

HEPPNER

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Work began Monday on the Barrett Blvd project in Heppner. Here, workers are beginning the excavation necessary to put in a drain pipe.

## City to remove pedestals; shut down statue debate

*Council had enough of 'hard feelings and division' over Heritage Plaza statue plans*

By David Sykes

Saying it has had enough of the hard feelings and divisions caused in the community over what kind of statue to put in Heritage Plaza in Heppner, the city council Monday voted unanimously to "table indefinitely discussion and remove the concrete pedestals" (on which any statue would have been placed) concerning any park statues.

"There have been hard feelings and people are not cooperating," Mayor Joe Perry told the council. "We should table it indefinitely. It has caused very strong feelings," council member Skip Matthews added in proposing the motion



Heppner city council voted Monday to remove these two cement pedestals at Heritage Plaza, and end the debate over what kind of statue might be placed there.

that would shut down the months-long debate, which has caused heated discussion, letters to the editor and numerous meetings and proposals.

The controversy originally start in July 2012 when then city manager Dave DeMayo told the city council he had contacted the Umatilla Tribes about placing an Indian themed statue in Heritage Plaza, a park in Heppner with some farm equipment already on display there. The statue idea generated some discussion at the time as to whether it should be Indian themed, or more Irish themed, matching the city's Irish background, but at that time neither idea gained

much traction.

However, in February of 2013 DeMayo, who had since retired as city manager, resurrected the idea and went so far as to pledge \$5,000 of his own money to pay for a statue, which under one proposal would have been a "digger" silhouette of Indians. The plan immediately drew fire and praise from both critics and proponents and caused strong emotional letters to the editor, and division and discussion within the community. Heppner resident Tom Wolff wrote a letter to the city council urging that an Irish themed statue would better suite Heppner's Irish background and heritage. DeMayo coun-

tered that the display would not compete with Heppner's Irish background, and would instead inform visitors of the diversity of the area.

At a March 14 Parks committee meeting a long discussion was held about a display, and according to minutes of the meeting several different proposals were advanced, but consensus was not reached. This lack of a consensus and no evident path to resolution, prompted the council Monday to put an end to the controversy. "Maybe a year or two from now, but not in the near future," said Mayor

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## Big changes on the horizon for area post offices

By Patty Nance

Big changes are coming to the Heppner and Lone Post Offices – well, maybe.

At issue is the change in the time of day that mail is picked up from the local post offices or, in postal speak, "dispatched". Local postmasters are certain of one thing – it will be a lot earlier than it is now.

According to Heppner Postmaster Dennis Lien, the changes are a result of the shutdown of the Pendleton Processing facility. When that happens, he explained, all mail will be processed through Portland. "We don't know all of the particulars yet," he said. Lien has been Heppner postmaster since 2005 and has been an employee at the post office for the past 19 years.

The Lone post office is in the same boat, according to Stephanie Hudson, spokesperson for the Lone Post Office. "We have not been officially informed about any of it," she said.

Lien explained that starting sometime between May 1 and 5 an earlier dispatch time will be determined. There are

currently fliers in the post office telling patrons that the dispatch times for mail are being changed from 5 p.m. daily to 1 p.m. "I am afraid it could be earlier when everything is said and done," Lien said. Hudson said they are currently estimating an 11:30 a.m. dispatch time. "But that's not set in stone," she said.

Jeremy Stewart, manager of Hatt's Fuel Stop and assistant postmaster at Lexington, said the dispatch times are set to change from 12:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

The change could affect rural route customers whose mail arrives back at the post office after the new deadline. "That mail would go out the next day," Lien said.

Hudson said with the changes, which will take place in early May, will mean that mail sent from lone to Heppner will take an additional 2-4 days to deliver.

The change does not affect postmarks, Lien said. For instance, all mail

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## School board approves pre-Labor day, but not extremely early school start

By April Sykes

The Morrow County School Board approved a pre-Labor Day school start date, but did not select the early start date recommended by administration.

MCSO Superintendent Dirk Dirksen and the board reported that after receiving input from staff and parents, the early start date was not recommended, largely because staff and families advised that many had already made vacation plans for this coming August and they believed it was too soon, right on the heels of the Morrow County Fair and Rodeo.

Administrators recommended the early start date, Option A, and, according to a poll, staff preferred it by only one vote, 65-64. Option A called for teachers to begin August 12 and students to begin August 19, immediately after the fair, so that students would have more instructional time prior to the state OAKS (Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) tests in May and also so that the first semester would end prior to the two-week Christmas break. The last opportunity for schools to conduct the OAKS tests is May 22; however district schools generally have the tests completed by May

16, according to Dirksen. Dirksen said that it has been determined that it is too late to plan for an early start this fall, for the 2013-14 school year, but suggested that the district start early to make plans for next year. He told the board that changes could include an earlier start for 2014-15, but could perhaps also include school being held on some Fridays.

Morrow County Schools have not had regular school days on Fridays for about 20 years, initially because of budget constraints. Option B, which was approved by the board, and received 64 votes among staff, calls for a pre-Labor Day start, with teachers beginning August 19; students beginning August 26; two weeks' vacation at Christmas, December 20-January 5; school starting back up on January 6; the end of the first semester January

9; spring break from March 24-28; students ending June 4; teachers ending June 6.

Option A called for teachers to begin August 12, a week earlier than Option B and two weeks earlier than Option C; students to begin August 19, the end of the first semester December 19; Christmas break the same for all options, December 20-January 5; spring break from March 24-28, students ending May 29 and teachers ending June 3.

Option C, which called for a post-Labor Day start, received only 31 votes among staff and was taken off the table for further consideration.

In other business the board:

-Approved a resolution to accept \$5,000 in unanticipated revenue from the Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation for playground equipment for Irrigon Elementary School.

-Granted a request from Heppner and Irrigon FFA members to attend the national convention, with fund raisers planned to aid with student costs for the trip.

-Approved the first reading of a policy laying out the qualifications and duties of the superintendent.

-Approved the first reading of a policy called "Mother Friendly Workplace", which deals with providing breast feeding mothers employed by the district a place to express milk, but eliminates wording in the previous policy which allowed for breast feeding on site and which previously allowed a child to be brought to the site. Policy now states: "A reasonable effort will be made to provide a flexible work schedule in consideration the requirements of the staff

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