

HEPPNER

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Wee Bit 'o Ireland this weekend



Heppner's Wee Bit o' Ireland celebration is back for its 34th run this week, March 17-20. See stories PAGE TWO and a full schedule of events pages FOUR AND FIVE. -File photo

Heppner facing big decision on its waste water treatment

EPA says ammonia too high in waste water going into Willow Creek

By David Sykes

The Environmental Protection Agency has informed the city of Heppner its ammonia levels in waste water being released into Willow Creek are too high and will have to be reduced, the city council was told Monday night. City officials say there are two options to alleviate the problem, and neither is going to be easy.

One option would be for the city to install ammonia reduction equipment at the waste water treatment plant, and then continue to dump the effluent into Willow Creek. The equipment may cost between \$750,000 and \$1.5 million. The other option is for the city to set

up a lagoon system, spread the effluent on farm land, and discontinue dumping any effluent into Willow Creek. The lagoon system also has problems, as the city does not have land at this time on which to place the lagoons or spread the water. It is estimated it will take approximately 38 acres of land to handle the lagoons and less than 20 acres if they irrigate with it. At this time the city uses the 17-acre local golf course to irrigate with the effluent.

Public Works Director Chad Doherty told the council the city would also have to look for land on the hillside, away from the Willow Creek and out of the flood plain, on which to

locate the lagoons. "The EPA is trying to get us out of the creek," city manager Kim Cutsforth said. "Spending \$750,000 on ammonia reduction equipment is putting a band aid on a 50-year-old plant," Cutsforth said about that option.

Cutsforth later said it might cost up to \$1.5 million "by the time we are done" to install the ammonia equipment.

Cutsforth said before any decision is made she wants to have an engineer study the problem and come up with the correct solution.

"We have been officially told (by the EPA), and now we need an engineer to come and look at it,"

she told the council. "They need to come back with a plan to make it work. I don't think ammonia abatement is the answer," she added.

The council passed a motion authorizing the city manager to contact Anderson Perry Engineering and start the process of a study.

In other business the council heard that the low bid on the new fire hall came in at \$930,000, higher than city officials had hoped.

"It's over what we wanted, but in the range we can live with," Cutsforth told the council.

The low bidder, Apollo, Inc, is located in Kennebec. *-See WASTE WATER PROBLEM/PAGE TWO*

Heppner grad strikes a chord with country song cover track

By Andrea Di Salvo

Heppner graduate Erica Nelson has taken her vocal studies to the next level with a cover recording of the song "Burning House" by country star Cam (Cameron Ochs).

Nelson, a 2015 graduate of Heppner High School, is the daughter of David and Michelle McCurry. The 18-year-old is a freshman at Portland State University, where she majors in Jazz Studies.

"I toured a recording studio called The Rye Room as a part of my contemporary vocalist class, and knew I had to work with Matt Greco, the producer there. He is such a great musician!" says Nelson.

She says she met with Greco to discuss recording a couple of songs, but the two decided the haunting tones of Cam's "Burning House" was a good fit, "just because of the way it reflected my vocal technique," Nelson says.

Producer Matt Greco provided the instrumentals, providing a rich piano track for the recording.

While it might seem difficult to fit recording time in with maintaining an honor-level GPA, Nelson says she makes it work.



Erica Nelson

"While college is a busy time for all students, I've been able to balance my workload to add studio time pretty easily," she says. "You should always have time to pursue your passions."

Nelson says she definitely plans on doing more song covers, though price is always a factor—professional recordings aren't cheap. She says she's not sure if she wants to use "Burning House" as a demo track, but does plan on recording a demo in the near future.

Nelson's rendition of "Burning House" can be heard online at <https://m.soundcloud.com/ricathekangaroo/burning-house-cam>.

School district approves entrance age policies for elementary, kindergarten

By April Sykes

The Morrow County School Board, at its March meeting at Irrigon Elementary School, adopted policy on early school entrance to read that a child will be admitted into public school if his sixth birthday occurs on or before Sept. 1 or if his sixth birthday occurs after that date if he has maintained regular attendance in any grade of a public

full-time school during the entire school term.

The policy goes on to say that a child will be admitted to kindergarten if his fifth birthday occurs on or before Sept. 1 or he or she is transferring from a public school in another district.

The policy also specifies that early entry into school may be allowed for a student whose needs would best be met in the school

program based on an analysis by qualified staff. The analysis would include the child's cognitive, social and physical development, with the superintendent identifying screening processes and instruments to provide the assessment. Parents will be required to pay the cost of the special testing involved and complete a request for early entrance by August 15. There is also a provi-

sion for parents to appeal the decision.

Also at the meeting, the school district approved hiring 2015-16 probationary teachers for extension for 2016-17, including: Amy Stringer, a counselor who divides her time among A.C. Houghton Elementary School, Irrigon, Irrigon Elementary and Heppner High School, and Madison Rosenbalm, fifth/sixth grade teacher at Heppner Elementary (north end teachers not included).

Teachers Terri Gentry, who teaches PE and health at Heppner Elementary and Heppner Junior/Senior High School, and Sherry Matteson, who teaches kindergarten/first grade at Heppner Elementary, have announced their retirements.

Dieter Waite, HES assistant principal, will continue in that capacity, in addition to teaching one period at Heppner Junior/Senior High School, along with the following teachers: Heppner Elementary-Melissa Coiner, Rick Drake, Mary Ann Elgueabal, Sue Gibbs, Sarah Matheny, Sharon Morris, Joselyn Piper, Sybil Stewart and Marissa Turner; HJSHS-Jean Collins, Beth Dickenson, Rick Drake, Mary Ann Elgueabal, John Flaherty, Dave Fowler, Greg Grant, Troy Morgan, Andrea Nelson, Jason Palmer, Petra Payne, Jeremy Rosenbalm and Marissa Turner.

-See SCHOOL DISTRICT/PAGE SIX

Shamrock found



The St. Patrick's Day shamrock that was hidden in Heppner was found last week by man and wife team Kandy and Dale Boyd. (Kandy said she figured out the clues and then told Dale where to find the lucky charm). So where was it? The shamrock was hidden above the Morrow County Courthouse in a stone barbecue on the back lawn (below). For their efforts the Boyds were given a \$50 Visa Gift Card donated by the Bank of Eastern Oregon. The card was presented (above) last week by Heppner Branch Manager Trisha Rollins. -Photo by David Sykes



Chamber plans candidates' forum

Thursday, April 21, Heppner Chamber of Commerce will sponsor a candidates' forum for the Morrow County Judge and Commissioner Position #1. Bill Kuhn will be the moderator.

Written questions will be accepted during the forum, or questions can be emailed to the chamber prior to that date at heppnerchamber@centurytel.net. Murray's will cater.

Pastors invited to submit Easter messages to G-T

Area pastors are invited to submit Easter messages to the Heppner Gazette-Times for publication in the March 23 newspaper. Deadline for submission is Monday, March 21.

Messages may be emailed to editor@rapidserve.net, mailed to Gazette-Times at P.O. Box 337, Heppner, OR 97836, faxed to 541-676-9211 or brought into the Gazette-Times office, 188 W. Wil-



low, Heppner, OR 97836.

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