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New Morrow County School superintendent swears in newly-elected board members

By April Sykes
New Morrow County School Superintendent Dirk Dirksen swore

in newly-elected school board members at the meeting held Monday night in Lexington. Dirksen is a long-time educator with the district, having been Riverside High School principal for many years.

This meeting marked the first for Dirksen as superintendent and the first for new board members Becky Kindle and Brian Kollman, both of Heppner. Long-time board member Bill Kuhn, a nine-year board veteran, was also sworn in.

Previous board chair Barney Lindsay turned the gavel over to Thad Killingbeck, elected chair at the meeting, while Lindsay took over as board vice-chair.

At the meeting, Assistant Superintendent George Mendoza outlined two new web-based programs that were designed to help special education and low performing students realize improvement.

The programs were purchased through a \$442,500 federal stimulus grant, ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act). Mendoza stressed that if MCSD had not used the funds, the monies would have reverted back to the federal government.

One aspect of the program, Read 180, purchased at a cost of \$109,000, is a reading program designed for secondary students. The other, Success Maker, purchased at a cost of \$79,000, is a math and reading intervention program for elementary-level students. Mendoza said that the district purchased 120 licenses for the high school program and 60 for the elementary program. Mendoza said that once the licenses are purchased, they belong to the district and may be reused. He said that it would cost the district around \$10,000 per year to keep the programs maintained and up to date.

He added that the district purchased English programs only, rather than bilingual, and plans to use the programs right from the start of the school year. School begins August 29.

The board also received a brief update on the Eastern Promise program, the brainchild of InterMountain Education Service District superintendent Mark Mulvihill, which would allow high school students to take college courses while still in high school. The program, involving area high schools, Blue Mountain Community College, Treasure Valley Community College and Eastern Oregon University, would exponentially expand students' options. Mulvihill told the Gazette-Times that the Morrow County School



Superintendent Dirk Dirksen swears in newly-elected board members (L-R) Brian Kollman, Bill Kuhn and Becky Kindle. —Photo by April Sykes

District is very well positioned for participation in the program. Michael Lasher, IMESD assistant superintendent, told the board that all school districts in Morrow County will be invited to participate in the Eastern Promise program. However, details concerning MCSD high schools' participation in the program are still being determined. Eastern Promise plans to begin the program with speech and biology classes. Currently Riverside High School in Boardman and Irrigon High School are dual-credit certified in math, and HHS is in its third year of being able to offer dual credits in career-technical areas.

In other business, the board:

—heard a report from Lasher that the ESD has sustained \$435,000 in budget cuts, but emphasized that the costs will not be passed on to school districts using IMESD services. Instead, he said, cuts were made primarily through elimination of administrative positions following Umatilla-Morrow ESD's recent merger with Union-Baker ESD to form IMESD.

—learned from Dirksen that four schools in the district have met AYP (Average Yearly Progress): A.C. Houghton Elementary in Irrigon, Heppner Elementary School, Heppner High School and Sam Boardman Elementary. "They keep raising the bar," said Dirksen. "It's harder and harder to make it." Dirksen said that it is particularly difficult in sub-groups such as special education.

—learned from Dirksen that the district has purchased three vans, two cars and two pickups because it was discovered that it would be cheaper for the district to purchase new vehicles rather than repair the old ones.

—heard an update on the distance learning program between Heppner High School and the Morrow Education Center in Irrigon, whereby MEC students will earn credits for classes taught by an HHS teacher.

—learned that 145 district students took advanced placement classes,

76 from HHS, 42 from Riverside and 27 from Irrigon High School; six students at RHS and three at IHS took credits through expanded options at BMCC.

—heard from Dirksen concerning several expenditures: a \$4,000 expenditure at Irrigon Elementary fire panel and \$5,000 for dishwasher replacement and repair following a leak at A.C. Houghton, which got into the asbestos flooring.

—heard an attendance variance report from Dirksen that 12 students from out of district opted in and five in district opted out. New Oregon legislation mandates open enrollment.

—tabled action on the district's human sexuality policy and curriculum until after meetings with Morrow County Health Department, local ministers, Oregon Department of Education representatives and community/parent meetings. The board plans to take action in October.

—learned that new teacher orientation is August 15-16 and in-service will be held August 22.

—learned that Mid-Co Bus Company, which provides district transportation, will not change their rates this year.

—approved the second reading and adopted policy on district nutrition, food services, reimbursable school meals and milk programs.

—approved the following employment action: resignations—Michelle Gaele, Windy River Elementary fourth-grade teacher, Jessica Lehmann, Irrigon Junior/Senior High School Spanish teacher, Anne Osterland, Irrigon Elementary School sixth-grade teacher, Randy McKimmy, Sam Boardman Elementary education assistant, Sarah Harris, Morrow Education Center ed assistant; extra duty resignations—Stefanie Sweeney, Heppner Junior High assistant track coach, Melissa Coiner, HHS head track coach, Kelly Doherty, RHS head volleyball coach; employment—Eric Lougee, MEC, English as a Second Language ed assistant, re-

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HEPPNER

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City seeks \$50,000 in state funds for Quaid Street improvements

Project would put sidewalks on both sides of street up to Elder and the grade school

By David Sykes

If the city of Heppner receives \$50,000 in funding from the State of Oregon, Quaid St. from Main to Elder near the grade school might have two new sidewalks, the city council was informed Monday night.

City Manager Dave DeMayo said a special street fund set up by the state for cities with populations of fewer than 5,000 has made the funds available for city street improvements. He outlined the proposed Quaid Street project, which will include curbs, gutters and 500 feet of sidewalk up both sides of the street. The improvements would improve safety for children walking to school along Quaid, DeMayo said.

Council member Cody High asked if the project design was a done deal, and wondered if the residents on Quaid would have any input into how the project was constructed. DeMayo said if the city did receive the funds, the public would have input. He said the earliest the project would get underway would be 2012.

In other business,

the city accepted an offer of \$20,000 on the former HUD house at 160 S. Court St. The city had purchased the house for \$1 under a special HUD (Housing and Urban Development) program that lets cities buy repossessed homes once they have been on the market and not sold for a minimum of six months. Theodore and Theda Phelps of Kimberly made the cash offer. There was one other offer on the property from a local person, which was substantially less than the accepted price.

The city also heard a report from DeMayo, who said that recently-released 2010 Census data showed that Heppner's population dropped 119 since the last census in 2000, from 1,410 to 1,291. DeMayo also displayed figures that showed the labor force in the city dropped from 635 to 565, or 70 employed people. Management and service jobs fell, but this was compensated for by increases in manufacturing, public administration and self-employment, DeMayo said. Median income has remained about the same. The worst of the poverty, unfor-

tunately, is among families where a father is absent, he added in his report.

DeMayo also said that in the past two months "the cities of Morrow County have been discussing the possibility of doing a joint marketing plan that would involve all five of the cities." He said Pendleton based ARTIFX Media is interested in being the agency that would develop the plan.

DeMayo said the larger cities—Boardman, Irrigon and Heppner—would do a three-way split of the cost (estimated to be \$4,000 each).

"Lexington and Ione would join us at no cost. This is an opportunity for all five cities to work together. It is exciting, and I think this is a step in the right direction," he added.

ARTIFX owners were scheduled to talk to the council Monday night about the plan. However, they did not show up, so the council took no action on the proposal.

Also as part of his report to the council, DeMayo said he had met

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Old and new methods unite for modern farmers



Loren Heideman and son, Deacon, have been combining old farm equipment with new to solve the problem of erosion control. After the 50-acre field fire in the Sand Hollow area two weeks ago, the father-son duo is using an old buck rake pulled behind a utility tractor to spread straw on the burn area for erosion control. —Photo by Della Heideman

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