



SPORTS

EOU harriers ready for season

Inside

3 Rivers Race held Saturday 2A

THE OBSERVER

SERVING UNION AND WALLOWA COUNTIES SINCE 1896

FRIDAY-SUNDAY • September 7 - 9, 2018 • \$1

Good day to our valued subscriber Duane Gemaehlich of La Grande

IC City Council holds public Greenway meeting on third option

■ Opposition questions what happens if city loses grant

By Cherise Kaechele

The Observer

Island City City Council held a special public session for the last of the three route proposals for the Greenway project on Thursday.

While most of the speakers at the meeting were opposed to the Greenway, Councilor Robb Rea admitted the city is in the corner with this project. If the city were to decline the grant from the Oregon Department of Transportation, that would put the city at risk for not receiving grants in the future.

This was the third special meeting held by the city to ask the public how it should use a \$1.1 million grant from the state for Phase II of the Grande Ronde River Greenway Project. The grant, awarded in 2016, is for a trail that would run from an area east of Riverside Park to a pond in eastern Island City north of Highway 82.

The meeting consisted mostly of comments taken from owners of the properties neighboring the pathway who oppose the Greenway because of its proximity to their own properties.

Many of the current councilors were not on the council when the Greenway was initiated.

Julie Bodfish, one of the residents whose property would be affected by the potential pathway, said she understands this was not the current councilors' decision to begin with. She said no one in her neighborhood had initially supported this project and accused the previous Union County planning director of lying about the support.

"I was threatened and bullied," she alleged at Thursday's hearing about giving access to the land. She pleaded with the council to abandon this project.

Many of Bodfish's neighbors said the same thing — they have never supported the pathway and this was not reflected accurately in the paperwork, which ODOT will have a copy of.

Mary McCracken spoke in support of the Greenway project. She said turning public lands into a trail will benefit many people in the community.

"There's a need for people to get out in nature and exercise," McCracken said. "It's a place where people can walk."

McCracken said she's been on many similar paths in other cities and said it's a great addition to a community. She did acknowledge the potential for the homeless population to camp along the trail but said that shouldn't be the focus right now.

"That's a different issue," she said, suggesting the council focus on that later.

Ken Patterson, ODOT area

See **Greenway** / Page 5A

Walden co-sponsors bill to improve suicide hotline

By Max Denning

The Observer

Individuals in crisis and seeking help through the National Suicide Prevention Hotline may soon be able to call a much shorter, easier to remember number.

President Donald Trump signed HR 2345, the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act, into law on Aug. 14. The law calls on the Federal Communications Commission to coordinate with the Substance Abuse and Mental

Health Services Administration to study the feasibility of establishing a three-digit calling code for national suicide prevention.

Rep. Greg Walden (R-Hood River) co-sponsored the bill, which originated in the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which he also chairs. In a press release Sept. 5, Walden noted suicide as the second-leading cause of death for Oregonians aged 15 to 34 and the eighth leading cause of death among all Oregonians.

"This is a tragic result of mental health being pushed to the shadows of shame and stigma for decades," Walden said in the press release.

While the law does not authorize any additional funds to do so, the bill aims to be the beginning of establishing a number that those in crisis can call.

"The National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act takes steps to establish a nationwide three-digit suicide prevention and mental

health crisis hotline, making the number as intuitive as dialing 911," Walden said in the press release. "I have met with suicide prevention advocates in Oregon about this bill's potential to save lives, and was proud to support this important change."

Currently, the National Suicide Prevention Hotline is a 1-800 number encompassing a network of 161 crisis centers that together provide a 24/7 hotline. The hotline

See **Hotline** / Page 5A

CATHARTIC

■ Collaboration between ACE and Shelter From the Storm provides healing through art

By Audrey Love

The Observer

Two La Grande nonprofits have partnered to offer artistic expression as an alternative outlet for healing and addressing trauma. Through September 2019, Art Center East will provide biweekly art classes for clients of Shelter From the Storm, an organization that supports individuals impacted by domestic abuse, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking.

The idea arose through conversations between ACE Executive Directors Mika Morton and Darcy Dolge and Shelter From the Storm Executive Director Mindy Mowery as another avenue to provide healing to the Shelter's clients.

"I think the part that stuck out for us was it could be (an) alternative therapy, something we haven't (yet) done," Mowery said of the project. "This allowed us to collaborate in a bigger way, to really bring a change for those who have been impacted by abuse, and I think that meant a lot to all of us."

Mowery sought funding through the Victims of Crime Act, a grant program via the Oregon Department of Justice designed to enhance services to crime victims and survivors. Through an 18-month Support Services and Training grant, the Shelter was awarded \$7,000 to cover all supplies, services and fees needed for the art program.

"As nonprofits and arts, we're serving communities," Dolge said of the two organizations. "It's really important to make sure we collaborate so we can all serve."

Six professional artists, known as "teaching artists," lead the classes, some of whom have either dealt with personal trauma themselves or have some degree of therapy-related training. In addition, Shelter From the Storm provides an on-site advocate during each class for participants to utilize as needed, as well as child care and transportation.

See **Art** / Page 5A

Audrey Love/The Observer

Teaching artist Stephanie Boudreau is one of six artists teaching art classes to Shelter From the Storm clients at ACE.

Wallowa County transient tax withdrawn

■ Commissioners say the topic likely to recur in the future

By Katy Nesbitt

For The Observer

A ballot title intended for the November general election asking voters to support an increase in the county's transient lodging tax was withdrawn in a special session of the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners Sept. 5.

Board of Commissioners Chairman Todd Nash said the issue will likely come up again.

"At 6.8 percent this is lower than most places like this around the state. We are partly a tourism based economy. We need to capture some of that through lodging," Nash said.

The ballot measure intended to ask voters in unincorporated Wallowa County to vote whether or not to increase the transient

lodging tax to 3 percent. The potential annual income, estimated at less than \$100,000 a year, was to support the sheriff's office and the operation of the Wallowa County Fairgrounds.

A petition filed by David Hurley, owner of Eagle's View Inn and Suites in Enterprise and Eagle Cap Chalets at Wallowa Lake, asked the Wallowa County district court to review the ballot title, claiming it didn't properly represent the measure.

The petition, filed Aug. 17, said the ballot title, "Shall Wallowa County Transient Lodging Tax be increased to 3 percent in unincorporated areas to benefit the Sheriff's Department and Fairgrounds operation?" is inaccurate.

The petition said, "The Commissioners — whether intentionally or unintentionally — have used words in the Ballot Title describing the Measure that obfuscate and confuse the subject, chief purpose, summary and major effect of the proposed tax increase."

According to Hurley's petition, the title is misleading because "the Commissioners also found the proposed revenue would also be used to fund 'redevelopment' and 'other similar projects' at the Wallowa County Fairgrounds, but have not included these purposes in the Ballot Title."

Hurley's petition claims "redevelopment and other similar projects" are not part of the fair-

See **Tax** / Page 5A

Washington and Cove avenues to receive safety improvements

■ Flashing LED stop signs will be installed at intersections

By Cherise Kaechele

The Observer

The City of La Grande will soon receive some safety improvements on Washington and Cove avenues.

At Wednesday night's city council meeting, Kyle Carpenter, the city's public works director, reported the city will be using nearly \$300,000 in federal funding to go to three projects.

The first one will install eight "stop ahead" warning signs and replace 19 existing stop signs with solar flashing LED signs along Washington Avenue. These signs will be at various intersections between Fourth Street and Island Avenue, according to the informational packet provided by the city.

The second improvement project will be on Cove Avenue, where seven intersection warning signs, four double arrow warning signs of turning lanes and seven "stop ahead" warning signs will be installed and five solar flashing LED stop signs will replace existing signs.

This project will also include the installation of a solar-powered rectangular rapid flash beacon light at various intersections between Willow Street and Walton Road. One will be installed at the intersection of Cove Avenue and Albany Street, near the Union County Senior Center. The beacons can be activated by a button on either side of the street to warn drivers that a pedestrian is using the crosswalk, Carpenter told the council.

Also on Wednesday, the council unanimously approved the land code development ordinance with modifications.

The council held a public hearing about the land code previously, and many of the public comments focused on prohibiting all camping with-

See **Avenues** / Page 5A

INDEX

Classified.....4B Horoscope.....5B Record .....3A  
Comics.....3B Lottery.....2A Sports.....8A  
Crossword.....5B Obituaries.....3A Sudoku.....3B  
Dear Abby...10B Opinion.....4A  
Health .....2B Outdoors .....1B

WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section



Friday  
53 LOW  
Turning out clear



Saturday  
76/45  
Not as warm



Sunday  
81/44  
Sunny; pleasant

CONTACT US

541-963-3161

Issue 105  
2 sections, 20 pages  
La Grande, Oregon

Email story ideas  
to [news@lagrandeobserver.com](mailto:news@lagrandeobserver.com).  
More contact info  
on Page 4A.



MONDAY

LA GRANDE FOOTBALL HOLDS HOME OPENER

Online at [lagrandeobserver.com](http://lagrandeobserver.com)

