

# City again discussing Heritage Park Indian sculpture

Some are pushing for a Umatilla Indian theme; others say stick with Heppner's Irish heritage

By David Sykes  
The city of Heppner is once again talking about

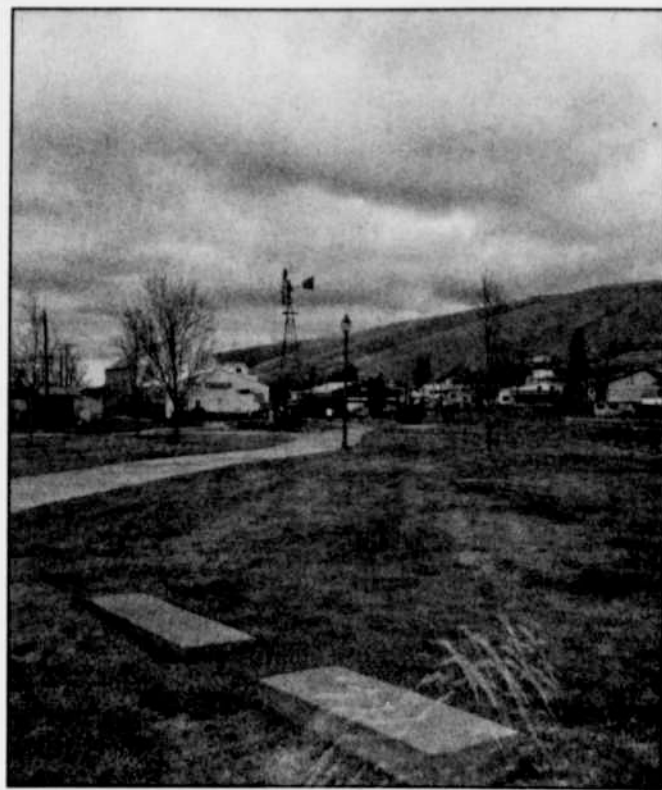
placing an Indian sculpture in one of its parks, and once again some are saying an Irish-type statue would be more accurate and appropriate.

At a January meeting of the city parks committee, several Heppner residents submitted several "options" for a statue at the park, which is located near the farm museum and already has a windmill and several antique farm equipment pieces displayed there.

Former City Manager Dave DeMayo is the main proponent of the Indian statue idea, telling the commission he would volunteer to work with the Umatilla Indian Tribes "at his own expense" to develop and locate a statue there.

The parks meeting drew a response from Heppner resident Tom Wolff, who urged the city not to place an Indian-themed statue in the park.

"Heppner and the Wil-



There is disagreement about what type of sculpture or statue should be placed at the above location in Heritage Park in Heppner. -Photo by David Sykes

low Creek Valley have a long and deep heritage of Irish culture and sheep influence, dating from before the turn of the century," Wolff wrote in a letter to the city council. -See CITY COUNCIL/PAGE SIX



## School district to change headquarters

School board votes to close Lexington district offices, move to Heppner Elementary building

By April Sykes

The Morrow County School Board voted Monday night to close down the school district office in Lexington and move the district operations to Heppner Elementary School.

"The move has been precipitated by an eroding

budget, plus an effort to reduce expenditures through the district," said a district news release. "Heppner Elementary School was selected based on the availability of space with little to no renovations being necessary. The district has completed an evaluation of

necessary maintenance on the District Office building and has decided money will be better spent in the classroom with teachers and aides who work directly with students," continued the release.

Superintendent Dirk Dirksen said it was estimated that renovating the building would cost in the neighborhood of a million dollars, while closing the building would save an estimated \$40,000-\$50,000 a year. He said the fate of the building has not yet been decided, with options including selling the building, donating it or demolishing it. "The building will continue to be monitored and the gym will be utilized by individuals for activities. The district plans to continue to work with the community to ensure all interests in the building and

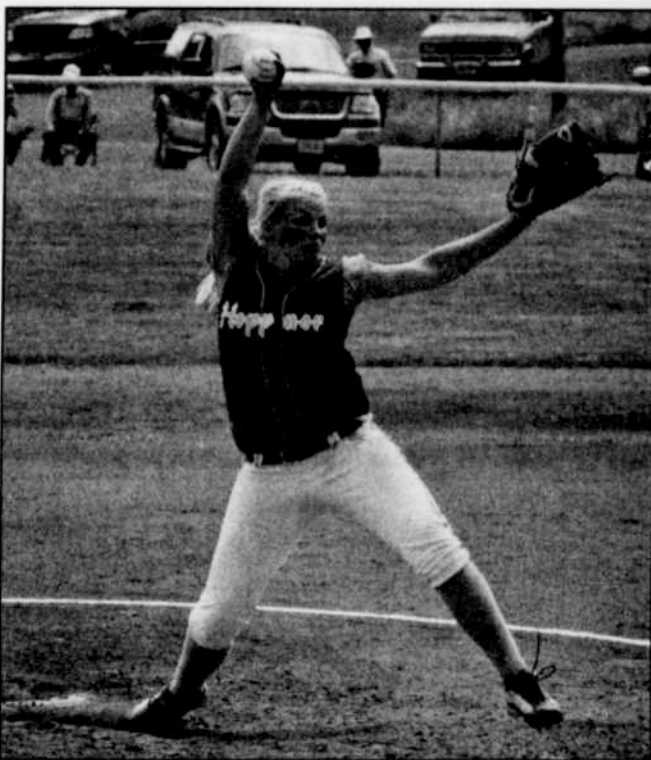
community are met," said the release.

The district had historically said that they would maintain a presence in the Lexington community, something that the district says it still desires. (See sidebar.) The board agreed to send a letter to the city of Lexington.

The superintendent's office will be moved to the "old Title room" at the end of the hall on the top floor at Heppner Elementary; the executive secretary's/personnel director's office will be established in HES' previous counselor's office; and the rest of the business office will be located in a previous classroom, said Business Manager Andy Fletcher.

Also that evening, Dirksen's performance review -See SCHOOL DISTRICT/PAGE SEVEN

## Baily Bennett wins state award



Mustang Senior Baily Bennett winds up for the pitch during an HHS softball game last year. Bennett was initially chosen as a finalist for the Oregon Sports Awards Prep Athlete award based on her softball performance. -Photo by Sandy Matthews

Heppner High School senior Baily Bennett was named Prep Athlete of the Year at the 61st Oregon Sports Awards, held Sunday, Feb. 10, in the Stanford Theater at the Tiger Woods Center at Nike's World Headquarters in Washington County.

Bennett was named Johnny Carpenter Prep Athlete of the Year, Class 4A-1A female, for her performance playing softball for HHS. The award was named for Johnny Carpenter, a pioneer sports broadcaster for KOIN from 1937 until his retirement in 1969. He helped found the Oregon Sports Writers and Sportscasters Association. The award went to the outstanding male and female Oregon 4A/3A/2A/1A high school athletes in the year 2012, selected from the finalists in the individual sport Prep Athletes categories.

In winning the award, Bennett stood alongside not only her high-school peers from across the state, but also rubbed shoulders with athletes like Ashton Eaton and Megan Rapinoe, Olympic gold-medal winners that took home the Harry Glickman Professional Athlete of the Year Awards. The Oregon Sports Awards, presented by Nike, were hosted by ESPN SportsCenter anchor and University of Oregon alum Neil Everett. A recorded version of the webcast is available on www.oregon-sportsawards.com and www.oregon-sportsawards.com.

### Lexington's response:

February 11, 2013

To: Superintendent Dirksen and Members of the Morrow County School Board  
From: The Lexington Town Council

In lieu of being at the school board meeting, as our council meeting is the same night, these thoughts will have to do in writing. Mr. Dirksen called to inform the council that the school district offices will indeed be moved to Heppner Elementary School. Our question: what is the plan for the old buildings left in Lexington?

It is our understanding that when the school was taken from Lexington that there would be a presence of the school district in each community and the district office was that for Lexington. Most citizens understand that things change and buildings don't last forever. However, leaving buildings boarded up, to deteriorate even more, without a plan for the building or property doesn't sound like a presence the district would want to leave in the community either. When the town made the choice to build a new fire hall, it was with the understanding that the old building would be demolished and the land made into a park or seeded to grass or whatever would make the property a nice site. The council believes that the same should be true of the school district.

If you choose to abandon the buildings, then a plan for the demolition and maybe a kiosk giving the history of the site should be in place or perhaps a plan to sell the property to someone who would renovate and/or develop the property. Just making another "Brownfield" for the community doesn't seem to be a wise option for the school district or the town.

We would appreciate hearing about your plan for the property.



The Morrow County School District plans on closing its offices in the former Lexington school. The offices will be relocated to Heppner Elementary; plans for the Lexington building are unknown. -Photo by David Sykes

## District exceeds statewide graduation rate

According to the Oregon Department of Education, Morrow County is doing slightly better than the state average when it comes to graduation rates.

The Oregon Department of Education released a report on Jan. 31 focused on high school dropout and graduation rates statewide for the 2011-2012 school year. According to the report, Morrow County School District has a four-year cohort graduation rate of 76.33 percent, a five-year

cohort graduation rate of 78.70 percent and a dropout rate of 3.36 percent. This is compared to the Oregon four-year cohort graduation rate of 68.4 percent, five-year cohort graduation rate of 72.4 percent, and dropout rate of 3.4 percent.

Morrow County School District is pleased that it exceeded the statewide average; however, district representatives say they are also aware and concerned that the district does not have 100 percent of stu-

dents graduating on time.

"Our plan is to improve our ability to identify all students that are not on track to graduate and work with them in meaningful ways that will encourage them to complete their high school diploma in four or five years," said Superintendent Dirk Dirksen. "When students have poor attendance, stop coming to school, fail courses and fall behind in credits, or choose

-See DISTRICT GRAD RATES/PAGE EIGHT

## Wyden schedules Morrow County town hall

Oregon Senator Ron Wyden will hold his annual town hall in Morrow County at 4:30 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 17. The

meeting will be held in the Riverfront Room of the Port of Morrow, 2 Marine Drive, Boardman.

Wyden has been holding town halls in every Oregon county every year since 1996.

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