

# Heppner declines to participate in county government reform

By David Sykes

The Heppner City Council was less than enthusiastic Monday to be part of an effort by the mayors and city managers' group to rewrite the

Morrow County Charter, changing how many elected commissioners the county has.

The mayors and city managers group meets monthly to discuss common problems and solutions. At last month's meeting, the group decided, because of increased frustration with the decisions of county government, to try to change the charter to what is commonly called a "home rule" form of government. Home rule usually consists of five elected officials, a paid administrator and appointed positions such as assessor, clerk, and treasurer, instead of those positions being elected. The mayors and managers say they feel the cities would be treated more favorably under this form of government.

The group said the current charter was established in 1859 and is outdated.

"With the growth of the county population, budget, and the complexity of the situations that the county deals with, the May-

ors/Managers believed that it was time for a change," a news release said last month.

The latest squabble between the cities and the county involves state highway funds. The county has traditionally given money received from the state for use by the cities in their road funds. The county budget committee learned, however, that it was not required to give that money and at first decided to cut the distribution of those funds in half this year and maybe eliminate it altogether next year. The county later relented and reinstated some funds, but not before the city managers and mayors became upset.

The friction between the two dates even farther back, to 2008 when the cities banded together to place an initiative on the ballot that would change the way some \$1 million in tip-page fees (money received from dumping fees at the large Finley Buttes Landfill in Morrow County) is distributed. The cities felt they

should receive 75 percent of the funds. The initiative was defeated by voters at the polls.

In the current charter reform effort, the mayors and managers say they are going to form a charter committee made up of two members each from the communities of Heppner, Boardman and Irrigon and one member from each of the communities of Lexington and Lone. This committee would be tasked with drafting a charter that would eventually be submitted for a vote by the citizens of Morrow County.

The plan hit a bump Monday, however, when the Heppner City Council said it wanted no part of the reform effort.

"Why are we appointing someone to this?" councilmember Cody High asked.

Councilmember Cindi Doherty cited a county ordinance that said any committee to change the charter must be appointed. *-See COUNTY GOVERNMENT/PAGE EIGHT*

HEPPNER

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# Gazette Times

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## Changing Heppner street route saves taxpayers \$135,000

### City comes up with alternate route to avoid expensive bridge replacement

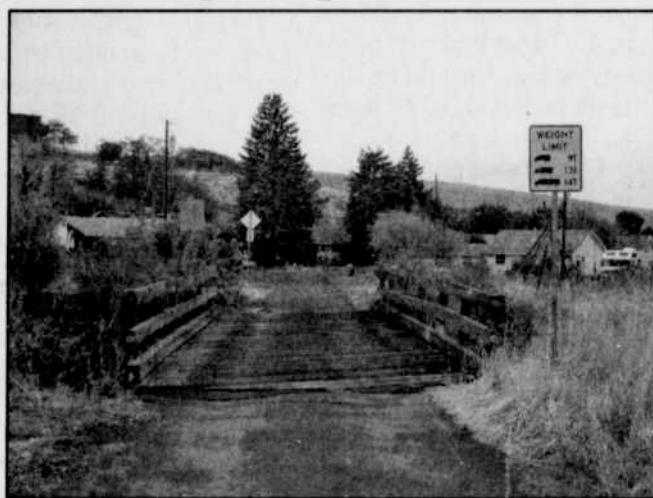
By David Sykes

A suggestion to the Oregon Department of Transportation to reroute a Sperry St. access and avoid a costly bridge replacement could save taxpayers an estimated \$135,000, the Heppner City Council was told Monday night.

At a meeting with ODOT in September, city Public Works Director Brian Harmon suggested not replacing the Sperry St. Bridge but instead establishing accesses and building a connector between Morgan and the back side of Sperry.

The revised plan was looked on favorably by ODOT, who wrote in a recent letter to the city: "In summary a new bridge would cost approximately \$655,000 including preliminary engineering and right of way acquisition. A new street connection would cost approximately \$520,000.

"This is a favorable alternative to a new bridge that could lessen construction costs and eliminate a bridge that the city would have to maintain the fu-



The Sperry Street Bridge will probably be removed but not replaced. An alternate route to access Sperry St. has been chosen off Morgan St. *-Photo by David Sykes*

ture," ODOT said.

In other business at Monday's meeting, the council participated in a conference call with Jeff Wright of Artix Media, a Pendleton-based advertising agency, about a proposed county-wide advertising campaign the city is considering purchasing. The council had met with Wright and his partner, Katie Oblisk, at last month's meeting to discuss the campaign.

Monday, certain council members once again asked Wright what

exactly the city could expect to receive from the campaign, and once again was given the same answer as last month. Wright told the council once he is given a budgeted amount the city is ready to spend, then he could tell them what they would receive.

The plan right now is to band together with Boardman and Irrigon, with each city kicking in an as yet unspecified amount to fund the campaign. The money would then be

*-See CITY COUNCIL/PAGE FIVE*

## Gazette-Times Trophy Corner



Top: Diana Healy, age 11, shot her buck last Tuesday in the Columbia Basin as part of the Mentored Youth Hunter Program. Healy dropped the buck with the very first shot from her new shotgun. Bottom: Ten-year-old Trevor Wilson of Hermiston shot his first buck Saturday in the Heppner Unit. He bagged his four-pointer while hunting with his dad, Stacy Wilson, under the Mentored Youth Hunter Program. *-Contributed photos*

The Heppner Gazette-Times wants to see pictures of your trophy animals from this hunting season. Stop by to have your picture taken, drop off photos, email them to editor@rapidsolve.net. or send cell phone photos to 541-980-6674



## School board learns of teaching model to improve student learning

By April Sykes

Sam Boardman Elementary teacher Pam Files presented a report on a teaching model for elementary school students at the Morrow County School Board's regular meeting at SBE Monday night.

Files stressed the importance of PLCs (professional learning communities) through which teachers collaborate not only on teaching methods, but on assessment and then interventions if the students do not respond.

Board Chair Thad Killingbeck, a former educator, commented that he appreciated that Files went from speaking about "my students to our students."

"We can walk into each school and they're all doing the same thing," he said.

"The reality is that teachers getting together helps students learn," said MCS D Superintendent Dirk Dirksen. "We try to maximize the district's PLCs."

"PLCs create consistency," said Assistant Superintendent George Mendoza. "A lot of these collaborative practices increase student learning."

Mendoza also presented a program before the board on the district's "Response to Intervention" model, which stresses assessment and a tiered intervention response to children's learning based on that assessment data. He said that the majority of students, around 80 percent, fall into the Tier I level, not requiring additional intervention. Approximately 15 percent fall into Tier II, he said, requiring intermediate intervention with teacher-lead small groups, and approximately five percent require individual one-on-one instruction. He said that some students simply require more learning opportunities and more time to achieve.

In other business, the board:

*-has been invited*

to attend a safety summit scheduled for Friday, October 28, at the Port of Morrow. Mary Apple from the InterMountain ESD said that, in addition to school board members and administrators, law enforcement personnel, city mayors and city managers, and fire safety personnel have also been invited to attend as an integral part of school safety.

*-learned that a meeting on the district's "sexuality curriculum" has been scheduled on Tuesday, November 1 at the Lone School. This meeting will include administrators, sixth-grade teachers and grade seven-12 health teachers. Dirksen said the meeting will include lone educators as well as those with MCS D in order to coordinate a "county direction."*

*-heard from board member Barney Lindsay, who indicated that he would* *-See SCHOOL BOARD/PAGE SIX*

## Ann Murray named pharmacist of the year

By Andrea Di Salvo

Heppner native Ann Murray was recently named Pharmacist of the Year by the Oregon State Pharmacists Association.

This isn't the first time Murray has received the award; she and husband, John, received it jointly in 2002. Still, 47-year-old Murray, who runs Murray's Drug with her husband, said she was shocked to receive the award this year.

"I'm honored," she said. "I have no idea why I was chosen."

That sentiment is part of a patient-focused humility that makes Murray popular with both customers and staff. Pharmacy technician Jennifer Palmer says Murray goes out of her way to help patients both at the drug store and at Pioneer



Ann Murray, the OSPA pharmacist of the year, stands surrounded by her supportive team, Shannon Wicklund (L) and Jennifer Palmer (R). *-Photo by Megan Fetter*

Memorial hospital's drug room, which she directs. More than one customer has stories of Murray's "above and beyond" ethic, which includes coming in on days off, opening on weekends and delivering prescriptions to home-bound patients.

Aside from being one of Heppner's favorite pharmacists, Murray is also an advocate for rural pharmacies. She keeps state legislators updated on the issues facing small-town pharmacies and serves on the Oregon State Pharmacy Association board of directors. Ann also plays the *-See PHARMACIST OF THE YEAR/PAGE EIGHT*

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