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City considers social gambling ordinance

By David Sykes

The city of Heppner is discussing a social gambling ordinance that would regulate card games, and possibly other games of chance, at local taverns and bars.

At its March 9 meeting city attorney Anne Spicer went over different ways the ordinance might control games such as black jack, loo and poker.

The ordinance would require dealers to get background checks and the establishment be licensed to host the games. "The establishment has to be licensed and must have background checks on anyone who is involved with (running) the game," Spicer told the council. She said enforcement could be through the justice court and there would be an annual license renewal. She said private clubs such as the Elks would be under the same license procedure. "Right now it is illegal to do card games," Spicer said. "You can only legally do private games at homes. That is a state statute." Ever since the state lottery came in the rules have changed. Establishments can't put up the money, pay the dealers or take a profit from the game, Spicer said.

Questions were raised by the council whether the ordinance would apply to dice and even board games such as those used with sporting events. If a card game in a tavern requires the deal to shift around the table, the council wanted to know if each person would be required to have a background check. Sheriff's Deputy Randy Rayburn, who was attending the meeting, said he would get back to the council on the exact cost of background checks.

The council is looking at the ordinance at the request of Nancy Gochnauer, owner of Bucknum's Tavern in Heppner, who wished to know what games were allowed. The council took no action at its meeting, but agreed to have Spicer come back later with a proposed ordinance.

In other business the council agreed to re-sign a contract with the Morrow County Sheriff's Department to provide police coverage in the city. The contract is the same as last year except the cost will go up $12,884 per year to $176,376.

The council also heard in the sheriff's report that the seatbelt blitz was very active in Heppner for February. There was a total of 29 traffic stops with 23 verbal warnings and six citations. One vehicle was impounded.

Deputies also responded to Pioneer Memorial Hospital for an intoxicated subject who ran out of the emergency room with an IV still attached. It was reported that the subject might have consumed some brake fluid. The subject later returned to the hospital for treatment.

The council heard in the city manager's report that the city has been awarded $5,000 in grant money from the Ford Family Foundation to be used toward the gravel parking lot and utilities to be installed in the proposed restrooms at Hager Park.

Ione School District to make over $183,000 in budget cuts; offers early retirement packages

By April Sykes

The Ione School Board, at their regular meeting Monday night, voted to authorize Superintendent/ Principal Karl Ostheller to make cuts in the 2009-10 school budget by over $183,000 in response to a projected funding shortfall.

Current recommendations are to eliminate one teaching position at $60,000; one classified aide position at $25,000 and other items as follows: technology hardware-$40,000; high school math textbook adoption-$12,000; student field trips-$7,000; high school general education, other tuition, textbooks instructional service-$8,000; staff professional development-$4,000; staff professional growth-$6,000; educational media-library books and periodicals-$4,000; superintendent tuition reimbursement-$3,500; board member out-of-district travel-$3,000; transfer custodial services from the Educational Service District to Ione-$8,000; drop extra duty contracts, such as Read-n-Play, SMART, TAG coordinator, concessions-$6,900.

The proposal would still preserve $5,000 for on-line learning opportunities (books and tuition) and $11,500 for staff professional growth.

The board also voted to offer a $10,000 early retirement bonus for up to two teachers as a way to cut costs, since hiring new teachers is less expensive than retaining long-time teachers. The board set March 31 as the deadline to enroll in the early retirement option.

The board received a report from Ostheller concerning a rash of thefts from student lockers and bags, mostly small items such as pencils, hair ties and socks, he said, but also some cash and several Apple iPods. He said that someone came forward to identify the perpetrator and the school has been working with the Morrow County Sheriff's Office in connection with the thefts.

He also reported some disciplinary issues involving disagreements and minor altercations, one at the high school and two at the elementary school.

In other business, the board:

-appointed Tim Holtz and Tucker Rice to the budget committee.

-approved architectural design plans for the new school remodeling project as presented.

-accepted the 2009-10 school calendar Option 1, which calls for staff in-service from August 25-27; a pre-Labor Day school start on Monday, August 31; a two-week Christmas break from December 21-January 1, with school resuming Monday, Jan. 4; the last student day on Tuesday, June 8, with the last staff work day falling between June 8-10, depending on scheduled staff work/in-service days. Ostheller said that his staff preferred Option 1.

Option 2 called for staff in-service September 1-3; a post-Labor Day school start on September 8; a two-week Christmas break from Dec., 21-Jan.1; and school ending on June 16, with the last staff work day from June 16-18.

Option 3 called for staff in-service Aug. 26, 27 and 31; a pre-Labor Day school start Wednesday, Sept. 2 with a week and half of Christmas break from Dec. 23-Jan. 1, the last student day on June 8, with the last staff work day from June 8-10.

-received the following administrative report from Ostheller: student enrollment is at 164 with 70 in kindergarten through grade five, 29 in grades six-eight and 64 in grades nine-12; the architectural firm presented a preliminary drawing of the addition to the elementary building; the budget process has been begun with reductions of $180,000 recommended; the septic system was pumped, since it had been four years since the last pumping; student sports are underway with 27 students

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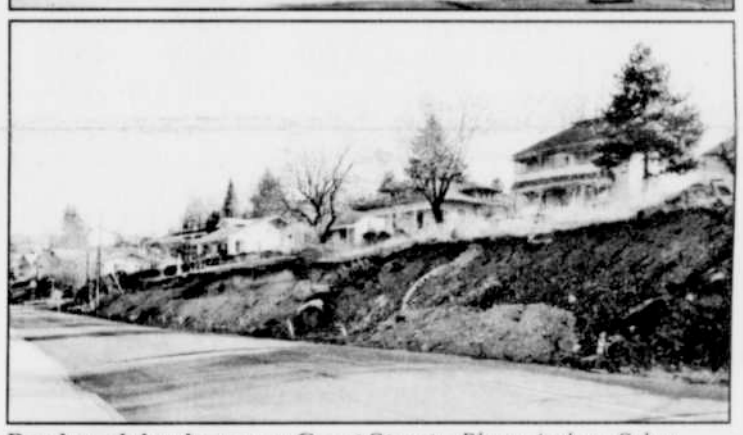
Leprechaun-in-training

Conner Brosnan follows in his family's footsteps as a leprechaun-in-training. More St. Patrick's Celebration pictures can be found on Page FOUR. *-Photo by Andrew Sykes*

Transportation improvement project starts in Heppner

The Oregon Department of Transportation's contractor Knife River Construction of Bend, Oregon, has begun work on a $2.17 million highway project that will repair the Court Street Bridge, rebuild sections of Court Street / Oregon Highway 74 in town and construct sidewalk and bike lanes improvements in the area. The project includes $1.018 million in federal stimulus dollars that will be used to resurface 19.5 miles of OR 74 with a chip seal from Heppner to mile point 66. Travelers will experience minor delays in town throughout the summer months and are advised to use alternate routes if available. During the chip seal work that will take place later this year, motorists can expect single lane travel with flaggers and pilot cars, plus loose rock on the roadway.



Road work has begun on Court Street. *-Photo Andrew Sykes*

"We realize this project will create some inconveniences for travelers and local residence, but the end result will be a smoother, safer transportation system for cars, bicycles and pedestrians," said ODOT Public Information Officer Tom Strandberg.

A separate chip seal project will extend an additional 17 miles on OR 74 to Nye Junction and resurface several sections of US 395 between Pilot Rock and Fox.

"It is going to be a very busy construction season with over 60 highway work zones throughout eastern Oregon," Strandberg said. "Please be patient and drive with extra caution through all work areas. Our contractors and crews are working to create better and safer roads for you."

Travelers are encouraged to visit TripCheck.com on the Web for current highway conditions and construction information, or call 511 or 800-977-ODOT for an automated road conditions report.

License suspensions in effect for ticketed MIPs

According to Judge Charlotte Gray of the Heppner Justice Court, by Oregon state law anyone who is issued an MIP will be subject to a one year driver's license suspension.

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