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Gazette Times

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Health district to interview CEO candidates

By April Sykes

The Morrow County Health District Board, after reopening its call for a new administrator, said Monday night that the board members planned to interview additional candidates Tuesday, June 2.

The board had formulated questions for phone interviews and then in-person interviews. Current administrator, Victor Vander Does, said he would extend the deadline for his retirement, since the district's first results in finding his replacement were not fruitful.

The board approved putting $75,000 into an Irrigon Clinic building reserve fund for expanding and remodeling the Irrigon Clinic.

The board also approved $15,000 in the upcoming budget to commit to an outreach program to initially begin in Irrigon at a date to be determined later. The emphasis of the program would be determined by Irrigon residents. The state program, called the Community Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP) through the Office of Rural Health, has previously funded a variety of wellness programs throughout the state, which range from childhood anti-obesity programs, drug and alcohol prevention, diabetes education, mental health, provider recruitment and retention and other health-related concerns. The first step would be to hire a coordinator to conduct town hall meetings to determine the emphasis the community would like to take. CHIP would normally kick in $15,000 for this process initially and the health district would match that, however the state has indicated it will not fund the program this upcoming fiscal year because of budget constraints.

Also at the meeting, the board:

-heard a report from Vander Does concerning Sue Peeples' resignation. Peeples, who was a nurse practitioner at the Irrigon Clinic, left to relocate to another area. Vander Does said that the district's physician's assistant and physicians will fill in to cover in her absence and the district may hire a temp for a period of time.

-learned that the long term care facility has six patients in the new rooms with one bed still available.

-learned that the assisted living facility has two openings for residents, which will be selected from a list of prospective residents. Plans are to build two one-bedroom units and a solarium at the facility. The land for the addition has already been purchased and $100,000 has already been placed in a reserve account for the project, however the addition is still a ways off, said Vander Does. "We're not even close," he said. He said that signatures from a majority of landowners in the subdivision must be obtained before the project can move ahead.

-received a profit loss statement for the month of April which showed the district in the black for the past two months with a $14,168 gain for the April and a $104,004 gain for March. Chief Financial Office Nicole Mahoney said that the district had an average $22,716 monthly year-to-date loss.

-learned that the district had 70.3 days in accounts receivable as of the April report, generally because of reimbursement issues out of their control, but Mahoney said the business office hoped to get that down to around 60 days.

-received the following report: Pioneer Memorial Clinic had 506 patient visits with 42 new patients, 46 patients seen by a nurse and 11 no-shows; Irrigon Clinic had 215 patient visits, 27 new patients, 56 seen by a nurse and 11 no-shows; Heppner Ambulance had 28 page outs with 20 transports for $18,978 in revenue; Boardman Ambulance had 23 page-outs with 13 transports for $14,892 in revenue; Irrigon Ambulance had 24 page-outs with 15 transports for $14,570 in revenue; there were two flights; Pioneer Memorial Hospital had eight admissions, three swing-bed admissions, 14 admitted for observation, 486 total outpatients, 1604 lab tests, 91 x-ray procedures, 28 CT scans, 32 EKG tests, one treadmill procedure, five colonoscopy procedures, three endoscopy procedures and 73 respiratory therapy procedures; Home Health had 108 patient visits; Hospice had one admission; Pharmacy had 1719 drug doses for $682,837 in drug revenue.

-held an executive session concerning CEO candidates.

Armato heading east to Harvard

By Autumn Morgan

This August a dream will come true for ingoing college freshman Maggie Armato. She will be traveling to Cambridge, MA, to attend Harvard University where she plans to study economics.

Maggie Armato

It has been a whirlwind ride for Armato who has subsequently been accepted to six out of the eight schools she applied to. Harvard accepts approximately 1,600 new students each year and Armato "never thought of the possibility."

But that possibility became reality when, at the end of March, Armato received an e-mail from Harvard congratulating her on her acceptance. That e-mail was later followed up by an official letter and certificate of acceptance from the university.

After financial endowments from the university and several scholarships, Armato will be able to attend the university at little to no personal cost.

Armato, who will be graduating from Heppner High School as co-valedictorian along with Sherlyn Peck, had SAT scores of 800 in critical reading, 690 in math, and 710 in writing. A perfect SAT score is 2,400 and she scored a 2,200.

School will begin around September 6 for Armato who, as a freshman, will live in a residential hall on campus. After completing freshman year, the students then move into houses on campus. The houses are divided into groups that have their own library and professor who is available for mentoring.

Armato is "nervous and excited" to be moving cross-country to attend Harvard University. She plans to come home at Thanksgiving and Christmas for a visit and then again at the end of the school year.

Armato was also accepted to Seattle Pacific University, Willamette University, Claremont McKenna College, Notre Dame, and New York University.

Armato's mother, Kim, attended the University of Oregon and her late father, Mike, attended University of California at Berkeley. Her brother, Joe, is a student at HHS.

Windwave prepares for switch from analog to digital

Windwave employees have been working in residential areas around Heppner lately, stringing fiber optic cables to replace analog TV cables. *–Photo by Autumn Morgan*

NOAA issues monthly climate summary for Heppner

According to preliminary data received by NOAA's National Weather Service in Pendleton, temperatures at Heppner averaged slightly warmer than normal during the month of May.

The average temperature was 56.6 degrees which was 0.6 degrees above normal. High temperatures averaged 69.9 degrees, which was 0.8 degrees above normal. The highest was 91 degrees on May 30. Low temperatures averaged 43.4 degrees, which was 0.4 degrees above normal. The lowest was 33 degrees, on May 13.

On two days, the temperature exceeded 90 degrees.

Precipitation totaled 0.93 inches during May, which was 0.74 inches below normal. Measurable precipitation -at least .01 inch- was received on 10 days with the heaviest, 0.30 inches reported on May 3.

Precipitation this year has reached 5.89 inches, which is 1.47 inches below normal. Since October, the water year precipitation at Heppner has been 9.51 inches, which is 2.06 inches below normal.

The outlook for June from NOAA's Climate Prediction Center calls for near normal temperatures and near to above normal precipitation. Normal highs for Heppner during June are 77.0 degrees and normal lows are 48.5 degrees. The 30 year normal precipitation is 1.08 inches.

The National Weather Service is an office of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department.

Heppner city crews to practice flash flood emergency plan

The Army Corps of Engineers will be sounding the flood alarms on June 15 and 16 in Heppner. The city crew will be rehearsing the plan that has been put into place in case Heppner was threatened by a flash flood.

In a real emergency, the American Red Cross would set up a mass care shelter at Heppner High School. The city crew will be at the rally points on high ground and at the Emergency Operations center at the sheriff's office.

New legislation may help Morrow County School District

House Bill 2533A, a bill to help Morrow County Schools was adopted by the Oregon House of Representatives June 2 by a wide margin. Representative Greg Smith (R-Heppner) spoke in favor of the bill, saying "this bill does a tremendous job in assisting rural schools, our kids and our communities."

The measure is specially designed to assist only four schools across the state that have lost enrollment since 1999, allowing them to qualify for a unique status in the state school funding formula. Under the "small high school" category, the Morrow County School District is eligible for $430,000 additional state dollars. That means $5,733 in extra funding per student on top of what the district already gets from the state.

"Small school funding will make a positive difference for Riverside High students," said Mark Burrows, Morrow County School District superintendent. "Currently we are faced with a choice between offering a full curriculum with arts and technical classes or providing remedial extension classes for our struggling low income and minority students. The weighted funding will allow us to provide both."

Representative Smith noted during the floor debate on HB 2533A that this legislation would help, "increase high school graduation rates and satisfaction with school, decrease the impact of poverty on academic progress, and make shorter commute times to school."

Often the state requirements imposed on school districts require high schools to provide a minimum amount of services. However, small high schools in remote areas frequently require more funding per student to meet those mandates. Smith believes HB 2533A will be extremely helpful for these rural schools to meet state standards.

"Rails, Riches, and Rejection" to be held June 13

Many names in the June 13 play, "Rails, Riches, and Rejection," will be familiar and some might even depict relatives of audience members.

Helping to carry the story through the early history of the OR& N Railroad in the Willow Creek Valley will be Tom Ayers as he visits with newcomer Marian Good, and joining them will be Jerry Brosnan. Other early-day names that will come alive on stage include Henry Blackman, Jackson Morrow, Columbus Rhea, Frank Kellogg, Henry Heppner, and William Penland. A Harshman story is related, Lars Larson will entertain, and the Frank Parker family will also make an appearance.

More recent history will be seen through the telling of stories by Marian Good Brosnan to three of her great grandchildren, Thompsons and a McCarty. Other familiar contemporary names that will play in the story are Laughlin, Gutierrez, Hughes, Harrison, and Osmin.

Some of these characters might be seen at the dinner that precedes the stage production. They and audience guests will find a delicious, formal repast served in the farm museum by Dino's Delectable Catering Service. The menu will feature salad, roast beef, halibut over wild rice, roasted vegetables, rolls, and almond delight dessert.

Dining will begin at 6 p.m. and "Rails, Riches, and Rejection" will begin at 7 p.m., on stage by the farm-museum murals. The $20 tickets are available at the Bank of Eastern Oregon, Community Bank, Heppner Chamber, Heppner TV, and Murray's.

Heppner/Ione graduations this weekend

Ione Community School will hold its graduation ceremony on Friday, June 5, at 7 p.m. Heppner High School will hold its graduation ceremony on Saturday, June 6, at 2 p.m.

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