

SCHOOL DISTRICT

lation other groups highly recommended to get the H1N1 flu vaccine include: pregnant women, new parents and caregivers of infants less than six months old, health care workers, emergency services and law enforcement personnel, children six months to school age, people 19-24 years old and those 25 to 64 who have underlying health issues such as asthma, heart or lung disease, diabetes or HIV. Smith said that those groups may get the vaccine at the school clinics or at the Morrow County Health Department.

Burrows touted the district's benchmark gains over the past five years. He told the board that Morrow County School district has dramatically increased the percentage of students achieving benchmarks in reading and math in 2008-09 compared to 2003-04.

In 2003 MCSD lagged area districts with 34 percent of the students meeting or exceeding benchmarks in reading and 32 percent in math, compared to: the Pendleton district with 51 percent meeting or exceeding benchmarks in reading and 43 percent in math; the Hermiston district with 45 percent in reading and 36 in math; and Ontario with 43 percent in reading and 30 percent in math. In 2003-04 the state percentages were 49 percent meeting or exceeding in reading and 42 percent in math.

In 2008-09, the tables turned with MCSD on the top of the heap with 64.9 percent of the students meeting or exceed-

ing benchmarks in reading and 58.2 percent in math, compared to the Hermiston district with 60.6 meeting or exceeding benchmarks in reading and 52.4 percent in math; Pendleton, 60 percent in reading and 38.3 percent in math and Ontario with 53 percent in reading and 36.7 in math. For 2008-09, statewide percentages were 66.1 percent meeting or exceeding in reading and 53.6 meeting or exceeding in math.

The 2008-09 data shows a 31 percent gain for MCSD in reading and a 26 percent gain in math from the 2003-04 figures.

On the down side, Burrows said that he received information from Morrow County Assessor Greg Sweek, that he believes that the amount of monies the district would receive from its local option tax approved by voters was overestimated. Burrows said that Sweek told him that the school district should expect around \$365,000 per year for the period of the three-year levy, rather than the original estimate of \$500,000 per year. Burrows said he would be scheduling a meeting with Sweek to further discuss the issue.

The board heard a presentation from Michael Lasher concerning a possible merger of the Umatilla-Morrow Education Service District with the Union Baker ESD. Lasher said that Oregon lawmakers are pressuring ESDs to merge to reduce the number of ESDs operating in the state and the Umatilla-Morrow ESD was considering tak-

ing pre-emptive action. The MCSD Board was somewhat hesitant considering the legal issues the Union Baker ESD had been previously involved in under prior management. UBESD is nearing bankruptcy and imminent closure is anticipated. Lasher told the board that a detailed cost analysis determined that it would cost from \$230,000 to \$475,000 to bring the Union County schools to the same levels as the Umatilla-Morrow Schools, however, he said that there was some duplication of personnel in the two ESDs which could be trimmed, with the UBESD having "a lot of people in the office that they don't need." "Their (UBESD's) financial situation is not very good," he added "They aren't providing the services they should." MCSD Board member Berto Hernandez summed it up when he asked Lasher, "Who's the big dog?", meaning who would be in charge of the ESD if the merger went through. Lasher replied that the UMESD is about twice the size of UBESD, serving about 13,000 students in Umatilla and Morrow counties, compared to around 7,000 in the UBESD service area.

Under the proposal, Union County school districts would merge with UMESD and Baker County Schools would merge with the Malheur ESD.

Lasher said that advantages of a merger would be to: enact local control on the "inevitable closure of UBESD"; provide a model

for future ESD consolidation; provide an increased student capacity which would increase state influence and leverage for contracts and grants; increase the revenue stream; create a larger hiring pool and entrepreneurial expansion; and brokerage opportunities with Blue Mountain Community College and Eastern Oregon University, among other advantages.

Disadvantages, said Lasher, would include reconfiguration of the ESD board; potential hiring requirements of UBESD staff; a possible employee lawsuit; an unclear division of assets and liabilities with Baker County/Malheur ESD; the larger area served; and impending resolution of the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) and alternative education settlement.

In other business, the board:

-appointed Andrea Fletcher and Lisanne Currin to the budget committee.

-accepted the following resignations/retirements: Donna Barton from her position as assistant principal, effective December 1, however she will finish out the school year; Josh Bettsworth, Riverside High School assistant custodian; Nancy Burnett, A.C. Houghton Elementary School Title I education assistant.

-approved the following employment: Bonnie Moore, Sam Boardman Elementary School four-hour assistant cook; Angela, Tipton, Irrigon

Junior/Senior High School department secretary; Delia Lopez, RHS assistant custodian.

-approved the following extra duty contracts: Vern Gumbert, Irrigon Junior High head boys' basketball coach; Mindy Wilson, Heppner Junior High assistant girls' basketball coach; Anna Conklin, HJH head girls' basketball coach; Ken Bailey, HJH head wrestling coach; Mike Ehrsam, HJH assistant boys' basketball coach; Cody Rolan, HJH head boys' basketball coach; Richard Rockwell, RHS assistant wrestling coach; and Randal Olsen, RHS assistant baseball coach.

-heard a report on the Morrow Education Center curriculum.

-approved an attendance variance from MCSD to the Hermiston School District.

-heard the following attendance report: A.C. Houghton Elementary School, Irrigon-265; Heppner Elementary School-196; Heppner High School-224; Irrigon Elementary School-197; Irrigon High School-336; Riverside High School-423; Sam Boardman Elementary School-320; Windy River Elementary School, Boardman-220; Morrow Education Center-MCSD-223; Morrow Education Center-Umatilla School District-46; total 2,250 students.

-approved a revision to the district's criminal records checks/fingerprinting policy as mandated.

-adopted the fol-

lowing budget calendar for the 2010-11 budget: March 12, 2010-budgets due from buildings and departments; April 14-publication of notice of budget meeting; April 21-second notice of budget meeting; April 22-distribution of budget document to committee; May 3-first budget meeting and budget message; May 10-regular board meeting, second budget meeting if needed, with additional meeting dates to be set by the committee if needed; May 21-deadline for budget approval; June 2-publication of notice of budget hearing; June 14-budget hearing, adopt budget and make appropriations; June 14-regular board meeting; July 1-beginning of 2010-2011 fiscal year; July 15-deadline to certify levy to assessor.

-heard the following announcements: Veteran's Day holiday, November 11; Oregon School Board Association convention, Portland, November 12-15; Thanksgiving holiday, November 26-27; next board meeting, Irrigon Elementary School, 7 p.m., December 14; winter break, December 19-January 3; school resumes January 4.

Upon hearing the announcements read, board Chair Barney Lindsay commented, "Why do we call it winter break? What happened to Christmas?" "You can call it Christmas break if you want to Barney," retorted Burrows.

-held an executive session concerning legal issues.

CITY COUNCIL

get through redistricting.

Anderson said although participation in the census is not voluntary, and it is against Federal law to refuse to answer, only 3-4 questions are "required" to be answered on the several page census forms.

In other business the council heard from Ryan Miller of Miller Disposal, the Heppner garbage collection franchise holder, who said they would be discontinuing cardboard pickup at the end of this month. Miller said the price he is able to get for cardboard does not justify the cost of picking it up. "There just isn't enough volume to continue in Heppner," Miller told the council. "It is too small an area to generate the volume," he said. "But we gave it a shot." The company had been picking cardboard up for recycle for several months now.

The council heard a report from public works director Brian Harmon, who said overall the Court Street reconstruction project recently completed in Heppner (see related story) went pretty smoothly. "Everyone worked together," Harmon said about the city crew, contractor Knife River, and ODOT. He said there was one more problem to fix before the project would be considered completed. A driveway belonging to Gary Schonbacher that is also used by the neighbor will have to be replaced because of a design flaw that caused vehicles to brush concrete when pulling into the driveway. There was also one other driveway that had to be replaced.

The council also approved a new water and sewer application form that requires the landlord of the property sign the form and be notified if the renter gets behind on payments. The city wants to hold landlords responsible for unpaid water and sewer charges even though it collects a \$130 deposit when new customers sign up. The deposit is supposed to take care of unpaid bills. The city has had some problems in the past collecting on unpaid

water bills, and is cracking down on late payers and those who try to skip town without paying.

The council was apprised of money received by the city from county "tippage" or Findley Buttes Landfill fees. Cities and other groups apply to a special economic group that this year doled out \$250,000 in tippage fees. A complete list including what the City of Heppner received is below:

- Boardman Community Development Assn. Community Sports Complex	\$30,000
- Columbia River Community Health Services New Clinic Project	\$10,000
- Boardman Park and Recreation District Community Center Planning	\$4,000
- Boardman Senior Center Upgrade Tables and Chairs	\$4,200
- City of Heppner/Heppner Little League Hager Park Restroom	\$18,500
- Heppner Chamber of Commerce Computer for Chamber Office	\$550
- Heppner Senior Citizens Center Window Blinds	\$4,750
- Heppner Daycare & Preschool Operating Subsidy	\$3,700
- Heppner High School/Heppner Booster Club Fairgrounds/Stadium Snack Shack	\$9,900
- City of Ione Street Paving & Repair - Emert Rd; A, B, C & D St.	\$10,000
- City of Ione Park Restoration	\$5,000
- Ione Little League Little League Field	\$5,000
- Creative Care Preschool Operating Subsidy	\$2,000

- Ione Booster Club SMART and Read-N-Play	\$3,000
- ICABO - Ione Education Foundation - Grow Ione, Inc.	\$15,000
- Emert's Second Addition	
- Town of Lexington Water Reservoir Update	\$28,000
- Town of Lexington Waterproof Storage Building	\$7,000
- Town of Lexington Fire Department Personal Protection Equipment	\$2,500
- City of Irrigon Water Line to Irrigon Sports Complex	\$6,500
- Irrigon Rural Fire Protection District Personal Protection Equipment	\$15,000
- Oregon Trail Library District Irrigon Branch Library	\$10,000
- Irrigon Jr/Sr High School/Knights Pride Boosters Athletic Complex Concessions Facility	\$7,500
- Irrigon Marina Park Recreation District Irrigon Park Dist. Equipment and Shop Building	\$7,700
- Stokes Landing Senior Center Dining Hall/Kitchen Upgrade	\$8,800
- Morrow County Tourism Committee Morrow County Brochure	\$1,500
- Morrow County Health District Emergency Services Training Mannequin	\$9,500
- Ione/Lexington Cemetery District Cemetery Stone Restoration	\$3,000
- North Morrow Vector Control District Fogging Unit	\$17,400
Total	\$250,000

HEALTH CARE RALLY

However, the most impressive part of the whole event was that after standing there for two hours, everyone followed through. The entire crowd headed straight to the House office buildings. Quietly, politely, earnestly - citizen lobbyists 20,000 to 40,000 strong entered the offices of our representatives to express our concerns. As you walked down the hall ordinary everyday citizens passed in small groups - in every office 10 to 12 people were clearly and intelligently expressing their concerns and values. This continued until the offices closed at 6 p.m.

• The response? Some offices were polite - others were more hostile. Many felt that they only needed to listen to those from their own state. They

were told in many ways that because this issue affects the freedoms of every individual in the country - we all were the constituents of all of them. It became very apparent that we as citizens have been too complacent - which has caused some of our representatives to become arrogant and unable to listen to the public. The members are much too insulated from the people they represent. Staffers form a very real barrier between the congressman and constituents. Rarely do they have to talk face to face with the people they serve. It is apparent that for many of the Blue Dog Democrats (those who are supposed to be fiscally conservative) the main and primary goal is to get re-elected.

We returned and continued the effort on

Friday. Many of the people of the day before had returned home. But we found ourselves in several situations (such as asking directions) where we were talking to vacationers touring the Capitol who were also concerned and were interested when they discovered our part in the rally. There were people from Ohio, Texas, San Francisco - who thanked us for our efforts.

The bill that ultimately passed the House on Saturday evening, if also adopted by the Senate, would not only end healthcare as we now know it in the United States, it would also tax its citizens into submission and poverty, destroying our once thriving economy and take away basic constitutional liberties of choice and self determination.

However, our efforts made a difference in many ways. The Republican caucus knows that people who care are a real and committed part of the electorate. The bill passed the house by only five votes. The Senate is aware of people's concerns in an additional and very concrete way and as they continue to hear these voices of middle America there is still hope they will create a better bill that will allow America's vision of freedom and liberty to remain intact.

However, what I learned is that the people of our great nation need to be "Touring" the Capitol less and "Participating" more. It is the only way our rights and freedoms will remain ours.

Doherty returns from software testing trip to D.C.



While working in Washington, D.C. Doherty was able to go to the Washington Monument, World War I and II Memorial, the White House, Korean Memorial, Holocaust Memorial, and the National Mall. -Contributed Photo

Adam Doherty of the Heppner branch of the Farm Service Agency recently returned from a trip to Washington, D.C.

While in D.C., Doherty tested software for programs that the Farm Service Agency administers. "With the new Farm Bill passing in 2009, new pro-

grams were implemented," said Doherty, "and in order for them to work in the county office, they needed office people to test to see if what they had written would work in the real world."

Doherty was in Washington, D.C. October 13-23.