

City releases 37-city comparison survey

By David Sykes

If you have ever wondered how Heppner stacks up on tax rates, general fund expenditures and full time employees when compared with other cities around the state of similar populations and services, the city released a survey Monday that may answer some of those questions.

The survey was conducted by Michelle Amberg, City Manager of Toledo, and included responses from 37 cities with population under 5,000 around the state of Oregon. The survey was distributed to the Heppner City Council at its regular monthly meeting Monday night.

A copy of the survey is printed on Page EIGHT of this week's Gazette-Times.

The council had held a special meeting on April 6 to appoint a replacement for council member Sandra Van Doorn, who had earlier resigned.



New council member Cody High

After interviewing two candidates the council voted in secret ballot to appoint Cody High to fill out the remaining two years of Van Doorn's position.

High is 25 years old, single and works at Bucknum's Tavern in Heppner. He lived here previously in 2003 when his father worked for the US Forest Service and he was a senior in high school. High left to attend Oregon Technical Institute and then left school and returned to Heppner.

He told the council his biggest desire for Heppner was to make it a good place to raise a family. When asked by the Gazette how he felt about serving on the council High said he was "looking forward

to it."

The council also interviewed Tim Collins for the position, but in the end voted four to one in favor of High.

In other action at the meeting the council gave City Manager Dave De Mayo the go-ahead to contact local contractors about renovating the upstairs of city hall. De Mayo said he wanted to find out if there was a contractor that would take on the expense of the project for future revenue from tenants that might locate there. De Mayo said it was not being used now and the upstairs might make good office space to rent out.

The council heard from council member, and sheriff's deputy John Bowles, who gave a report on police activity around the city the past month.

Bowles said there were seven traffic citations issued in March. There were three people arrested for Driving Under the Influence of Intoxicants. A parked vehicle was struck at Gale and Center streets by another vehicle which fled the scene. The driver of the fleeing vehicle was arrested for hit and run property damage and initiating a false report.

In other incidents flags were reported being removed from a private residence and harassing notes being left behind. Eggs were also thrown at houses and someone had written in fresh concrete.

The police reported that there were nine animal complaints, two of which were barking dogs. Nine

dogs were transported to Pet Rescue. Two citations were issued for maintaining a dog as a public nuisance. A dog trap was set to capture a dog getting into garbage. Also a citizen reported fraud on a credit card, and a rifle was reported stolen from a vehicle.

In the city in March the police also arrested one person for unlawful possession of a firearm, issued 11 Minor in Possession/Consumption of alcohol citations. And the police reported investigating threatening text messages being sent.

In other business the city crew reported starting work on the "lover's lane" bridge behind the bowling alley. The bridge is closed while the decking and some structural beams are replaced or repaired.

The city learned that Kirk Street alleyway has shrunk. Edward Haugvar recently purchased a lot adjoining the alley and had it surveyed. The survey shows that boundary actually closes off the alleyway. De Mayo said the new owner is willing to work with the city to resolve the issue.

The council heard that the "Oregon is Indian Country" display will be arriving at city hall soon. The display will be there about a month. The city manager invited the public to come to city hall and view the display. He said the schools had also been invited to send children to see the display, but so far he had not heard a response to the invitation.

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Candidates debate issues at local forum



Candidates for the upcoming election attended a forum Sunday and answered questions from the public. Seated L-R at the table are: Tim Maloney for governor candidate Allen Alley; Rex Watkins running for governor; Colleen MacLeod candidate for State Representative Dist. 57; Terry Tallman and Dean Kegler, County Judge; Justin Nelson and Tom Cutsforth, District Attorney; Earl Woods, Anne Spicer and Terry Felda, Justice of the Peace; and Ken Grieb County Commissioner. Front right is moderator Bill Kuhn with Jack Melligan handling questions. -Photo by David Sykes

By David Sykes

Candidates for governor, state representative, county judge, district attorney, justice of the peace and county commissioners came before the public Sunday in Heppner to answer questions and debate the issues. Approximately 58 people came to the forum, which was sponsored by the Willow Creek Party Tea Party Patriots, and held at the Heppner High School.

One gubernatorial candidate and a stand in for another were the first to be questioned. The public filled out cards and passed them to the front where local attorney and forum moderator Bill Kuhn asked the questions and generally ran the show.

Governor candidates - Allen Alley and Rex Watkins

Many of the questions directed to the governor candidates concerned state spending. One question was about the Business Energy Tax Credit, or now known as the BETC tax credit, which has helped many of the wind farms establish here and avoid millions of dollars in state taxes. "Millions of dollars has been racked up for green energy," Watkins, who is a businessman from Albany, told the crowd. "I am not a big fan of welfare, personal or corporate." Tim Maloney, a campaign worker standing in for Allen Alley who was unable to make the forum, said Alley believes Oregon does not have a business friendly environment and "we need to overhaul the tax structure and PERS (public retirement fund)." State spending is out of control and Alley thinks high taxes are driving businesses out of Oregon. "We need to tax the government," he said

and directed people to a web site called taxthegovernment.com for an explanation of Alley's position, Maloney said.

Alley's representative also said the federal government has run over the 10th amendment to the constitution and state's rights. "Many western states are over one-half owned by the federal government," he said. Watkins agreed and said 53% of the state of Oregon is owned by the federal government. "We have been taxed and regulated enough," he said.

When asked what the government can do to create jobs, Watkins said it is not the government's job to create jobs. "Government needs to get out of the way. Private enterprise will create jobs if government does that," Watkins said.

Alley's position is that he would appoint a person from the economic development department to serve Eastern Oregon specifically. He also believes businesses are taxed too high. Allen also wants to see a repeal and defeat of measures 66 & 67, tax increase measures passed by the legislature.

On education, Watkins says there is no competition in delivering education and that the public system is not working. "The legislature put a cap on online and charter schools because the teacher unions did not like it," he said. He said he was in favor of vouchers for private schools.

Alley said he supports school choice and pointed out that government spending has gone up 48% over the past 10 years, "but the government has not shown a 48% increase in services."

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2010 Walk MS to be held April 17

Join the Walk MS community move and be moved to end the devastating effects of MS. The 12th year of Walk MS Heppner will be held on April 17 at 9 a.m. with more than 100 people will be walking for a cure.

"Last year I felt like my MS was winning the fight so my doctor put me on a new disease modifying drug and today I am much better" said a past walker. It is because of generous supporters, walkers, and volunteers of Walk MS Heppner that these drugs are available to those

with MS. In Gilliam, Wheeler, and Morrow County there are at least 12 people who have MS, which means that 12 families in area communities are faced with the challenges of this disease every day. "I'm asking for your support again this year" said a walk coordinator. "Your donations continue to make a difference in the lives of many people with MS."

Walk MS is the single largest fundraising event for the National MS Society- Oregon Chapter.

In 2009, 80 cents of every dollar donated to Walk MS went to the Oregon Chapter to support research and more services for people with MS in our area. Research is moving forward at a fast pace. A new oral medication could be available this spring which improves walking in people with all kinds of MS.

Participants can register online at www.mswalkoregon.com or by calling 503-445-8342. For more information contact Merilee McDowell at 541-676-5238.

Morrow County School Board approves graduation requirement changes

By April Sykes

The Morrow County School District Board approved the first reading of changes to the district's graduation requirements at their Monday night meeting at Windy River Elementary School in Boardman.

MCSD Superintendent Mark Burrows told the board that the district's changes in graduation requirements were in response to state mandates. "It's not something we have a lot of choice about," he said.

"We want all kids who are capable to get the Oregon diploma," said Burrows. "We will work very hard to get everyone over that bar." He noted that only students who receive the regular Oregon diploma may be recipients of student aid and other benefits. He added that one way of accomplishing that goal would be through work samples, which are allowed. He said that before the next board meeting administrators will hammer out what those work samples will be.

Upon final approval, in order to receive a regular Oregon diploma, district graduation policies are as follows:

*2010 and 2011 graduates are required to have 24 credits to graduate: four in English, including one unit in written comprehension,

three in math, two in science, three in social studies, one in health, one in PE, one in career technical education, the arts or a second language and nine electives.

*2012 and 2013 graduates are also required to have 24 credits: four in English, including one unit in written comprehension, three in math, three in science (up from two) three in social studies, one in health, one in PE, three in career technical education, the arts of a second language (up from one) and six electives (down from nine). The 2012 graduates must be enrolled in grade nine during the 2008-09 school year and must be able to read and comprehend a variety of text. The 2013 graduates must be enrolled in grade nine during the 2009-10 school year and be able to read and comprehend a variety of text, write clearly and accurately.

*2014 and beyond graduates are required to have 24 credits: four in English, including one unit in written comprehension, three in math at the algebra I level and higher, three in science, three in social studies, one in health, one in PE, three in career technical ed, the arts or a second language and six electives. The 2014 graduates must be enrolled in grade nine during

the 2010-11 school year and be able to read and comprehend a variety of text, write clearly and accurately and apply math. The 2015 graduates (and subsequent years) must be enrolled in grade nine during the 2011-12 (and subsequent) school year and be able to read and comprehend a variety of text, write clearly and accurately, apply math and any additional essential skills adopted by the state board of education.

Other requirements include: developing an education plan and building an education profile; demonstrating extended application through a collection of evidence and participating in career related learning experiences.

The district may award a diploma to a student who does not satisfy the above math and English requirements if the student has exceeded the academic content standards or displays proficiency in math or English, as demonstrated on Oregon state assessments.

The board also approved a modified diploma for students who have demonstrated the inability to meet the full set of academic for a high school diploma even with reasonable accommodations. A modified diploma

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Heppner, Ione proms to be held Saturday

Heppner and Ione Schools will hold their proms on Saturday, April 17. Heppner High School will hold their prom from 8-12 on Saturday night at the Morrow County Fairgrounds. Ione School will hold their prom from 8-12 on Saturday night at the Port of Morrow.

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