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HEPPNER Gazette Times

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Smith says tax increase vote helps district

By David Sykes

Representative Greg Smith, one of only two Republicans to cast a yes vote in favor of a new state tax increase, defended his vote last week by saying it was for the good of his voting district.

Smith, who resides in Heppner, told the Heppner Chamber of Commerce by conference call last Thursday that his decision to vote in favor of the $472 million tax increase would secure over $18 million in state spending to come out of the Democrat controlled house into his district.

Rep. Greg Smith

Before his yes vote Smith received a letter last Tuesday from Democrat House Speaker Dave Hunt and Ways and Means co-chair Democrat Peter Buckley, promising benefits including:

$8 million in lottery money for Blue Mountain Community College.

$8 million in lottery money for Eastern Oregon University Library

$2.3 million in state bonds for Port of Morrow Education Center.

Limiting cuts in the Oregon University System to benefit agricultural extension centers and the ranger resources program.

He also asked for support for extending a tax break on logging equipment.

"My job is to roll up my sleeves and do the job for the people back home, and I am not ashamed of that," Smith told the Chamber, the same day a front page article about the trade off appeared in the Portland Oregonian.

"Our communities are dying and I am doing what I can to support our communities," Smith told the Chamber. "And every item (that was promised) has merit."

Smith and Bob Jensen of Pendleton were the only two Republicans to vote for a tax increase on individuals making more than $125,000 annually, or families making more than $250,000.

Also on Thursday of last week Republican party Chairman Bob Tiernan filed an ethics complaint against Hunt and Buckley for violating the public trust in the trade-off deal. Tuesday Andrew Over, the state party's executive director told the Heppner Gazette-Times the ethics committee responded that the complaint would not be investigated because it was not in their jurisdiction. "We still believe there is merit to our complaint," said Over.

As for Smith he told the Chamber of Commerce: "I have to come back and explain what each of these (projects) will mean. People are going to tell me what they think at the ballot box."

M. C. District Attorney Ballard and Attorney General Kroger announce aggravated murder indictment

Morrow County District Attorney Elizabeth A. Ballard and Attorney General John Kroger recently announced that a grand jury has indicted Araceli Velasquez Espain on multiple counts for the death of her infant son.

Espain faces charges of aggravated murder, first-degree manslaughter, second-degree manslaughter, first-degree criminal mistreatment and abandonment of a child.

All persons charged are presumed innocent under our Constitution until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

The indictment accused Espain of intentionally killing her baby on June 6.

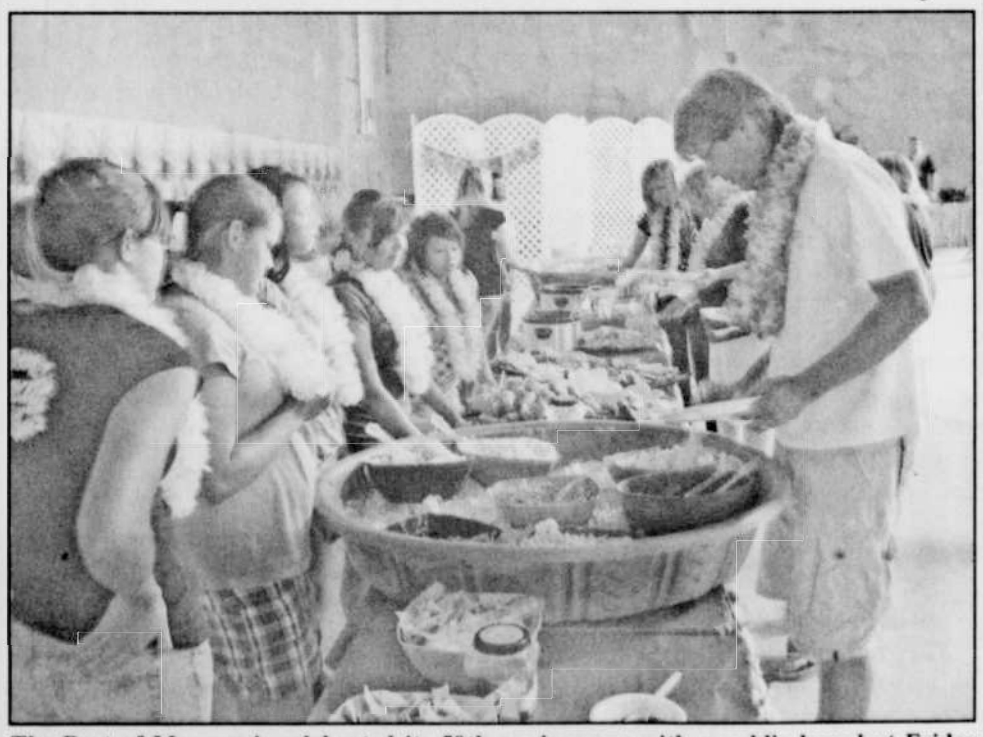
Espain was scheduled to be arraigned in Morrow County Circuit Court at 1:15 p.m., Tuesday, June 16.

The case is being investigated by the Major Crimes Team, which includes the Morrow County Sheriff's Office, Boardman Police Department, Oregon State Police, Umatilla County Sheriff's Office, Hermiston Police Department, Pendleton Police Department, Milton Freewater Police Department, Morrow County District Attorney's Office and Umatilla County District Attorney's Office.

Senior Assistant Attorney General Scott Jackson of the Oregon Department of Justice is assisting in the case at the request of District Attorney Ballard.

Attorney General John Kroger leads the Oregon Department of Justice. The department's mission is to fight crime and fraud, protect the environment, improve child welfare, and defend the rights of all Oregonians.

Port of Morrow celebrates 50th anniversary



The Port of Morrow is celebrated its 50th anniversary with a public luau last Friday from 4-7 p.m. at the new transload building at 71401 Rail Loop Drive in Boardman. The celebration was an informal affair that included a roasted pork dinner and tours of the new 55,000 square-foot building. Although there was no formal ceremony a slide show of the port's progress was presented. The transload building, the newest port improvement, will be a warehouse distribution nexus, with rail, truck and barge transportation options.
–Photo by David Sykes

Alumni football game cancelled

Due to the lack of participation, the alumni football game scheduled for this year has been cancelled.

Celebrate Heppner photos can be found on Page THREE

ALL NEWS AND ADVERTISEMENT DEADLINE:

MONDAYS AT 5:00 P.M.

Ione School Board adopts budget

By April Sykes

The Ione School District Board Monday night adopted a 2009-2010 budget with $5,703,204 in appropriated funds and an additional $370,000 in unappropriated funds. They also imposed a tax rate of $4.0342 per $1,000 of assessed value for operations and $243,626 for bonds.

Also at the meeting they approved a transportation contract with Mid-Co and approved the purchase of an $11,300 Kubota lawn mower over a three-year contract.

In other business, the board:

-heard the following report from Superintendent/Principal Karl Ostheller:

*student enrollment is unchanged from last month with 164 students in kindergarten through 12th grade.

*teacher evaluations have been completed;

*two classrooms are almost ready for the floor abatement process.

*the custodial/groundskeeper position has been reopened to create a larger pool of applicants. Four applications and one verbal commitment have been received.

*special education interviews have been scheduled for June 18. The district had a pool of 10 applicants and four would be interviewed.

*construction projects should be starting soon with the gym floor work beginning around June 17. Pool work should be mostly complete with the exception of hooking up the chlorination system which is expected to get underway later this week. The pre-bid meeting for the roof project, construction meeting for the gym floor and a pre-bid meeting for window replacement will be held this week. A facilities meeting will also be held to review the bids for two classroom additions.

*the International Club will hold a dinner during the Fourth of July celebration and speech debate students will be assisting in a variety of activities.

-received the following financial update from Chief Financial Officer Beth O'Hanlon with the Umatilla-Morrow ESD as of May 31:

*the district received basic school support totaling $71,938 and school stabilization money totaling $48,681. The general fund collected $2,851 in property taxes.

*the district received an update for the 2009-10 funding estimate which includes $14,717 in additional common school funds.

*the intermediate program, operations and maintenance and transportation remain over budget.

*bond proceeds earned $3,203 in interest for the district.

*individual special revenue funds continue to carry deficit fund balances. The district ordered money to cover the deficit balances in state and federal title funds," said O'Hanlon. "All but the pool fund will be made whole by the end of the year. If the general fund has funds available to transfer at the end of the year, "she said. "We would like to propose using a portion of the capital projects transfer to cover the pool."

*larger or unusual payments in May include the following: Carruth Consulting for the annual fee to maintain 403 (B) plan documents as required by the IRS; Mid Columbia Bus for transportation; U.S. Bank for administration fees as trustee for the bond; Willamette ESD for bond project services; Umatilla-Morrow ESD for custodial services.

-learned from board member Anne Morter that graduating seniors earned over $18,500 in scholarships from local sources.

-rescinded a motion to authorize the Umatilla-Morrow ESD as the recipient for SIP funds. The district learned that it is not authorized to do so.

-heard the following announcements: a special meeting will me held Monday, June 22, at 7 p.m.; no meeting will be held in July; the August board meeting will be held Monday, August 17.

-held an executive session to discuss negotiations and performance evaluations.

Congressman Greg Walden to visit Heppner

Congressman Greg Walden will be in Heppner on Tuesday, June 30, to give a congressional update, covering topics such as economy, forestry and health care.

To accommodate this, the chamber lunch meeting will be moved from Thursday, July 2, to Tuesday, June 30, and the "all entities reports" will be moved to Thursday, July 9. The meeting will be held in the Senior Center Dining Room from 11:45 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Any interested community members are invited to attend this meeting. A "no host" lunch will be provided at $9 per person and RSVP's are required to allow for sufficient seating and meals.

Please RSVP to the Heppner Chamber of Commerce no later than Monday, June 29, if you will be attending so accommodations can be made.

Annual Red White & Blues Texas Hold 'em Poker Tournament to be held

The 4th annual Red White & Blues Texas Hold 'em Poker Tournament will be held Saturday, June 20, 2009, at Ione Legion Hall.

Sign up begins at 6 p.m. with a $40 buy in. Play will begin at 6:30 p.m. There will be no late sign-ups.

A sandwich and salad bar will be available. Beverages will be provided by Taylor's. For more information call Marvin Padberg at 422-7276.

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