

Parents oppose children wearing masks at school

By April Sykes

A respectful crowd of around 50 people, mostly parents, showed up at the Morrow County School Board meeting Monday night in Heppner for MCSD's monthly meeting. Although two Morrow County Sheriff's deputies were on hand, no disturbances occurred.

The majority of those testifying expressed their opposition to their children wearing masks at school, citing the heat generated by the masks, increase in the amount of Co2 in students' blood resulting from breathing into masks, difficulty in breathing, motion sickness and exposing children to "dangerous pathogens." Another parent testified, "My children did not get the best education" during the last school year with home schooling and telecommunication.

"Let's go back to the Bible" and quit doing this to our children," said Jeff Zimmerman. One woman started to testify but became too emotional to continue.

Genessa Knowles, Butter Creek, commented that their child wears a mask from catching the bus at 6:30 a.m. to returning home at 4:30 p.m., resulting in a very long day, with overheating, headaches, mo-



Genessa and Brian Knowles



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tion sickness and difficulty breathing.

MCSD Superintendent Dirk Dirksen, however, reiterated that the district has to follow state-mandated regulations and mask requirements. "At this point in time. . . we're looking at starting the year with masks," he said. "I wish, as we all wish, we'd never heard of the word COVID. We got schools open as quickly as we could," he added. "I think we're in a better place."

Brian Knowles, Butter Creek, a Heppner school alumnus, asked whether the district would be following "Critical Race Theory", to which Dirksen replied that the district would not. "We're not changing anything," he said. "We won't be trying to sneak something in." Critical Race Theory "is the complete opposite of what we teach our kids," said Knowles. "Good parenting is treating everyone the same."

Critical Race Theory maintains that racism is "institutionalized and imbedded in America's history, legal systems and

policies" and acknowledges the "continuing impacts of slavery and segregation in America."

Also at the meeting, two new board members, Jacob Cain, and Kalie Davis, both Boardman, attended their first school district meeting.

Dirksen reminded the board that a school district bond issue is rapidly approaching. "We're in Catch 22 with our buildings," he said. "Our buildings look good from the outside," he added, but when you start looking behind the walls. . . He said that in November and December information concerning the upcoming bond issue will be distributed to the public, with the bond issue slated for a vote in the May 22 election.

In other business, the board:

- learned from Dirksen that the district has a 90 percent graduation rate.

- heard from Dirksen concerning the agreement with the Morrow County Recreation District. He reiterated that there is no longer a pay-to-play cost for students and noted a

signed agreement between the school district and the Morrow County Unified Recreation District indicating as such.

- approved a financial update highlighting "significant transactions" for the district as follows: "The district's ending fund balance is larger than anticipated due to the federal COVID funding and state grants. In addition, there were retirements or resignations during the year that were difficult to refill." General Fund year-to-date collections: ESSER I Grant: \$242,921.15; CDL Grant-\$52,541; Business Oregon-\$104,689; Special Revenue Funds year-to-date collected: Measure 98-\$683,893 (fully utilized); SIA-\$680,090 (fully utilized); and Morrow Education Foundation-\$608,916.

- accepted and appropriated the following unanticipated revenues: Heppner Schools-\$1,000 each to the Associated Student Body Wild Horse Fund from Community Counseling, Devin Oil, Morrow County Health District and Miller and Sons.; \$1,000 to Riv-

erside Jr./Sr. High School from the Oregon Community Foundation.

- approved holding all meetings in the south end of the county at Heppner Elementary School and all in the north end at the Morrow Education Center in Irrigon. Previously meetings had rotated among all the schools.

- learned that the summer school schedule for high school recovery and a kindergarten through eighth grade jump start program including incoming kindergarteners began August 2 and will run through August 17.

- heard that staff in-service will be held from August 23-26.

- approved resolutions to accept unanticipated revenue and bank signer documents.

- heard that students will begin school on August 30 and there will be no school on Monday, September 6, for the Labor Day holiday.

- heard about employment actions:

- Resignations/non-renewals: Aurdahl, Kyle - Principal - WRE; Correa, Mike - .5 Assistant Softball Coach - HJSHS; Elliott, Michaelia - Assistant Custodian - IJSHS; Evans, Shanna - 4th Grade Teacher - WRE; Fennern, Justin - Head Cook - HES; Finck, Tracy - Educational Assistant - IJSHS; Grant, Virginia - Head Cheerleading Coach - HJSHS; Krogh, Teri - Assistant Cook - ACH; Millard, Ben - Assistant Football Coach - IJSHS.

- Employment/promotions/transfer: Barron, Ashli - Temporary 4th Grade Teacher - WRE, Bulow, Jacqueline - Temporary 5th Grade Teacher - IES; Calvillo, Sarah - Educational Assistant - RJSHS; Christy, John - Principal - WRE; Cole, Adrienne - Special Education Teacher - IJSHS; Flynn, Rachel - Temporary Language Arts Teacher - RJSHS; Gattis, Tammy - Temporary 4th



Jacob Cain, new board member



Kalie Davis, new board member

Grade Teacher; Gomez, Alejandra - Educational Assistant - WRE; Huerta, Maria - Educational Assistant - WRE; Kirk, Andrew - Science Teacher - IJSHS; Lindner, Candice - Language Arts Teacher - RJSHS; Locey, Dan - JH Science Teacher - IJSHS; Miller, Annika - Temporary 6th Grade Teacher - WRE; Navarro, Daisey - Educational Assistant - RJSHS; Paullus, Delaney - ELL Teacher - SBE; Pope, Jennifer - ELL Teacher - ACH; Scanlan, Margaretta - Temporary 6th Grade Teacher - WRE; Sheller, Steven - Assistant Principal - RJSHS; Sorensen, Jake - Assistant Custodian - IJSHS; Vanderploeg, Katrina - JH Math Teacher - IJSHS; Walker, Don - STEAM Head Teacher - MCSD; Williams, Savannah - Art Teacher - IJSHS; Wirth, Jennifer - Life Skills Special Education Teacher - MCSD/SBE/WRE.

- Extra duty contracts: Colin-Torres, Viviana - HS Head Track Coach - RJSHS; Moore, Richard - HS Assistant Football Coach - RJSHS; Velasco, Edith - JH Assistant Volleyball Coach - RJSHS; Volpi, Tyler - HS Assistant Football Coach - RJSHS.

Murray's hosts beer, wine tasting event



Ann Murray and her brother Joe Lindsay showed up in 60's style at the Murray's annual beer and wine tasting event Aug. 6 at the fit park in Heppner. Lindsay and Family provided music, along with Brady Goss.



Rick Johnston, Heppner, gets in the groove at the Murray's event.

I WANT YOUR STORY!

Do you have a community project? Have you started a new, interesting hobby or business? Have you or someone you know hit a significant milestone? Is there something you feel needs to be shared with the community? I want your story! I would love to share it with the Heppner Gazette-Times' readers!

Contact Giselle
Call or text cell# 541-914-2157
(PLEASE leave a message if I don't answer!)
office# 676-9228
email graphics@rapidsolve.net

SPECIAL TRANSPORTATION FUND (STF)

**Looking for Committee Members
We Have Five Vacancies in the STF Committee**



STF PURPOSE

This Advisory Committee is established in the interest of transit system users (seniors, disabled, veterans, Hispanic and any other pertinent person groups) in Morrow County. Its purpose is to advise the Morrow County Commissioners/The Loop on matters that pertain to the Special Transportation Fund and all matters regarding the transportation needs of those utilizing the transit system. The Advisory Committee will make recommendations that encourage and promote the accomplishments of those needs that directly affect the welfare of those who desire and/or require such services.

If you are interested in serving in this committee, please contact Katie Imes at The Loop: 541.676.5667 or kimes@co.morrow.or.us

STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT FUND (STIF)

**Looking for Committee Members
We Have Two Vacancies in the STIF Committee**



STIF PURPOSE

The Committee shall assist the Commissioners in tasks and duties supporting local and regional transportation services funded through the State Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) and allocated to Morrow County, for distribution to Public Transportation Service Providers within and adjacent to Morrow County.

If you are interested in serving in this committee, please contact Katie Imes at The Loop: 541.676.5667 or kimes@co.morrow.or.us