

MCHD board hears former employee comments

The Morrow County Health District, at its regular monthly meeting in Lexington Monday night, heard comments via Zoom from former MCHD employee Victoria Waltz, who alleged that there were no providers in Pioneer Memorial Clinic for seven days in April.

Waltz also asked the board, "Where have the COVID funds gone?" She requested information on how to request a COVID audit and inquired as to how often Dr. Ed Berretta is at the Heppner Clinic.

Chief Financial Officer Nicole Mahoney responded, saying the COVID funds received by the district have already been audited.

Board member Aaron Palmquist commented, "People want the dirt to get it out on social media," adding, "People need to stop creating controversy. We either need to add to it (the district) or take it away," said Palmquist. "I'm for adding to it." He also commented, "We've

been doing the best we can recruiting docs and other professionals."

Board member Diane Kilkenny responded, that after "two years of the pandemic", "Everyone (in the district) works hard . . ." "If you have a grievance, we need to hear it," she added.

The district is currently recruiting for an MD or DO (osteopathic physician) for Irrigon. Dr. Sirucek notified the board that he has had a family emergency and won't be able to fulfill previous commitments of joining the district. "There's no ill will," responded CEO Emily Roberts. "We wish him the best," she said.

CEO Emily Roberts commented that the most recent hospital turnover rate is at 19.5 percent, which, she said is "very low," especially compared to national Bureau of Labor statistics of 39.4 percent.

Roberts said the district currently has 19 open positions, "Not a good rate," she said, but added that six

of those positions are new. "We will always need people," she said and noted that the district is continually working on recruitment and retention.

In other business, the board:

- learned that the duplexes owned by the district, are "pretty much full", being used mainly for housing for emergency room providers/locum tenens. "Housing is a dire need for us," said Roberts.

- discussed the uses of "pronouns" in terms of "unconscious bias." "I want to say I don't support this," said board member Aaron Palmquist. "It doesn't create inclusiveness, because it pushes an agenda. It will create divisiveness." "We are not intending to push anything," responded Roberts. "We have issues right now." "It's not an agenda. It's another way to be inclusive," she added.

- received no financial reports because of the early monthly meeting date.

Morrow County voters reject school district bond

Voters in Morrow County did not pass the Morrow County School District General Obligation bond on the May 17th ballot. Superintendent Dirk Dirksen said the district is disappointed about the outcome. "We worked very hard to inform our communities about the bond and how it could improve our facilities, but we acknowledge that this is a challenging time to pass a bond. We continue to be committed to student success in all our schools," Dirksen said.

Dirksen said he appreciates all of the district staff who worked on the district's bond information campaign and appreciates the work of the county-wide political action committee that worked very hard on their own campaign supporting the bond.

The bond would have funded projects in Boardman, Heppner and Irrigon. Projects were slated at all of the district's eight schools and at the District Office. Proposed bond projects included:

- New secure entries and offices
- Additions to and remodels of existing schools
- Heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system updates
- Additional student

spaces

- Separation of Jr/Sr High student spaces
- Reconfigured traffic and parking
- Additional building access for people with disabilities
- Increased technology infrastructure

The bond would have raised \$138 million, and MCSD would have received a matching grant from the Oregon School Capital Improvement Matching (OSCIM) Program of \$4 million. A total of \$142 million would have been available for projects.

Dirksen, who is retiring from MCSD June 30th, said he did not know when the district would consider going out for another bond.

MS Walk held on rainy day



A large group of supporters joined the MS Walk held May 1 in Heppner. -Contributed photo.

On a rainy May 1st, 18 supporters for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society started walking from Hager Park to the city park by the library. The rain stopped just as they began. The walkers made some noise and stopped at Les Schwab for pictures with an enthusiastic crew. The group then

made a stop at the city park for thank yous and more pictures.

After an updating of the funds raised for NMSS, the walkers went to Bucknam's Tavern for a meal and comradery. They expressed appreciation to both Les Schwab and Bucknam's for accommodating them. A

few more people joined the fun and donated to NMSS. "The food was great, and the party atmosphere was fun," stated one of the walkers..

The NMSS funds research for new treatment for MS patients. These include injections, infusions and oral medications to name some. This organization also helps people in their daily lives by finding resources for improving lives in various ways. These could include paying for personnel training, fitness memberships or even home remodeling.

If you would like to support the research NMSS does to end this disease, please contact Heath Colvin at 541-676-5735 or Barb Orwick at 541-256-0455.

Heppner athletes earn trips to state competition

Heppner golf takes on state tournament and baseball qualifies for the state tournament

By Blake Carter

Last Monday and Tuesday, Heppner golf went to Banks, OR to compete in a stout OSAA 3A/2A/1A state golf tournament. After coming in third in their district, Heppner had earned the right to compete with the best of the best. The team consisted of seniors Cody Fletcher and Derrick Smith, juniors David Cribbs and Paul Lindsay, sophomore Landon Mitchell and freshman John Lindsay. The team competed on the same course for two days straight, combining the two days' scores to complete their overall total. Heppner was able to beat out their fellow league teams Vale and Grant Union to finish within the top 10 of the competition. Landon Mitchell had the 35th best score in the competition individually while Cody Fletcher finished 39th.

Wednesday, Heppner baseball had a last-minute game with 3A Horizon Christian, Tualatin. The team headed down to Tualatin for a pair of non-league games. In game one of the two game series, the Mustangs took a narrow 9-8 win, in the finale the Mustangs had a comfortable 13-4 win.

In game one Heppner faced an early deficit, as the Hawks took a 3-0 lead on two RBI singles, and one sacrifice fly out. Heppner would respond in the second with a pair of runs, the inning got going as Jake Lentz singled to the shortstop. In a very good sign for the Mustangs, Tucker Ashbeck was back in the starting lineup after seeing the field last weekend in Lyle. Ashbeck was hit by a pitch to put a couple runners on with just one out. Heppner wouldn't take long to cash in as Ryan Lindsay singled through the left side scoring

Lentz from second and advancing Ashbeck to third. Kason Cimmiyotti sent a fly ball out into center field to bring home Ashbeck. The inning ended after a pop out in the next at bat. Toby Nation, who got the start in game one, kept the Hawks quiet in the second leaving the score 3-2, Horizon Christian, after two. In the top of the third Heppner got back to work. Catcher Cameron Proudfoot got the inning started with a double into left field, Nation would bring him home in the next at bat with an RBI single. Brock Hisler was brought in to run for Nation and came all the way around to score after Karver Wilkins hit a single. A walk, and a hit by pitch set up Lindsay, who singled into left field scoring two Mustang runners. Heppner finished off the inning as Cimmiyotti scored another run on a single, making it 6-3, Heppner.

After two scoreless innings, Heppner added three more in the fifth inning. Three singles from Cimmiyotti, Caden George and Proudfoot added another run to the board. Nation grounded out in the next at bat but did score a Mustang runner from third. Wilkins stepped up to the plate and scored another on a single to make it 9-3 Mustangs. After nine unanswered runs, the Hawks got three back in the fifth. Five singles led to a 9-6 ballgame going into the sixth inning. After no runs in the next inning, it was a 9-6 game going into the bottom of the seventh inning. Horizon Christian put one on with a dropped third strike, followed by a groundout, one out for Heppner. The Hawks singled in the next at bat, followed by a ground out that scored a run, 9-7 with two outs. A Mustang error let the Hawks within

one, 9-8. After coming on in relief, Ryan Lindsay shut the door with a strikeout, 9-8 Heppner.

Game two Heppner used a big sixth inning to grab a 13-4 win. George would score Cimmiyotti in the top of the first to give Heppner an early 1-0 lead. Horizon Christian would respond with a run of their own on a solo home run in the bottom of the inning and tie the game at one. Horizon would add two more in the second inning, using a dropped third strike, and a single to score two. Heppner faced an early 3-1 deficit, and after two scoreless innings Heppner trailed going into the top of the fifth. A dropped third strike and a walk set up George. Aggressive baserunning scored a Mustang run on a passed ball, George grounded out but scored one run, 3-3 ballgame. Proudfoot would single and steal second and third base. On a passed ball Proudfoot would race in to steal home and the lead, 4-3 Heppner. The Hawks got one back in the bottom half of the inning and tied the game at four. Heppner would score eight runs in the inning, using four walks, and six singles. Heppner would add an insurance run in the seventh as George stole home. A quick three outs gave Heppner the doubleheader sweep heading into the postseason.

The baseball team is the last Mustang sports team to compete in state. This year the OSAA returned to their regular state championships and returned to the 22-team bracket. Twelve teams competed for six spots in the round of sixteen bracket on Monday. Heppner was seeded 14th and earned a home play-in game with the 19th seeded Bonanza Antlers.

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