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Good day to our valued subscriber April McIntosh of La Grande

IC City Council approves inverter purchase

By Dick Mason
The Observer

ISLAND CITY — Island City's city council approved a relatively small but critical expenditure Monday night.

At Monday's meeting, the city council voted to spend \$1,150 for the purchase of a power inverter. The inverter will prevent Island City's water system from shutting down during a power outage by adjusting the electrical current from a generator.

The need for the inverter was discovered a month ago when the city was upgrading pumps for its well on Walton Road. The well, which has a diesel-fueled generator, serves as Island City's backup well during power outages, said Karen Howton, Island City's city recorder.

Once the pump upgrades were made, the city tested the well's backup generator and discovered that the well and the water system control panel were not communicating when their power was provided by the generator, Howton said. This means in the event of a power outage the well would be able to continue running for only 20 minutes unless a technician arrived to make system adjustments.

"Water pressure would begin diminishing," Howton said, noting that it would fall to the point that there would not be enough pressure to fight fires.

Howton said before the pump upgrades were made, the well's system had no trouble communicating with the control panel when running on generator power.

The city had the option of replacing its generator with one that would fix the communication issue with the Walton Road well or purchasing a power inverter. The council decided against buying a new generator because the expense would be prohibitive.

"It would cost between \$70,000 and \$80,000," Howton said.

The total cost of the inverter, purchased by the city on Tuesday, was \$2,300. The city split the expense with Advanced Control Systems, a company the City of Island City contracts with for technology services.

Howton said the power inverter should be installed this week.

The Walton Road well upgrades were conducted as one of the final portions of the city's \$2.9 million water improvement project, which began about three years ago. The project funded the drilling and installation of the new well on McAlister Road and a

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SHOP WITH A COP

■ Children given \$100 to spend at Walmart on presents for their families

By Max Denning
The Observer

Ten-year-old Lakoda Hughes walks swiftly through the electronics section in Walmart, leading Union County Sheriff's Deputy Dane Jensen, who is pushing a shopping cart containing presents she has picked out for her family members.

Lakoda is taking part in the La Grande Police Department's 10th annual Shop with a Cop event. She overhears LGPD Sergeant Kris Rasmussen mention to Jensen the children can also get a Christmas tree if their families don't have one. Lakoda looks up at Jensen.

"So we're going to get a

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Cherise Kaechele/The Observer

Top photo: Lakoda Hughes and UCSO Dep. Dane Jensen discuss the next item on Lakoda's gift list at Walmart on Tuesday. Above: LGPD Chief Brian Harvey looks at Olivia Arnott's items in the toy section on Tuesday morning at the Shop with a Cop event.



Cherise Kaechele/The Observer

LGPD Officer Mike Eckhart poses with Ember Sanborn on Tuesday morning. All of the law enforcement officials were paired with students at the 10th annual Shop with a Cop event.

Fire managers work to mitigate risk to private land

By Katy Nesbitt
For The Observer

Decades of large wildfires across the West have a local U.S. Forest Service District staff putting a critical eye to protecting the wildland/urban interface.

More than half of the Forest Service budget goes to fire suppression, a new normal for the 113-year-old agency. Nathan Goodrich, fire management officer for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest North Zone, said large wildland fire management is becoming less about protecting public land.

"Three-quarters of the time we are essentially protecting private land and private improvements," Goodrich said. "Doing that in a landscape that hasn't had any treatment, and trying to put in a fire line or defensible space, is like starting from scratch. When you are looking for a place to catch a fire at the base of the slope, you can't do that because of private land and structures."

The problem area along the Wallowa Mountain front is generally at the base of the slope — a thin sliver of land running from Bear Creek west of Wallowa to Sheep Creek east of Joseph. In all, about 1,800 acres are spread across 40 miles sandwiched between private land and the wilderness.

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Lawmakers plan to introduce gun storage bill

The Associated Press

PORTLAND — Democrats in the Oregon Legislature plan to introduce a bill in 2019 that would require gun owners to securely store their weapons using locks.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports gun owners who fail to follow through could be fined as much as \$500, or \$2,000 if a child gets unauthorized access to the firearm, according to a summary of the proposal released by supporters. They did not include a copy of the actual legislation, which will be introduced by Rep. Barbara Smith Warner, a Portland Democrat, and Sen. James Manning, a Democrat from Eugene.

The session begins in January.

The proposal also would make it easier for shooting victims to sue for damages if the gun owner failed to secure the weapon, report the loss or theft of the gun in a timely manner or supervise a child using the gun.

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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section



Tonight
30 LOW
Mostly cloudy



Thursday
40/30
Cloudy

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