council approved a plan Monday to meet the city's water reconstruction project debt, and still raise water rates by only \$1 per month.

The city's utility commission has been wrestling with the problem of how to handle the city's \$130,000 annual water project debt payment (incurred when the city overhauled the water system several years ago), and still keep rate increases to a minimum.

At last month's meeting the council had talked about raising rates \$4 per month immediately and another \$4 in six months. Monday Utility Commission member Tom Wolff, who spent some time analyzing the city's debt obligations as well as water and sewer income, outlined a plan that would keep rate increase substantially below that and still pay the city's debt. Briefly the plan calls for using accumulated funds to pay off an existing sewer rehabilitation loan with the Bank of Eastern Oregon and use income previously used to repay that loan, to begin paying down the city's \$130,000 per year water project debt. The debt is a 30 year obligation but drops to \$119,000 per year after the first 10 year's of payment.

For a complete outline of the plan see box below.

### An Alternative Solution to the Water Debt Payment Program (by Tom Wolff)

This solution would not require a rate increase to meet the Water Project Debt payments.

1. As of July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009, the balance of accumulated value (and cash) in the Debt Service Fund is expected to be \$251,891.87. This value has been built by transfers from the Water Fund, Sewer Fund, and from the General Fund to meet expected debt payments.
2. The city has paid-off all old bonded indebtedness except for the new Water Project debt. The City Hall loan pays monthly, and the Sewer Loan debt is a general obligation of the city with no dedicated funds reserved to pay it. Balances in the Debt Service Fund labeled as belonging to the "Sewer Fund" can be thought of as left-over from prior Sewer Dept. bonded debt.

Using the values as outlined, my recommendation is to:

3. On July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009, use the accumulated cash in the Debt Service Fund (account) and pay-off the new BEO Sewer Loan in full = \$213,676.31 plus about \$7,678.99 in accrued interest for a total of \$221,355.30.
4. Re-direct the \$8.90 collected each month on the utility invoices (now labeled "Sewer Bond", even though there is not a Sewer Bond in existence anymore) and apply \$8.00 of it to the Debt Service Fund to meet the future needs of the Water Project debt payments. (This value, although labeled "Sewer Bond" on the monthly invoices, is just additional monies collected by the City each month, and had no legal or restricted ties.)
5. Apply the \$.90 to the Reserve for Maintenance, Repairs, and Unknown Contingencies Fund for the utility dept. (combined Water and Sewer Funds).
6. The remaining balance in the Debt Service Fund at 07-02-2009 of \$30,536.57 (\$251,891.87 -\$213,676.31), plus five (5) months of the \$8.00 accumulation (\$27,600), plus the five (5) months of the currently afforded \$70,000 Debt Service budgeted transfers (\$29,166.67), plus a re-direct of the first five (5) months of the currently afforded \$55,000 Reserve for Maintenance line item to the Debt Service Transfers (\$43,400.00) would provide the cash (and spending authority) to meet the December 2009 Water Project Debt payment of \$130,701.11.
7. This scenario allows for very adequate cash-flow to meet the future needs of the Water Project debt payment stream.
8. It does cut the 2009-2010 funding of the Reserve for Maintenance, Repairs, and Unknown Contingencies Fund very short for this one-year period.
9. I would further propose the Council authorize a \$1.00 increase in the fixed portion of the Water Rates, and dedicate that \$1.00 increase to the Reserve for Maintenance, Repairs, and Unknown Contingencies Fund and require that monthly transfers of the actual cash be made to the separate and distinct said Reserve Fund bank account.

City officials said Monday the \$8.90 collected on city water bills each month labeled "sewer bond" has been incorrectly labeled on the bills. The money was actually being used to pay off a Bank of Eastern Oregon loan that the city took out several years ago to refinance the original sewer bond. Officials said the water bills would be corrected in the future.

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