

the MARCH 2019

malad valley

SCRUTINEER

& IRREG'LAR TIMES



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Welcome...

to the **first edition** of *The Malad Valley Scrutineer & Irreg'lar Times*. Presented are **alternative facts** and views on topics of interest to **voters, residents and property owners** of Oneida County.

This paper is

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1 Elementary Vote

The next Elementary School Bond Election is Tuesday, the 12th of March.

YOUR VOTE IS IMPORTANT; it's **twice** as important when you vote "**No!**".

So what happened to the "one man, one vote" principle? Well... first of all, for more than a hundred years, *women* also have the right, privilege, *and obligation* to be informed, and to vote. Secondly, this is *not* an ordinary election; the wise State of Idaho requires large financial obligations paid by the property-owning community to be **SO AGREEABLE** that two-thirds of the votes cast *must* be in favor of the bond.

So every "**No!**" vote cancels *two* yes votes.

To be so agreeable, the purpose of the bond must be supported with a **good plan**.

This bond cycle, the *plan* appears to be "Approve a big gob of money, and the Oneida County School District #351 *will start* making better decisions about what to do with it."

Four years ago (for the last elementary school bond cycle), the plan included *at least* a proposal for a new elementary school building (similar to one built in Lewiston, Utah). This *current* plan is to build something "according to the standards for school buildings of so-many square feet" and promising community input, *after* the bond passes, to work out the details.

Well... *after* the bond passes, the superintendent and school board are no longer compelled to listen to *anyone* (until the next school board elections!). It is likely an "executive decision" will

be made by an educator, *not* an engineer or architect, and any community input dismissed with small regard.

There *is* a **real plan** outlined elsewhere in this paper. It is more practical, more accountable, not destructive, and *much less expensive* than the proposed bond plan. It's an affordable plan that accomplishes *more* than the bond would:

Renovate and respect the value of the existing Malad Elementary School and Auditorium buildings.

You have the power. **Vote!**



Page 2

2 Elementary Infrastructure

A **front-page article** in the January 31st issue of *The Idaho Enterprise* (“Major infrastructure [sic] issues”) admits that the problems with the existing elementary school building are internal, albeit by quoting renown and venerable *educators*, *not* the engineers or architect.

The infrastructure *does* sorely need to be addressed. The building *may be* “old” and “outdated” yet from a proper perspective... **not really**. The Co-op Building is older than anyone living (oldest part built in 1892), but the Malad

Elementary School building is barely old enough for Medicare (finished in 1953). We're not expecting to tear down the “flatiron” building (in fact, the city just purchased it for a “new” city hall!), and we're not expecting to bury everyone born in 1953 or earlier. **Infrastructure can be replaced.**

Like a stent for a heart, or an artificial shoulder or hip joint, infrastructure is *not* the end-of-the-line for people, *or* for buildings.

It just needs judicious attention... and money.



3 Elementary Renovation

“Two roads diverged in a” Malad Elementary School issue. One, the gleam and smell of a new building; the Other, nuanced restoration of infrastructure in solid and venerable school and auditorium buildings.

One, a huge debt and a new building, placed impractically on the site to allow use of the old while the new is constructed. Loss of the community auditorium resource, and numerous other structures.

The Other, an affordable incremental renovation of the school and auditorium, and preservation of other resources.

“And that has made all the difference.”

Follows a renovation plan and strategy for the Malad Elementary School and Auditorium buildings.

- Work only during summers, when school is not in session and the buildings are vacant.
- Prioritize and segment the work to be done each summer.
- Finance the work with a new levy.
- Limit the length of the levy to three years.
- Renew levy until renovations are satisfactorily completed.

If the levy amount is too small to pay for the summer's work, do less that summer.

If the levy amount is larger than can be spent for the summer's work, carry it forward for the next summer.

Every three years is a plateau for community evaluation of progress. The levy amount might even be adjusted.

A levy of \$573,692 per year in Oneida County only requires a 55% approval by voters.

A half million dollars spent in three months should be a reasonable amount for good progress.

A levy does not require wasted interest payments.

A levy is not a 20-year debt commitment.

A levy still costs property owners money, but in a more accountable manner and for a shorter period of time.

A qualified architect to specify and construction overseer to manage and guide the work would be required.

All fees should be bid for fixed periods of time, not based on percentage of work expense.



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4 Elementary Security

In these modern times it may be appropriate to address security concerns at Malad Elementary School. Across the country changes are being made to mitigate security risks in schools and public buildings. **There is no wave of demolition and replacement with new buildings to meet these needs.**



5 Elementary Tech

The February 14th issue of *The Idaho Enterprise* has a front-page (but, below the fold!) article “Technology needs require creative innovations at Malad Elementary” which presents a weak case for a new school building as the solution to identified problems.

In general, the remarks are inaccurate, or cosmetic, or just emotional appeals.

- If cinder block/masonry walls are blocking WiFi signals, this is *good!* It means the walls have steel reinforcing, and there is no reason

to have WiFi signals extend *outside* the classrooms or building. The interior walls are wood frame, and should be relatively transparent to WiFi signals. Besides, with inexpensive modern router technology each classroom can have a dedicated router, supporting fine-grain control and accounting for WiFi access.

- The unsightly wires and their attachments are products of minimal *ad hoc* iterations as the technology needs have evolved, by well-intentioned installers and maintenance personnel. An astute renovation would provide new channels and raceways to conceal present and future wiring, in an accessible manner not requiring opening up walls or drilling new holes as requirements change. A *new* building might accommodate *today's* needs inside *new* walls, but changes in the near future will likely fall back to expeditious and inexpensive surface-mounted methods.
- The bells and clocking system is infrastructure that can be replaced. The same architectural elements that conceal and provide maintenance access to Ethernet cables and support for the school network can also accommodate modern synchronized clocks

and bells. Even a modern intercom system would take advantage of the network infrastructure. Security cameras any- and everywhere!

It is misguided to think that renovation of the buildings would be merely a band-aid solution, or like maintenance men on steroids. The right architect with school renovation experience will direct the design and execution of renovation in ways that renews *everything*: infrastructure as well as cosmetic, thermal, and security concerns.



6 Let's Do Something!

The Malad Elementary School building issue needs attention. Passing the bond for a new school is improbable, but putting off renovation of the existing building because demands for a new building fall short of the required super majority of voters is also not a solution. Incremental renovation of the existing buildings with a more limited levy that requires only a simple majority is more progressive than waiting a few years and vainly trying again for a new school bond.

A new election for a levy can occur as soon as June, with levy funds available for work in the summer of 2020.



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7 Tech Lessons

There is a new opportunity in Malad to learn what goes on inside smartphones and computers. Whether you know a little or nothing about digital electronics, introductory lessons with direct hardware and software hands-on exposure are now offered to interested adults and youths.

Your particular interests and background will influence the starting point, and how quickly you advance your capabilities. Learn how to control lights and motors. Measure temperatures, capture sounds and make noises... the hardware and software for experiment is inexpensive, fun, and with no limits (except your imagination!).

Guided lessons, including the incremental building of a complete microcomputer, and learning to write control programs and applications in JavaScript, C++, assembly, and other computer languages of interest. Stop by Saturdays between 9 and 3 at 17 Bannock Street for free answers and informational interviews.



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8 Submissions

This first edition overwhelmingly reflects my positions and point of view on various topics, but other well-reasoned writings of likely interest to the valley will be considered for future issues... perhaps next would be June.

Submit to the editor via email

in@scruta.com

Anything not well represented by other media is of interest.

Advertisers are also important! The reach is guaranteed direct mail to every address serviced by Malad, and the buy-in modest. Moderate success may be enough to produce future issues.

Apologies if the on-line version is not fully functional. The preparation, printing and folding of the hard copy edition is top priority, but once in the mail attention will be directed to flesh out the web presence.

Bonds and levies are distinct mechanisms to raise money for tax-payer funded works.

Bonds are usually large, require outside investors (and consequently interest), and require a long-term tax-payer commitment. The bond amount is available up front.

Levies are smaller, do not incur interest, and are usually for only a few years. The levy amount is divided over the term, so it is pay-as-you-go.

You might notice there is no "Letters to the Editor" section appearing in this paper. The format and frequency of issue makes them impractical in this printed edition... but reader feedback is welcome and encouraged in the associated online edition. Letters/comments may be pseudonymous, only an active email address is required to log in and post responses.

Alternative points of view and diverse opinions have not appeared in the issues of The Idaho Enterprise running the torrent of pro-school-bond articles. It is possible no one is writing letters to the editor, and I respect the right of the publisher to control her publication. It became obvious last fall with the flawed "school survey" that such a mechanism is not a reliable means to be heard in this valley.

Perhaps this publication can ameliorate valley needs.

11 Safety First

Years ago someone told me that when you want to tell someone something the best way to do it is "KISS". That means, "Keep it simple, stupid." So here goes:

When you are walking down the street and not using a sidewalk, walk on the left side of the street so you can see oncoming traffic.

Is that simple enough? Want to know why? In winter the roads are icy and slick and if a car is behind you, you cannot see if the driver loses control. If you are looking up and see a problem you have a chance of getting out of the way. Even in the summer, because of all the distracted drivers now days, you need to see who's not paying attention to protect yourself. Just because we live in a small town does not mean you shouldn't be paying attention. In fact, because in this small town so many people are looking around them and not paying attention, the danger factor might even be greater than if you were in a bigger city.

When bicycling, ride with the flow of traffic. Why? Because if you are going 20 miles an hour and the car coming behind you is going 35 miles an hour and hits you, it will only be a 15 mph impact. If you are facing traffic and are riding at 20 mph and the driver coming at you is going 40, it equals 60 mph impact. Either way, obey the traffic laws. Don't blast through intersections and don't hog the center of the road. Be courteous and remember we share our roads with everyone else... it isn't your private road. Also, even though it may be hot and uncomfortable, wear a helmet. I know people say, "It's my life so I'll do what I want." But honestly, the last thing emergency

personnel want to see is your blood and brains all over the road. If not for yourself, do it for them. They have nightmares just like everyone else.

And finally, please people, when driving around a cyclist, change lanes if possible. If you can't move over, then at least slow down a little. Sometimes cyclists have to ride in the lane instead of off to the side because of road debris, pot holes, ice, sticker vines etc. I once watched a man lose his left arm after a pick-up truck mirror smashed into him.

Last but not least, these courtesies should apply when you pass horseback riders too. You don't know how well trained a rider or horse might be and it's possible to get someone really hurt because their horse spooks. Also, our county is an "Open range" county. Cattle and the people moving them actually have the right of way on county roads. Please be kind and courteous to them too.

I love this town and the people in it. Please be safe.

—Pennie Wolf



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12 Elementary Finance

The January 24th issue of *The Idaho Enterprise* has a front-page article “How funding for school bond will be calculated”.

It is hard to appreciate why Oneida County should be competing with other Idaho counties’ school tax rates. With a new school and auditorium, Oneida will exceed Pocatello’s tax rate. How many school buildings are in *that* district? And, how many people? How many jobs? How much traffic?

Having the lowest school tax rate listed seems to be a big win for Oneida County! *We might* be proud.

Among few facts in the article are many unpersuasive arguments for bond approval.

One claim is a new school “will meet the needs of Oneida County students now and long into the future (estimated to be 75–100 years)”.

However, this is *just the elementary school* so really only students’ needs in first through fifth grades *might* be met. In less than 20 years there would likely be a new school district song about other facilities.

Garret Chadwick’s report imagines a new school would have a life of “75+”

years, and the renovated existing building “25+” years. If we accept the article’s gloss that the “+” means 25 years, then the renovated school has easily 50 years to fairly compare. When asked what happens after “25+” years to the renovated building the builder said the foundation would fail. Really? After 67 years it seems to be about the same as when it was poured. It’s the “infrastructure” and other cosmetic aspects that are being harped about.

Another claim is regarding a state subsidy of 27.8% “based on number of students” to help pay off the bond. Most of that subsidy will be interest in the first bond years, pouring money into the pockets of bond investors. There is also a surprising loophole regarding the number of students and how they are counted. Presently students using the online school and not even residing in this district are being counted like those students actually sitting at desks in Oneida County. Since the subsidy is re-evaluated each year, it seems likely that long before the 20 year bond expires the state will re-apportion the subsidy, giving Oneida County taxpayers a future burden in excess of the promises.

Another questionable argument is putting the proposed tax increase in terms of “the price of a daily can of pop and a candy bar” as though those with such a diet would be willing to give it up (*for the children* of course!).



13 Elementary, Watson!

It is *not* possible to go back in time, and do the maintenance the school buildings needed over many decades of questionable decisions. Investigating why, and looking for those accountable over many changes in personnel and school boards, is likely impossible. Decisions *were* made, and indirectly supported by a complacent community.

But lessons can be learned! Instead of *demolishing* the embarrassment, and replacing it with a (temporarily!) new school, **renovate** the existing buildings, bring them up to proud and functional standards, and provide a better process for future maintenance decisions (with appropriate funding). This is our progressive and positive opportunity **to start doing things better.**



14 Mail Boxes &ct

Since 2013 or so, there has been a rash of unsightly and makeshift mail boxes planted sporadically along Malad City streets.

In an article in *The Idaho Enterprise* a few years ago the postmaster admitted that moving mail receptacles from the door to the curb was not actually required, but preferred for efficiency. But, efficiency for whom?

Since 1863 the post office has proudly offered City Mail Delivery to all residents of towns large enough to support it. “City Mail Delivery” means *to the door*, not to some rural-route box at the curb. We pay an always-increasing price for this service, and, the Postal *Service* (italics mine) should address *real* inefficiencies to save money rather than compromising *service*.

The current postmaster is faithfully executing the policy set by a former postmistress (I think!) but in fact this policy **is not supported by the postal manual!**

There *are* changes in the postal manual which disallow mail receptacles near the door *of new addresses or delivery points* but allow existing city delivery modes to remain for all existing (near the door) delivery points.

An overly zealous but otherwise unknown postal person decided that the mere change of ownership or occupant

of a mail delivery point is sufficient to impose the new regulation. However, the postal manual specifically addresses (no pun intended, but...) this circumstance and is explicit that **no changes shall be required!**

FROM THE POSTAL BULLETIN:
http://about.usps.com/postal-bulletin/2018/pb22492/html/updt_002.htm

631.7 Conversion of Mode of Delivery

[Revise the second and third paragraphs of 631.7 to read as follows:]

***Postmasters may establish a mixed delivery area where in-growth or extensions of service within a block compel a change in modes of delivery for newly constructed or renovated delivery points. This policy applies to both residential and business delivery locations. When a residence is sold, the mode of delivery cannot be changed arbitrarily prior to the new resident moving in. The existing mode of delivery must be retained absent an agreement otherwise.

Do not agree to give up the existing mode of delivery!



15 Expecting Magic

It seems unlikely that the Elementary School Bond will achieve the super majority of votes cast. Four years ago a similar process failed with about 52%, 15 points short of $66\frac{2}{3}\%$. Nothing has changed much since then to magically close that gap. The new superintendent and school board do not have the benefit of that experience, and have unleashed a steamroller media campaign hardly different from the last. Emotional issues lead to obfuscate the waste of resources a new school would represent.

The arguments presented here may not affect the outcome, but getting practical and affordable ideas out to readers might allow a future election, with a more modest plan, to pass soon. Waiting another four years and doing

**THIS
COULD
BE
YOUR AD!**

nothing in the interim... reminds me of the mythological Greek king Sisyphus.



16 Digital IQ Quiz

What does *binary* mean to you?

1. up/down
2. on/off
3. 1/0
4. yes/no/maybe
5. in/out
6. left/right
7. black/white
8. over/under
9. high/low
10. fast/slow
11. dead/alive
12. blue/brown



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17 Rejection

I *wish* I could
like vomit *heave*

this rent emotion
deep inside.

Push the lump
down in my throat

else let me gurgle
as I choke.

Gasp new air—
not to replace

but give me hope,
renew the chase.

Pound my chest
to set it free

this *private* scream...
then **let me be!**



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