



Gazette Times

VOL. 134 NO. 15 10 Pages Wednesday, April 15, 2015 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

Combe adds facilities director to list of duties

By April Sykes

Heppner High School and Heppner Elementary School Principal Matt Combe will add the job of facilities maintenance director to his job description, following employment action by the Morrow County School Board Monday night in Heppner.

Combe is taking over as facilities maintenance director, following the resignation of former facilities director/finance director Andy Fletcher, who resigned from the school district to take a job with Columbia Basin Electric in Heppner. Combe had held the facilities maintenance director position previously.

Combe said that he will spend approximately 75 percent of his time as principal at HHS and HES, with the remaining 25 percent as facilities maintenance director. HHS science teacher Dieter Waite will be promoted to three fourths vice principal at HES, with the

remaining 25 percent of his time dedicated to teaching two science classes at HHS.

This move will increase administrative time in the south end schools to 1.5 full time equivalent positions, although it is still short of the 2.0 FTE positions prior to the resignation of former HHS Principal Daye Stone.

Combe said that the head teacher positions held by Greg Grant at HHS and Melissa Coiner at HES are still in effect.

The board also heard a presentation by HES teachers Sue Gibbs, Melissa Coiner and Pam Dowdy on the new Smarter Balanced Assessment taught in the school in preparation for the Common Core testing. The teachers were enthusiastic about the new program and said that it promotes a "higher level of thinking" among the students.

"It's stepping kids up to apply their knowledge," said Gibbs, who added that with this program, there is

sometimes more than one right answer.

"We are ahead of the game," added Dowdy.

Superintendent Dirk Dirksen was also enthusiastic about the program and added that only two students have opted out.

"It's exciting; it's problematic; it teaches kids how to think," commented school board member Brian Kollman.

Board Chair Thad Killingbeck said that he believes that this emphasis in Morrow County Schools will put Morrow County kids ahead of the game.

Also at the meeting, Community Counseling Services director Kimberly Lindsay, CCS Clinical Manager Stephanie Hisler, and CCS counselors Katy Wilde and Amy George presented an overview of the counseling program in the Morrow County schools. Dirksen, school administrators and teachers were more than enthusiastic about the success of the program and its positive effect on students. The program is set

Health district CEO steps down

Grigg to leave Heppner for new position in Burns

Morrow County Health District CEO Dan Grigg has announced his resignation to the health district board. Grigg's last day with MCHD will be June 25.

At a meeting Monday night, the board decided to begin the recruitment process for Grigg's replacement immediately and discussed how

to proceed. Grigg offered to help the board with the search process, as well as continuing to seek a replacement for Dr. Betsy Anderson, who will be leaving in August.

Grigg, who has served as the health district's Administrator/Chief Executive Officer since May of 2013, is leaving Heppner

to take a position as CEO of Harney District Hospital in Burns, OR.

"I never expected to leave this soon, but feel that this is the right decision for me and my career as well as for my family," Grigg said in a letter to health district employees. "I have thoroughly loved my time here with all of you and feel that we have accomplished some great things together."



Dan Grigg

Ione school seeks new principal

Crane to resign at end of school year

Ione Community School is interviewing four candidates for the K-12 principal position this Thursday, April 16. The candidates are Nancy Moon, Rick Lindblad, Henry Ramirez and Matthew Murray.

A community meet and greet is open to anyone from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the elementary school gym. The school board encourages all to come and give their input on the com-

ment cards.

The board accepted current principal Sarah Crane's resignation at the March board meeting.

Crane is moving to Portland to get married once this school year is over. In July she will begin a new role as a principal of Jackson Elementary School in Hillsboro School District. "The decision to move

was difficult because I feel very connected to the students, staff and community of Ione," says Crane.

"I certainly didn't begin this job with the intent of only staying two years, but I was faced with making a decision that is best for my future and my family."

"I am forever grateful for the experience I have had in Ione."



Ione principal Sarah Crane

to expand next year.

Heppner High School FFA members Logan Grieb and Kolby Currin, along with FFA Advisor Beth Dickenson, presented a program on the ongoing pheasant-raising program at HHS, the brainchild of the late Sam Hornbeck, whose goal was to have pheasants raised to be released on public hunting lands.

In other business, the board:

-received the following enrollment report: A.C. Houghton Elementary School, Irrigon-296; Sam

Boardman Elementary, Boardman-345; Heppner Elementary-177; Irrigon Elementary-171; Windy River Elementary, Boardman-206; Heppner Junior/Senior High School-159; Irrigon Junior/Senior High School-382; Riverside Junior/Senior High School, Boardman-386; Morrow Education Center, Irrigon-36; total-2,158.

-approved the following employment action: resignations/non-renewals-Molly Blatz, IJSHS science teacher, June 2015, Rachele Dow, SBE sec-

ond grade, June 2015; retirements-Helen Bliss, ACH head cook, June 2015, Robert Carson, IES fourth grade teacher, June 2015, Nancy McElhany, SBE/WRE library tech, June 2015; employment/promotions/transfers-Katie Burton, SBE first grade teacher, 2015/16, Lynn Calvert, transfer from SBE kindergarten to English Language Learner teacher, 2015-16, Ryan Keefauver, IJSHS Principal 2015-16, Pat King, RJSHS special

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Ione native named to Wrestling Hall of Fame

By Andrea Di Salvo

One of Ione's native sons will be recognized next month for his commitment to a long-time passion.

Bob Akers, who now

District positions are contested in May election

Several local positions are open in the upcoming May 19 Special Election.

Most of the positions on the ballot are for district positions such as local fire, library, cemetery and park districts. Most of the candidates for those positions are running uncontested, with a few exceptions.

One contested position is that of Oregon Trail Library District Director 1, for which both Sally Walker of Heppner and Mary Jones of Boardman have filed as candidates.

Willow Creek Park District has four candidates running for the three open Director at Large positions; candidates include Skip Matthews, Kim Cutsforth, Joe Perry and Gary Prophet, all of Heppner. Voters will be able to vote for any three of the four candidates.

In the north end, Stan Anderson and Dave Cooley of Irrigon are both running for the Irrigon Park & Recreation District Director 2 slot. Also contested is the Umatilla Morrow Radio & Data District Director 5, with Mark Pratt of Boardman and Marty Broadbent vying for that position.

lives and coaches in Gresham, OR, will be inducted in the National Wrestling Hall of Fame at a May 2 ceremony at Embassy Suites Portland in Tigard. He is one of six Oregon coaches to receive the honor this year. Plaques in the inductees' honor will be placed in the National Hall of Fame Museum in Stillwater, OK.

Akers, 72, is the son of Berl and Margaret Akers. He was born in Heppner and raised on the family's wheat farm outside of Ione. Though it's been a while since he lived on the farm, he has vivid memories of his childhood in the country.

"For 11 months of the year, you'd wake up and go outside and look for those rain clouds," he recalls. "And then there'd be that

one month of the year when you'd say, 'Gosh, I hope it doesn't rain.'"

While Akers is being recognized for his contribution to wrestling, he wasn't always an avid wrestling proponent. When attending Ione High School, he was a "mainstay" on the gridiron. It wasn't until after his graduation from IHS in 1960 that he discovered his love for wrestling, first during his two years at Columbia Basin College in Pasco and then for three years at Oregon State University.

It was while at Pasco that Akers met and later married his wife of 52 years, Hermiston native Janice Losness. The couple has a son and a daughter,

both OSU graduates, and four grandchildren, whom Akers says are all involved in sports.

"I'm lucky to get four good grandkids," he says.

Ironically, Akers never really was a wrestler himself. He says an injury kept him from going very far in the sport; he tried for the OSU wrestling team but could never make the cut. Instead, he got as close as he could to the action, working in the athletic departments at Columbia Basin and OSU and spending a lot of time with the wrestlers.

"(I was) always getting beat up by the good guys," he recalls, adding that a lot of the wrestlers he knew in his weight class went on to become national champions. "I liked to tease them later that they wouldn't have gotten so good if they hadn't gained confidence from beating me all the time," he says.

After graduating OSU with a degree in education, Akers taught in Corvallis, OR, and then in Portland public schools before he moved to Gresham to work in what later became Centennial School District. That was 1966, he says, and

he's been there ever since.

Akers says he turned to coaching shortly after graduation.

"Athletics is one of the best classrooms we've got these days, getting the kids involved and teaching them responsibility," he says when asked what drew him to coaching. "I think kids can learn so much from athletics about being good citizens and being hard working and being responsible for themselves and budgeting their time."

He retired from teaching in 1996, but it seemed his coaching career wasn't quite over.

"I thought I was all finished but they said I could coach one more year," Akers says. "Since I retired I think I enjoy coaching more. I keep telling everybody I'll go 'One more year.'"

All told, Akers has coached football for 50 years and wrestling for about 28 years.

"I'm afraid to quit (coaching football) now because, if they win the state championship after I quit, they'd blame me for not winning the last 50 years," he jokes.

Aside from coaching, Akers is a long-time member of the OSAA (Oregon

School Activities Association) State Wrestling Tournament Committee. He has also volunteered at the high school state wrestling tournament since 1962.

Akers, who says he has a lot of cousins and friends still in Ione, as well as a sister in Hermiston, was inducted in the Ione Hall of Fame several years ago. He has also been inducted into the Centennial School District Hall of Fame. He says he values those pieces of recognition.

"It's great any time you can go back and be honored by the kids and families you grew up with and be told you've been successful," says Akers. "I got my start at Ione and a lot of my philosophies are what I learned from Ione High School and from growing up on a wheat ranch, where you learned that no matter what day of the week it was, there was work to be done."

"When people give you an honor like that it tells you you've done a good job of supporting the community and giving back to the community," he adds.

Of his upcoming recognition at the national level, Akers says it is "quite an honor."

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Bob Akers

Rep. Smith votes to approve \$2.8 million for renovation of Oregon Veterans' Home in The Dalles

SALEM—Friday, Rep. Greg Smith (R-Heppner) voted to approve the submission of a federal State Home Construction Grant application to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in the amount of \$2,805,305 for renovation of the Oregon Veterans' Home in The Dalles.

Planned upgrades include basic maintenance and updating or replacing high traffic areas and fixtures, including flooring, lighting, new paint, wall coverings; upgrades to resident rooms and nurses stations; the remodeling

of nutrition centers and rehabilitation areas; and the replacement of furniture.

"The Oregon Veterans' Home in The Dalles is important to our region and our state," said Rep. Greg Smith. "Not only is this upgrade fiscally prudent, it allows us to take better care of those that served our country and state."

The State Home Construction Grant program requires a match rate of 35 percent of state funds, which equates to \$1.5 million. ODVA's match would

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