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Good day to our valued subscriber Josephine Crow of Union



Cherise Kaechele/The Observer

OREGON TRAIL:

B2H MAY BE A THREAT TO LOCAL HISTORICAL TRAIL

By Dick Mason
The Observer

Construction of the Boardman to Hemingway (B2H) electric transmission line might do what Father Time's corrosive hand has not — destroy the last remaining remnants of the Oregon Trail in Union County.

This is the fear of Lanetta Paul, a passionate Oregon Trail supporter who lives in the Morgan Lake area.

Paul, who has led many people on tours of the Oregon Trail from the area near her home to Hilgard State Park, seven miles away, is among those working to have the proposed B2H route changed so that it is far from Union County's Oregon Trail

ruts, allowing them to remain a tangible link to this region's story.

This is critical, she said, for there will be no second chances when it comes to preserving what's left of the Oregon Trail.

"Once it is gone, it is gone forever," Paul said. "It is a piece of history lost."

John Williams, who also lives near Morgan Lake Road, shares Paul's sense of urgency. He owns land with Oregon Trail ruts and said those and all ruts between the Morgan Lake area and Hilgard State Park are at risk because a portion of the B2H transmission line may run along this route under a plan proposed by PacifiCorp, the Bonneville Power Administration and Idaho Power, who

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Oregon Trail markers line the private property to indicate the location for those who are curious. The trail made its way near the Morgan Lake area outside of La Grande, but is being threatened by the Boardman to Hemingway transmission line project.

Elgin student wins second place in statewide Mayors Association contest

By Audrey Love
The Observer

Charles Monger, a ninth-grade student at Elgin High School, won the second place prize for his digital media presentation in the Oregon Mayors Association's annual "If I Were Mayor, I Would..." statewide contest.

Monger's slideshow presentation detailed his plans to provide the city

with more entertainment — using some of the city's existing venues, such as the Opera House or community center, to double as sites for a haunted house, carnival or other community-wide event. Monger believes that by providing the city with more opportunities for entertainment, residents wouldn't have to travel elsewhere to meet that need.

"I was very excited to

know I'd won," Monger said. "I'd tried (the contest) three times in middle school — sixth, seventh and eighth grade — and I finally won."

The Oregon Mayors Association, a voluntary group of persons who hold the office of mayor, sponsors the annual contest open to grades four through 12. During his term as mayor of Elgin, Allan Duffy has encouraged the city to participate in the

contest the past three years.

"It's a program that (had) never been initiated in Elgin, but through the Oregon Mayors Association I got the program started here," Duffy said. "It's been great to go through the (submissions) and look at their ideas and what (they think) the responsibility of the mayor is."

Students compete in three age groups using

different media to describe what it would mean to them if they were mayor of their city. Fourth and fifth grades submit posters, sixth through eighth grades write essays and ninth through 12th grades create a multimedia presentation one to three minutes in length, such as a short video or PowerPoint presentation. Downtown Elgin businesses

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Joseph could be first town in Wallowa County to legalize recreational marijuana sales

Supporters note medical benefits and potential tax revenue for the city if passed

By Max Denning
The Observer

After a citizen-led ballot initiative, residents of the City of Joseph will vote on whether or not to overturn the ban of the sale of recreational marijuana in November.

Sean Flanagan, owner of The Peace Pipe, which sells smoking paraphernalia in Joseph, and his partner, Michelle Kramer, collected 187 signatures, 104 of which were processed and accepted by Wallowa County. Only 87 signatures — which constitutes 10 percent of the registered voters in the City of Joseph — were needed to put the citizen initiative on the ballot.

Kramer said there are two main reasons she supports legalizing the sale of recreational marijuana: the benefits for medical consumers and the potential tax revenue.

There are a number of medical marijuana patients in Wallowa County who have to travel to either

Pendleton or La Grande to purchase marijuana, as Wallowa County doesn't have a medical marijuana dispensary, she said. Her mother had cancer and used medical marijuana to help ease her pain.

"I'm grateful to marijuana for the benefits of healing," Kramer said. "It helps take away the pain, it helps give people energy, it helps people have a better perspective."

Kramer also said Joseph has a number of veterans who use medical marijuana for PTSD and a large elderly population that could use it for pain management.

She said it can be difficult for people in chronic pain to travel from Wallowa County to Pendleton or La Grande.

In addition to the medical benefits of marijuana, she sees a high volume of out-of-town visitors come to The Peace Pipe looking for recreational marijuana.

"Customers have come into the

store and ask 'Is this a dispensary? Are you ever going to have a dispensary?' We'd love to have a dispensary," Kramer said. "The income potential is obviously very large."

The income potential has been an enticing point for many cities across Oregon. The citizen initiative in Joseph comes after a similar effort in La Grande in July, which also touted the potential revenue from sales but ultimately fell short of the necessary signatures. In Baker County, the town of Huntington has gained a substantial amount of tax revenue from the sale of marijuana.

In 2017, the Associated Press reported Huntington expected to receive \$100,000 in tax dollars from one of its two recreational marijuana dispensaries, which would constitute half of the city's annual budget.

Still, not everyone in Joseph believes legalizing the sale of recreational marijuana is a good idea.

Joseph Mayor Dennis Sands said he thought selling recreational marijuana in Joseph would have a negative impact on the city.

"There are a number of reasons that I don't care to get into, but where it has been legalized, I haven't been pleased with what I've seen as far as just the general neighborhood and what it brings into the area," he said.

Sands also acknowledged there are plenty of "good, decent, hard-working folks" who smoke marijuana.

In 2014, 61.2 percent of voters in Wallowa County voted against marijuana legalization.

As of March 29, five Oregon cities— Sumpter, Haines, Dunes City, Culver and Clatskanie— in addition to Joseph that opted out of selling recreational marijuana after its legalization in the 2014 election will be voting on whether to overturn their bans in November.

D.A. program protects victims

The Observer continues a series focusing on child sexual abuse in Union County. This is the third story in the series.

By Cherise Kaechele
The Observer

The Union County Victim Assistance Program, located on the second floor of the old courthouse building, is a place no one really wants to go.

Megan Browne, program specialist, and Valerie Schlichting, program director, are the guardians of victims of crimes in Union County; to put it simply.

When a tragedy has occurred as a result of a crime — like in child sexual abuse cases — advocates are there for both the child and the family.

"Valerie and Megan are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week," said Union County District Attorney Kelsie McDaniel. "Sometimes they'll be in the field with the police officers. They'll be with the victims right off the bat."

Schlichting said ideally they'll be with sexual abuse victims as soon as possible.

McDaniel said the scariest scenario is when a report has been filed but charges have not. It's a sort of waiting game for the accused to get arrested. While

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Baker City councilor resigns

WesComm News Service staff

Baker City Councilor James C. Thomas resigned Wednesday, two days after he pleaded guilty to driving under the influence of intoxicants following his June 19 arrest.

City Manager Fred Warner Jr. sent an email Thursday announcing that Thomas had resigned.

Thomas' resignation letter, dated Aug. 22 and addressed to the city manager, mayor and other City Council members, reads:

"It is with heavy heart that I feel it is my duty to resign from the Baker City Council effective immediately.

"Although I had picked up the packet, I will not be seeking re-election.

"I made a terrible mistake and drove under the influence of alcohol. I have pled guilty to that offense and have to live with the consequences. I can't change yesterday, and have to focus on today and tomorrow.

"Thank you for all your past support and I wish you well. It has been an honor to serve with you."

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WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section



Tonight
41 LOW
Clear and chilly



Tuesday
78/46
Hazy sun;
warmer

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Call The Observer newsroom at 541-963-3161 or send an email to news@lagrandeobserver.com.



WEDNESDAY

NEW HOME DESIGN COMPANY OPENS IN LA GRANDE

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