Bessie Wetzell Newspaper Library
University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403

HEPPNER 50¢

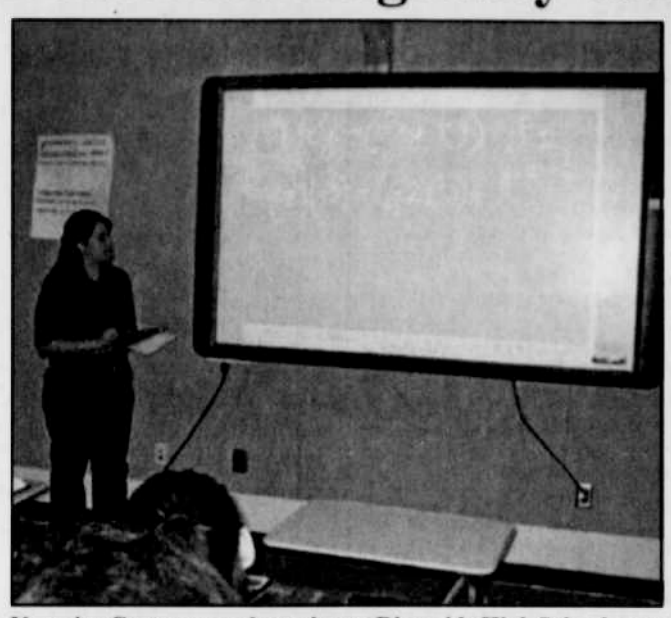
Gazette Times

VOL. 129 NO. 7 10 Pages Wednesday, February 17, 2010 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

School district to receives nearly $200,000 less in taxes than assessor originally estimates

By April Sykes

Morrow County Assessor Greg Sweek appeared before the Morrow County School Board February 8 to explain the discrepancy between his estimate as to what the district might have received in local option taxes and the amount of taxes they would actually receive.



Veronica Cortez, a math teacher at Riverside High School, uses a promethean board to teach Algebra II. *–Contributed Photo*

Sweek told the board and Superintendent Mark Burrows that outdated software contributed to the difference in calculating monies lost to compression. He said that he estimated compression by code area which would have resulted in a gain of $540,000 for the district through the local option tax. If he had been able to estimate the compression loss by "account extension", it would have shown that the district would actually garner only $365,000. If not for compression, the school district would have received $1 million from the local option tax. Compression is a cap on the amount that taxpayers pay.

Sweek said that it would probably take a minimum of $200,000 for the assessor's office for purchase of the software equipment and conversion. He said the conversion would probably be the more expensive of the two. He said he has spoken with the Morrow County Court and is starting to look at systems and is planning site visits to look at other counties' systems. He said he hopes to have an idea of the type of system he would like to purchase and the cost involved by budget time.

Also at the meeting, Dr. Mark Mulvihill, Umatilla-Morrow Education Service District superintendent, presented the 2010-2011 local service plan to the board. UMESD provides programs for special needs children, technology support, school improvement services and administrative and support services for "component" school districts, which means those districts have contracts for services. UMESD shows budgeted expenditures of $5,307,280 for fiscal year 2010 with proposed expenditures of $5,825,074 for a $517,794 loss. Local property taxes comprise $2,807,991 of the budget and state school support makes up $3,088,987. For fiscal year 2009, UMESD received $2,704,731 in local property taxes and $3,112,956 in state school support for $5,817,687 in income versus $5,682,694 in expenditures for a $446,775 loss.

The board approved the 2010-2011 local service plans.

Component school districts, besides Morrow County School District, include Athena-Weston, Echo, Helix, Hermiston, Ione, Milton-Freewater, Pendleton, Pilot Rock, Stanfield, Ukiah and Umatilla.

UMESD previously outlined with MCSD a proposed merger between UMESD and the Union Baker ESD.

In other business, the board:

-presented Riverside High School's state Outstanding School Award to Dirk Dirksen, RHS principal.

-heard from Ray Michael, pharmacist and owner of Boardman Pharmacy, who offered his apology, but said he would not be able to continue to work with the district's pharmacy insurance plan for employees. "I just can't continue

-See SCHOOL DISTRICT/ Page SEVEN

Economic development group holds annual meeting

The Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group (WCVEDG) held its annual meeting last Thursday and elected David Sykes as president for 2010. Sykes was president in 2009 as well. The group also elected board members including George Koffler, Ed Rollins of the Bank of Eastern Oregon, Nancy Snider of Wheatland Insurance, Dave DeMayo Heppner City manager, Mike Blauer, Morrow County Health District administrator and Marcia Kemp of the US Forest Service. Sykes is the owner of the Heppner Gazette-Times Newspaper and Sykes Real Estate in Heppner.

The guest speaker at the meeting, which was held in conjunction with the Heppner Chamber of Commerce weekly meeting, was Matt Bergstrom, administrator of the new Secure Residential Treatment Facility in Heppner. The lunch meeting attracted about 50 people and was held at the St. Patrick's Senior Center.

Sykes went over WCVEDG's accomplishment the past year and also its goals for the coming year. Last year the group secured over $7,000 in work force training funds which it gave to the medical district to use in training medical personnel. WCVEDG has already obtained over $14,000 in work-force training funds for the coming year, Sykes said, but how the training money will be allocated has not yet been determined.

David Sykes elected president

Sykes praised WCVEDG's executive director Sheryll Bates for her efforts in working with the work force training agency in securing both last year's and the coming year's funding.

In laying out the group's goals, Sykes said over the past several years the Heppner area has seen an increase in investment in "care giver" type businesses and services such as the $750,000 investment at the hospital in its nursing home facilities, the construction of the Willow Creek Terrance Assisted Living Center, and now the Lakeview Heights Secure Residential Treatment Facility (SRTF). WCVEDG hopes to study this trend and determine if there may be other types of compatible or spin off businesses that may provide related economic development for the area.

As an example of the positive economic contribution to the community the SRTF will be employing 21 people when it opens next month, and the Morrow County Health District, Pioneer Memorial Hospital and Nursing Home, and the clinic, are major employers in the area.

Sykes said WCVEDG has in the past spent a lot of time and effort trying to attract businesses to the South Morrow Industrial Park (former Kinzua Mill site) without much luck. He said the group is not giving up trying to find manufacturing or other businesses to locate there, but perhaps we should now look at the trend developing in the "care giver" type of businesses and services in this area, he said. "We want to do what we can to encourage and help the existing care giver businesses be successful, but also look for others that might complement them," Sykes told the gathered crowd.

One of the achievements of WCVEDG last year was to launch a web site with information and contacts about the industrial park for someone who may be looking for a place to locate a manufacturing or other type of business.

Another accomplishment of the group was the completion of strategic plans for all three communities in the valley, Heppner, Lexington and Ione. Bates again worked with CAPECO (a regional economic development group out of Pendleton) which met numerous times with member of each community to formulate the plans. "The plans help communities crystallize where they want to go in the future," Sykes said about the benefits of strategic plans. As a goal for the coming year WCVEDG hopes to do another plan linking the common interests of the three communities in the valley and how they may work together to accomplish positive things which benefit the whole Willow Creek Valley.

Another goal of WCVEDG for the coming year will be to encourage construction of some rental housing in Heppner. Almost everyone acknowledges that there is a shortage of adequate rental housing, especially two and three bedrooms, in the Heppner area. George Koffler will be heading up a committee to continue looking for solutions to the problem, including a possible investors group that could build a duplex or tri-plex.

WCVEDG is also looking into how it might help local people obtain some of the good paying jobs opening up in the wind generation business developing in the Ione area. There is a wind technician training program at Columbia Gorge Community College in The Dalles, and Blue Mountain Community College is investigating whether it might partner with the college and provide long distance training or other services to offer the training. The wind technician certification is a two-year program with both classroom and hands on training taking care of windmills. There are several large windmill operations either in construction or already operating in the Ione area of south Morrow County. WCVEDG has attended meetings about the training and will see what it can do to help.

The new Secure Residential Treatment Facility held the first of two open houses for the public Tuesday. The public was invited to walk around the facility and there were hors d'oeuvres and staff on hand to answer questions.

Heppner basketball/wrestling teams to participate in district tournaments

The Heppner boys' and girls' basketball teams will both head to the Blue Mountain Conference district playoffs scheduled in Pendleton Friday and Saturday, February 19 and 20. The wrestling team will participate in their district tournament on Friday, February 19, beginning at 2 p.m. and Saturday, February 20, beginning at 10 a.m. in Union.

The basketball district tournament information is as follows:

Friday, February 19, games are as follows:

***1 p.m., Girls' game #1-Team 2 vs. Team 3;**

***approximately 2:45 p.m. Boys' game #1-Team 2 vs. Team 3;**

*** 6 p.m., Girls' game #2-Team 4 vs. Team 5;**

***approximately 7:45 p.m. Team #1 is protected.**

Saturday, February, 20 games are as follows:

***1 p.m., Girls' game #3-winner of game #2 vs. loser of game #1;**

***approximately 2:45 p.m., Boy's game #3-winner of game #2 vs. loser of game #1;**

***6 p.m., Girls' game #4-winner of game #1 vs. team #1;**

***approximately 7:45 p.m., Boys' game #4-winner of game #1 vs. team #1.**

The winner of Saturday's game #4 will be the number-one seed to the state tournament and will receive the first-place trophy. The BMC championship banner will be presented to the league champion.

The loser of Saturday's game #4 will be the number-two seed to the state tournament and will receive the second place trophy.

The winner of Saturday's game #3 will be the number-three seed to the state tournament.

Ticket prices are as follows: Per session: adults-$6, students-$4; Day Pass (two sessions): adults-$10, students-$7; Tournament Pass: adults-$18, students-$12.

ALL NEWS AND ADVERTISEMENT DEADLINE:
MONDAYS AT 5:00 P.M.

* Insulated coveralls * * Coats * * Stock Tank Deicers *
* Electric Heaters * * Pack Boots *
Winter Clearance Sale 30% OFF
Also, heated Pet Bowls, Buckets & Pet Beds
Morrow County Grain Growers Green Feed & Seed
242 W. Linden Way, Heppner • 676-9422 • 989-8221 (MCGG main office)