

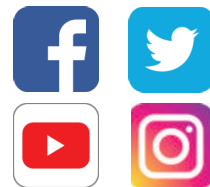
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Good day to our valued subscriber Ruby Frazier of Wallowa

URA discusses Call for Project program's future

By Cherise Kaechele
 The Observer

The Urban Renewal Agency discussed making some changes to the point system of the Calls for Project program, which will likely make the process more automated instead of subjective.

Tuesday night, the URA discussed the core economic development programs offered within the Urban Renewal District. The URA offers several programs for those interested in making investments with their business projects within the URD. A loan program, Call for Projects and the Business and Technology Park are among them. The CFP is likely the most involved program, which offers \$200,000 in grants to applicants every year as long as they follow certain criteria.

The program and its criteria were discussed at length. In previous meetings, some agency members voiced they wanted to get rid of the program altogether since it's so subjective and tends to have new flaws every year. However, other agency members said it's the most important program the URA offers and the agency would have little to show for the URD if they got rid of it.

The program has based projects on a point system. The point system did not always come into the main consideration in previous years, which was part of the flawed system. In a packet given to the agency, District Manager Robert Strope proposed several ideas to the agency for discussion, such as increasing the point scale system to allow for a much larger point scale.

"This helps delineate higher quality projects and avoids the potential for tie scores," according to the packet.

In the first section of the proposed scale, the impact on the Central Business Zone ranked trade sector businesses at any location as the



The Observer file photo

The JC Penney building stays vacant after the company decided to close the La Grande location. The building was one of the examples given at Tuesday night's meeting where the Urban Renewal Agency would like to see someone invest in the building.

top priority. Retail and commercial businesses located inside and outside the CBZ were ranked with varying points and additional points were suggested to be given to those businesses who wanted to occupy a building that had been vacant for more than six and 12 months.

Another section focused on comparing how much private investment was being used versus investment from public dollars.

According to the packet, it "provides incentive for larger projects that do not rely as heavily on public funds, including grants or loans from other public sources."

The highest points given was for a project with more than \$150,000 in private investment.

There were also sections that took into account working on blighted buildings and business viability.

The proposal also suggested capping the projects at \$75,000 and giving the highest ranked projects what they asked for (up to \$75,000) and funding the second and third highest ranked projects.

See URA / Page 5A

62 measles cases in Washington, 4 in Oregon

■ Total measles count has risen by 24 since Feb. 1

By Amanda Weisbrod
 The Observer

On Monday, Clark County Public Health announced the measles outbreak in Southwestern Washington has risen to 62 cases, up from the 41 confirmed cases The Observer reported on Feb. 1. The Oregon Health Authority cited four confirmed cases of measles in Multnomah County as of Feb. 7.

According to The Columbian, a newspaper in Vancouver, Washington, "of the 62 confirmed cases in Clark County, 54 were not immunized and six were unverified. There are now two cases who have received one dose of the MMR vaccine, which provides 93 percent effectiveness."

The Columbian last reported 53 measles cases in Washington state on Friday, showing just how viral this disease is, with nine more instances of the sickness appearing over the weekend.

Elizabeth Sieders, communicable disease nurse at the Center for Human Development in La Grande, wrote in an email update on Feb. 15 that there "continues to be no suspect measles activity in Union County at this time."

Sieders also noted because it has been 23 days since a person from Union County knowingly was exposed to measles, and the disease's incubation period is only seven to 18 days, she is encouraged when calculating the dimin-



Photo courtesy of CDC

This 1999 photograph depicts the face of a child who was displaying the characteristic measles rash.

ishing risk of measles reaching Union County through resident travel or importation.

"GRH and CHD are continuing to promote education of the disease within the community as the main method of outbreak prevention at this time," she wrote. "This has resulted in a significant increase in demand for (the) MMR vaccine, which both GRH and CHD have been able to fulfill."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention state two doses of the MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine are 97 percent effective.

See Measles / Page 5A



Observer file photo

The voting age in Oregon may be changed from 18 to 16. Local opinions vary widely from legislators, students and teachers alike.

Are 16-year-olds ready to vote?

By Dick Mason
 The Observer

A push in State Legislature to change the voting age in Oregon from 18 to 16 years old is drawing mixed reaction in Northeast Oregon.

Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, is among the outspoken opponents of the drive.

"People are not legally considered adults in this country until they are 18," Hansell said, noting in the United States, in most cases, you cannot enter into contracts, own firearms, get married, enlist in the military or own land until you are 18.

"They (16-year-olds) are not deemed mature enough and old enough (to do any of these things). They are teenagers, they are children," Hansell said. "Yet, in light of all that, we want to give them the tremendous privilege and responsibility of voting. It (would

be) a huge mistake."

The lower voting age debate is being sparked by state Sen. Shemia Fagan, D-Portland. Fagan introduced a measure Monday calling for the state's voting age to be lowered from 18 to 16. Fagan is proposing a change to the Oregon Constitution. If lawmakers pass the measure, it would then be sent to voters, who would have a chance to make this the only state where 16-year-olds can vote.

La Grande High School history teacher John Lamoreau supports the measure Fagan introduced.

"First of all, I have found that many of the students I have taught of this age care about their communities and are incredibly motivated to make their communities better. I know too many people of current voting age who do not vote at all. If we

have citizens who care, by all means, let's give them have the opportunity to vote" he said. "If we give 16-year-olds the privilege of driving a motor vehicle, let's give them the privilege of casting a ballot."

LHS students who also support Fagan's measure include Kael Bartlett, a junior.

"I'm down for that (allowing 16-year-olds to vote). There are a lot of things we could say, but we cannot (because we can't vote)," Bartlett said.

Palama Cooke, a LHS senior, said she believes 16-year-olds should be able to vote on issues and candidates that will impact them later in life. She cited presidential races and measures addressing climate change as examples.

LHS junior Alex Larvik, who turned 17 less than a week ago, thinks allowing 16-year-olds to vote "is a bad idea."

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Enterprise woman killed after being struck by vehicle

By Max Denning
 The Observer

An 80-year-old Enterprise woman is dead after she and a woman walking with her across West North Street were struck by a vehicle at approximately 5:30 p.m. Friday in Enterprise.

According to the Enterprise Police Department, Kathleen Kim and 40-year-old Molly Wells of Lostine were both hit by a vehicle driven by Charles Cannon, 54, of Flora, near Safeway. Both were

taken to Wallowa Memorial Hospital via ambulance. Kim died due to the injuries she suffered. Wells was treated and later released.

Enterprise Police Chief Joel Fish said the department is leading an investigation into the accident, but no one has been charged with a crime.

"We don't have all the information yet," Fish said.

He said there were a number of witnesses to the event and the police have interviewed many of them.

Elizabeth Casebourn, a resident of Enterprise, did not see the actual accident but witnessed the immediate aftermath.

"Usually when it's just a little fender bender, just one or two cops are there," Casebourn said. "So we knew it wasn't good when probably everybody who was on duty was there."

She said she saw blood all over the sidewalk as well as two ambulances.

"We were like oh man, that's not good," she said.

Casebourn said it seemed like the whole town was outside of Safeway watching the scene. She noted it was dark, and the weather had been very poor.

The next day, the evidence of the accident remained.

"The snow was covered in blood," Casebourn said. "It was awful."

Fish said EPD is not currently looking for more witnesses and should have an update on its investigation Friday. ■

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WEATHER

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