

HEPPNER

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Gazette
Times

VOL. 132 N.O. 11 8 Pages Wednesday, March 13, 2013 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

School board postpones decision on school start date; district urges August 19 start

By April Sykes

The Morrow County School Board Monday night decided to postpone a decision about the district's school student fall start date until the April 8 board meeting. Board member Brian Kollman, Heppner, requested that the district receive additional input from staff and parents concerning a proposed early school start date of August 19 before making a decision. Kollman said that parents in the south end have told him that starting back to school the day after fair concludes can be a hardship for the students.

Board member Barney Lindsay, Lexington area, concurred and also asked for more input.

Superintendent Dirk Dirksen recommended that school begin at a record early date, August 19, the Monday after the Morrow County Fair & Rodeo closes in Heppner. The fair will be August 15-18 this year.

Dirksen encouraged the board to adopt the early start date so that students have more instructional time before the state OAKS (Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) tests in reading/literature and mathematics occur and also so that the entire semester would end prior to the two-week Christmas break.

Heppner Principal Matt Combe volunteered that he hoped the decision would be made with more regard to education than convenience.

Dirksen said that the

last opportunity, out of two, for schools to conduct the OAKS tests is May 22, although he said the district generally has the tests wrapped up by May 16.

He said that the state mandates 990 instructional hours for high school students and the district schedules 990 hours for elementary students as well. Morrow County students attend school 150 days, he said.

The administration offered three options:

-Option A, which received 65 votes from administration and staff, calls for an early start with teachers beginning August 12, a week earlier than Option B and two weeks earlier than Option C; students beginning August 19; the end of the first semester on December 19; spring break from March 24-28; students ending May 29 and teachers ending June 3.

-Option B, which came in a close second with staff, receiving 64 votes, calls for a pre-Labor Day start with teachers beginning August 19; students beginning August 26; the end of the first semester January 9; spring break from March 24-28; students ending June 4; and teachers ending June 6.

-Option C, which used to be the norm, but has not been selected for some time, has been taken off the table as an option, receiving only 31 votes. Option C called for a post-Labor Day start with teachers beginning August

26, students beginning September 3; the end of the first semester January 16; spring break March 24-28; students ending June 11; and teachers ending June 13.

All three options called for a two-week Christmas break from December 20-January 5, with school starting back on January 6.

In other business, the board: -approved a resolution to accept unanticipated revenue as follows: \$500 to Heppner Elementary for the Over the Counter Prescription Education Program for the Time Out Reading program, \$420 for the Heppner music program from the United Methodist Church; \$500 to Windy River Elementary School from the Northeast Oregon Area Health Education Center to help fund a trip to the John Day Fossil Beds; \$2,120 to WRE and HES for fourth-sixth grade students to attend a half-day writing festival; \$2,500 from Monsanto to Barney Lindsay, who in turn named the Heppner FFA as beneficiary; \$3827.15 to A.C. Houghton Elementary School from Wal-Mart to purchase iPads.

-approved a resolution to accept no non-resident students, based on enrollment projects, staffing and available resources.

-approved staffing as follows: (Heppner Schools only listed) 2012-2013 probationary teachers-Jeremy Rosenbalm,

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Steppin' out with 5K walk

Residents and visitors in Heppner are invited to start their day with a wee bit o' fun by joining the St. Patrick's Day Walk & 5K Run on Saturday at 9:30 a.m. Friends Helping Friends, which hosts the event, will gather at 8:30 a.m. in the Heppner United Methodist Church for a remembrance social hour and

registration. The five-dollar donations requested for the walk/run will help to start the funding of an antiquated heating and cooling unit at St. Patrick's Senior Center building. The committee is encouraging all who have not pre-registered to please arrive early and sign-up. Three lucky Leprechauns will be awarded the donated

door prizes of Twenty-five dollar gas cards from Devin Oil and Hatt's Fuel Stop and a large pizza from Howe's About Pizza. Everyone is encouraged to wear green or pink for the festivities. Remembrance Shamrocks will be in place around town on Friday and will remain for everyone's enjoyment until Sunday.

Merchants offer up many things Irish

By Patty Nance

It's the biggest week-end of the year - four days of food, fun and festivities when people come from all over the Northwest to experience a touch of the leprechaun - it's a St. Patrick's Day celebration in Heppner. It all begins with fabric on Thursday morning when one local business kicks off its annual Leprechaun Hat Hunt.

Each year, workers at Quilter's Roundup, located on the corner of Willow and Main Sts., hide little leprechaun hats throughout the store. Find the hat - win a prize. Cynthia Wenberg, who works at the store, said the event is very popular and lots of fun. "We love all things Irish," she said. Wenberg said the store carries "Irish" fabric throughout the year. "We always have it in stock. Whenever we see a St. Pat's collection we always try to bring it in".

Just up the street, Peterson Jewelers offers many beautiful jewelry and gift ideas in the Irish tradition. Randall and Marlene Peterson have owned and operated the store since 1959. His father, John Oscar, opened the store in 1928.

Across the street from Quilter's Roundup is one of Heppner's busiest stores. Murray's Drug Store is all that and more. Sure you can get a prescription filled, but



Local merchants, Cynthia Wenberg, Jodi Brisbois and Randall and Marlene Peterson are ready for Heppner's St. Patrick's Day festivities. -Photos by Patty Nance



you can also enjoy a latte or lunch, buy a great bottle of wine or good Irish whiskey, a bouquet of flowers or cards and a whole lot more. During St. Patrick's Day

weekend, however, Murray Drug may be best known for their St. Patrick's Day sweatshirts. The sweatshirts and ball caps have an all new look this year and are available in most sizes.

For a complete list of events, see pages 5 and 6 in this week's paper.

Coyotes on the prowl during birthing season

By Patty Nance

Crocuses and daffodils are peaking through the ground, robins are returning and the days are getting a little longer. It's springtime in south Morrow County. For many area ranchers, springtime means rebirth and renewal of their herds.

For one area rancher, this year brought sorrow along with the joy of calving season at the family's ranch in Clark's Canyon.

Bob Mahoney said last week coyotes have been a deadly problem this year, especially for newborn calves.

"Wolves aren't the only predators livestock growers have to contend with," he said. "The coyote has always been high on the livestock producer's list."

He explained that during calving season, most ranchers have a 24-hour-a-day job.

"We work all day and then must check the herd at night. We check several times each night to ensure any calves born are up and going and healthy," he said.

When things don't look right or when the nights are really cold like they were in December and January,



This calf, owned by local rancher Bob Mahoney, was attacked by coyotes immediately after its birth, the rancher said. Coyotes have always been a nemesis for area farmers and ranchers, and this year proves no different. -Contributed photo

Mahoney said the calves are taken to a warm room where they are dried off.

"The days are long and the nights are longer for cattlemen during the winter months," he said.

In January, Mahoney found a calf that was born between midnight and 5:30 a.m. that had been attacked by coyotes before it even had a chance to stand up. The calf was found close to their home on Clark's Canyon Rd.

According to local trapper Mark Angell, coyotes are numerous in that area. He traps the animals in the Social Ridge and Rhea Creek areas, and said he has trapped 25 this year in the

Social Ridge area alone.

Mahoney said the loss of a calf is bad enough but the loss becomes greater when you look at the whole picture.

"Besides the calf dying, the young cow went dry and had to be sold. That's a \$1,000 loss at a time when every dollar counts," he said. "Not only did we lose the cow and calf, we lost the income from this cow producing calves for the next seven or eight years."

Mahoney is also a bit philosophical about the issue. "The coyotes have been the ranchers' nemesis for many years and will probably always be so," he said.

Area pastors invited to submit Easter messages

Easter is March 31. The Heppner Gazette-Times invites area pastors to submit Easter messages to be published in the March 27 edition. The deadline is Friday, March 22, at 5 p.m.

Messages can be dropped off at the Gazette office, emailed to editor@rapid-serve.net, or faxed to 541-676-9211.

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