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Joseph voters could overturn ban on marijuana

By Max Denning
The Observer

With less than a month until election day, residents of Joseph are preparing to vote on whether to legalize the sale of recreational marijuana. But even if residents

decide to allow dispensaries into their town, an ordinance passed in 2015 will severely limit where such a business could be located.

In 2015, Joseph banned medical and recreational marijuana dispensaries

in the city after the sale of recreational marijuana was legalized in the state following the 2014 general election. Cities and counties where more than 55 percent of voters voted against recreational marijuana legalization in 2014

were allowed to opt out of the sale of recreational marijuana. Joseph was one of 80 cities in Oregon that opted out.

In 2018, Sean Flanagan, owner of The Peace Pipe, which sells smoking paraphernalia in Joseph,

and his partner, Michelle Kramer, collected the necessary signatures to get a measure on the ballot to overturn the ban on the sale of recreational marijuana in Joseph. Medical marijuana

See **Joseph** / Page 5A

IC council to consult ODOT on bending Greenway Project

By Dick Mason
The Observer

The saga of the controversial Grande Ronde River Greenway Project took another twist, literally and figuratively, Monday night.

Island City's city council voted to have members meet with Oregon Department of Transportation officials to discuss options for funding and completing Phase II of the Greenway project in a manner that would be acceptable to the public.

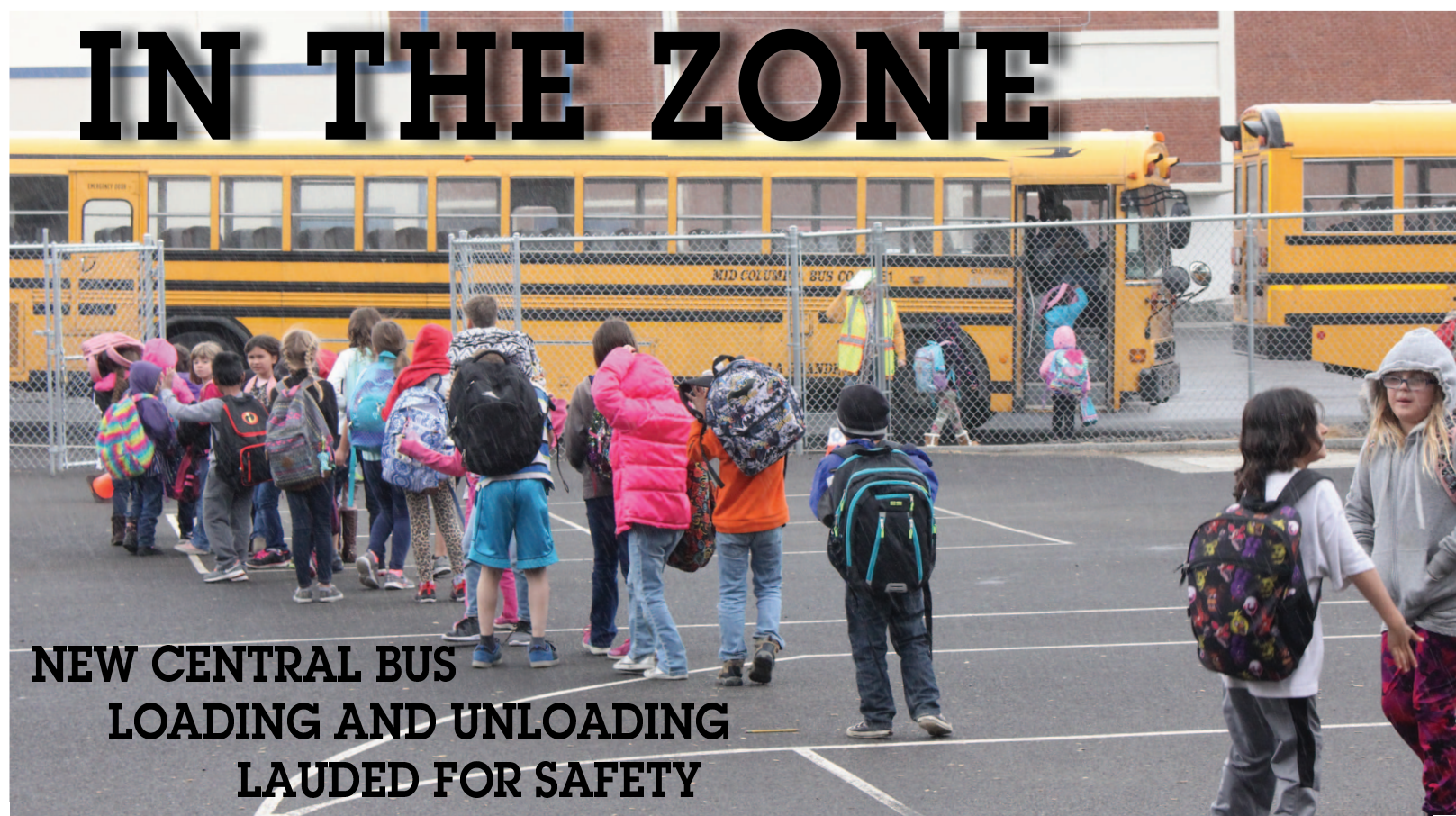
The council voted to have two or three councilors present two options to ODOT officials regarding the use of a \$1.2 million grant from the state for Phase II of the Grande Ronde River Greenway Project. The grant, awarded in 2012, is for a paved trail that would run from an area east of Riverside Park in La Grande to a pond in eastern Island City north of Highway 82. If the grant money is not used for the Greenway project, Island City will have to return the funds.

Previous route proposals for Phase II of the Greenway received blistering criticism at council meetings from people living near where the path would run, many fearing they would lose their privacy and security. Supporters have said the Greenway would enhance the local quality of life and attract tourists, boosting the local economy.

Councilor Robb Rea said he understands the concerns expressed by community members, but does not want the city to pull out until all options have been examined.

"I don't think this should come

See **Greenway** / Page 5A



IN THE ZONE

NEW CENTRAL BUS LOADING AND UNLOADING LAUDED FOR SAFETY

Cherise Kaechele / The Observer

Central Elementary School's new bus pick-up and drop-off location hopes to alleviate traffic and improve student safety. Students are now organized on the playground by destination and wait behind a fence under supervision for their buses to arrive.

By Dick Mason
The Observer

Chuck Wolcott, a school bus driver for Mid Columbia Bus Co., emphatically pointed down to his ankles last week about 90 minutes after delivering many students to the new Central Elementary School.

Wolcott was punctuating his feelings about the new bus pickup and drop-off site on the north end of Central's campus.

"My stress level is way down. It's awesome," the bus driver said.

Wolcott explained he prefers the new bus pick-up site because

there is no traffic at the pickup and drop-off location, which is in a bus-only site between Central and La Grande High School. In 2017-18, during the first year of the operation of the Central Elementary School building, the loading and unloading location was on Second Street.

The old site was safe, but Wolcott said it made him nervous because there were many cars and trucks rolling by. The traffic level at last year's loading site was elevated because it was right next to Central's main entrance.

"Now there is no pandaemonium (at the new bus loading and unloading site)," Wolcott said. "It is a day and night difference."

Mid Columbia bus driver Scott Chrusoski is also a big fan of the new bus pickup site.

"It has cut out the other hazards," he said.

He said he believes it would also be a good place to pick up La Grande High School sports teams.

"I wish it could double as a sports pickup," Chrusoski said.

Safety at the loading zone, which

is adjacent to Central's playground, is enhanced by a cyclone fence and a highly organized bus boarding process the school has in place.

Students wait in lines, organized by destination, on the playground behind the fence waiting for buses to arrive while being supervised by school staff. When a bus arrives, students walk in orderly fashion through a gate and on to their bus.

Central Assistant Principal Chris Wagner said the new system is better than the old one.

"They come in one row at time

See **Bus** / Page 5A

Elgin welcomes sheriff's deputy, plans upcoming move to new facility

By Audrey Love
The Observer

The City of Elgin will soon have a new "sheriff" in town in the form of Deputy Dylan Hamilton of the Union County Sheriff's Office, who made his first appearance before the city at Tuesday night's Elgin City Council meeting.

"I'm looking forward to interacting with all of you," Hamilton said to the crowd. He

replaces Deputy Justin Hernandez in patrolling the Elgin area.

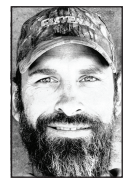
Tuesday night's meeting also marked the first with Student Councilor Kaylee Smith joining the councilors' ranks. Smith, a senior at Elgin High School, was sworn in as the city's newest student councilor at September's meeting. This go-around, she reported on the high school's homecoming week

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Farnam challenges Rep. Greg Barreto

By Cherise Kaechele
The Observer

Independent candidate Skye Farnam is challenging incumbent Greg Barreto for State Representative of District 58. Farnam believes some compromises need to be made for the good of the district, the state and the country.



Farnam

Farnam, 38, who was born and resides in Summerville, is a private contractor for Terraform Landscaping

Farnam said society has become so divided with the political spec-

trum of Republican or Democrat that nothing is getting done.

"(Politicians) are being polarized by money," he said. "We need to meet in the middle."

Farnam said the Independent Party is the best option in today's charged political climate. "Meeting in the middle" is where issues can be discussed, decisions can be made and all sides can get a bit of what they want.

Farnam said this is the first time he's campaigned for a position, besides running for the Imbler Fire District board, but he finds that to be a benefit.

"I don't have a political back-

ground," he said as a positive argument. "Being the Independent candidate is better than Republican or Democrat because I can make an informed decision."

Farnam said he doesn't take money for his campaign because it's about the conversations.

"It's more than just about party allegiance," he said. "Guns, abortion and immigration are our major issues. We're the freest and safest people in the world but we're divided by issues that threaten our freedom and safety."

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	Tonight 31 Low Mainly clear		Thursday 57/30 Sunshine
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541-963-3161
Issue 119
2 sections, 18 pages
La Grande, Oregon

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FRIDAY

WALLOWA COUNTY HOLDS CANDIDATE FORUM

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