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School district drops art programs at Heppner and Irrigon due to budget cuts

By April Sykes

The Morrow County School Board, at their Monday night meeting at Windy River Elementary School in Boardman, voted unanimously to eliminate the art programs at Heppner High School and Irrigon High School "as forced by budget constraints."

"Financially, these are not ordinary times," said Superintendent Mark Burrows, who told the board that proposed reductions in the state school fund were worse than expected. He said that the state financial situation will return school funding to 2001 levels and will reduce the Morrow County School District's budget by around one and a half million, rather than the $800,000 loss previously anticipated.

Burrows said unless the upcoming three-year serial levy is passed by district voters, the district will be forced to cut five days from the school year next year and will seek a freeze in employees' wages. "One and a half million is a lot," said Burrows.

In other business, the district adopted a pre-Labor Day start for the 2009-10 school year. Teachers will begin on August 24, 2009, with students starting on August 31. Christmas break is scheduled to begin Friday, December 18, with school resuming on Monday, January 4, 2010. The last day of school for students will be Wednesday, June 9, and the last day for teachers on Friday, June 10. Staff was overwhelmingly in favor of this option.

In other business at the meeting, the board:

-heard a report from Burrows on how the district adapted to the road work in progress near Heppner Elementary School in regards to busing students to and from the school.. Burrows especially gave his appreciation to Burke O'Brien for his "can-do attitude" and to the Morrow County Road crew for making modifications to facilitate the busing. The buses were taken out through the overflow parking area and a bridge was built across Hinton Creek to get the buses on their routes. Burrows also credited Mid Columbia Bus, the neighbors who allowed access through their property and Heppner city manager David DeMayo for facilitating the process.

-approved a resolution accepting and appropriating $3,650 for a supplemental grant from the Department of Education for instruction and staff development at Riverside High School in the Advanced Placement Incentive Program.

-approved release of two students to the Umatilla School District.

-approved attendance variances for one student from the Hermiston School District to A.C. Houghton Elementary School in Irrigon.

-approved renewal of attendance variances for one student to attend Hermiston School District from MCSD and one student to attend Hermiston High School with subsequent board discussion on the criteria for granting variances. Burrows told the board that the policy has been for the convenience of the students and parents and when courses are not available within the Morrow County School District. "Times are hard and we want to preserve the ADM (the way the state calculates enrollment and reimburses the school for each student attending), said Burrows. The board plans to discuss the policy further.

-approved a leave of absence for Mary Koertje for the remainder of the school year.

-approved the following employment action: resignations/retirements for Jean Strange, Heppner High School PE and art teacher; Kathy Simonis, Riverside High School language arts teacher; Cody Booth, Irrigon High School Spanish/language arts teacher; Helen Walty, RHS assistant custodian.

-approved the following extra duty contracts: David Boor, Riverside Junior High School head football coach; Kyle Carpenter, RHS assistant football coach.

-accepted $500 donations each to ACH, Irrigon Elementary School and IHS from the Washington Defense Group at the Depot.

-heard a mathematics textbook adoption report from Erin Stocker. However, the textbooks will not be purchased this year because of the anticipated budget cuts.

-heard a presentation from Windy River Elementary staff on "parent parties" which create a bridge between the parents and the classroom.

-learned that the Umatilla-Morrow ESD will be required by the state legislature to combine with the Union ESD by July 1, 2010. The board was assured that there will be "no service disruptions."

-approved a resolution for budget transfers as follows: $500 from technology instruction to support services; $1,200 from drug and alcohol prevention to support services.

-heard the following announcements: the first budget committee meeting will be held Monday, May 4, at the district office at 7 p.m.; the next board meeting will be held Monday, May 11, at Irrigon High School; election day is Tuesday, May 19; the last day for seniors is Friday, May 29; the math contest will be held this Thursday at 6 p.m. at Riverside High School; the dedication for the new baseball, softball and Little League field at Irrigon at 10 a.m. Saturday.

-held an executive session for the purposes of discussing employment, negotiations and legal matters.

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Social gaming ordinance requires background check and fingerprinting

By David Sykes

An ordinance under consideration by the city of Heppner would require bar owners, bartenders and others to have a police background check, be fingerprinted and the establishments pay a yearly $100 licensing fee before wagering card games could be played on the premises. The council did not vote on the ordinance, but instead tabled the issue for further study until next month's meeting. A full text of the proposed ordinance can be read at www.heppner.net/

gaming.

According to City Attorney Ann Spicer, all wagering card games in public establishments in Heppner have been illegal since 1991, with the games only allowed if the city has an ordinance governing them, which Heppner does not.

Nancy Gochnauer, owner of Bucknum's Tavern in Heppner, started the ordinance process when she asked the city if it was legal to hold card games in her tavern. The city has since announced that wagering card games that may be going on around town are illegal.

The proposed ordinance would require fingerprints of the "owners, officers, principal managing employees, and all employees who are involved in conducting the game activities or operating the game premises of the applicant. Where the permit applicant is a nonprofit membership organization, 'principal managing employee' shall mean the chief elected official of the organization and any other elected officials whose authority extends to the supervision or management of permitted social games," the ordinance reads.

For the Elks it would be the Exalted Ruler as well as others who will be managing the club while the games were going on.

Sheriff's Deputy John Bowles, who is also a city council member, said violation of the gaming ordinance would be a Class A Misdemeanor, like a DUI, and that the local police would go into establishments to check compliance of the ordinance.

The establishments where the card games are held would also have to pay a $100 annual fee as well as the cost of the fingerprinting and background checks.

Some council members asked that the ordinance be tabled until it could receive further study to

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Easter bunny makes his annual visit to Heppner

Hanna Green, 4, enjoys a visit with the Easter bunny at the annual Elks Easter Egg Hunt at City Park. Hannah is the daughter of David and Candy Green of Heppner. *–Photo by David Sykes*

Wrangler Riding Club raffling off bench

Wrangler Riding Club charter member Howard Bryant puts his brand on the bench the club is raffling for their only fund raiser while technology education teacher Dave Fowler and student Devin Robinson look on. The bench is on display at Les Schwab Tire Center. The bench was made by Wood on Wood of Heppner and branded with Wrangler Club member's brands and stained by Bill Gentry. Tickets are available at Les Schwab or from a Wrangler member for $5 each or six for $25. The bench will be raffled on the last Wrangler Playday on May 3. *–Contributed Photo*

9th annual TV shoot to be held in Ione

The 9th annual TV shoot will be held in Ione on Saturday, April 25, at Frank and Joe Halvorsen's farm.

The fee is $20 per person, per shot. Registration will be from 8:30-9:30 a.m. An all you can eat lunch will be available. The cost is $6 for adults and $3.50 for children 10 and under.

Prizes will include $100 for hitting the target at 1,000 yards. There will be three classes and prizes for all three classes: Class #1 – elk and deer rifle; Class #2 – heavy target or bench guns; and Class #3 – open site 600 yards.

Allison Carey Gunworks of Portland will be in charge of the free clay pigeons for the kids.

Bill Breshears of B&B Barbecue of Gresham will be serving tri-tip sandwiches, brats, hot dogs, baked beans, and potato salad.

For more information or to help sponsor this event and get your name on the reader board, call Tanna Padberg at 422-7276.

The Halvorsen farm is located at 64686 Halvorsen Lane in Ione.

All proceeds will be used for children's games, prizes, and the Ione Fourth of July Celebration.

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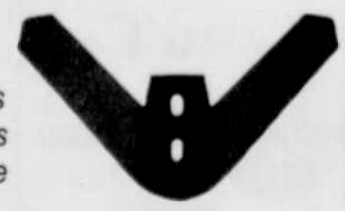

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