

GO!
NORTHEAST OREGON
APRIL 10, 2019
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Union County Safe Communities Coalition

April 18, 2019
5:30-7:00 PM
La Grande Middle School
1108 4th St. La Grande

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TOWN HALL ON UNDERAGE DRINKING

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Good day to our valued subscriber Deva Spikes of Elgin

LGCC explores vision revisions

Monday evening's work session focused on three goals

By Amanda Weisbrod
The Observer

The La Grande City Council and members of the city planning, economic development and parks & recreation departments met for a work session Monday evening to learn about the city's comprehensive plan in regards to state expectations.

Phil Stenbeck, a representative from the Oregon Department of Land Conservation & Development, led the workshop with an hour-long presentation followed by a short discussion. Stenbeck mostly focused on what a comprehensive plan is, where

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Elgin CC discusses flooding at meeting

By Amanda Weisbrod
The Observer

High waters were a hot topic of discussion at Tuesday night's Elgin City Council meeting, as the topic of flooding soaked into several items on the agenda.

Dan Larman, Elgin's public works director, said while the volume of water rushing down the nearby Grande Ronde River was at 9,500 square feet per second on Friday, it rose to 27,000 square feet per second by Monday. Because of these rapid and high floodwaters, Larman said the city has closed Cedar Street in Elgin until "the blacktop is showing."

The public works director reported he has not yet found

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By Dick Mason
The Observer

Flooding caused by rain and snowmelt continues to wreak havoc on roads and threaten structures in Union and Wallowa counties.

Flooding in Union County has forced the closures of Pierce Road, Alicel Lane and Rhinehart Lane, a portion of Highway 237 and left much of Hilgard State Park under water over the past three days. Floodwaters in Wallowa County have forced the closure of all or portions of Jim Town and Whiskey Roads. The picture overall in Wallowa County is so bad that its board of commissioners declared a state of emergency Tuesday due to flooding throughout the county.

Motorists are being urged to be very cautious when driving on flooded roads.

"You don't know how deep the water is and what is under it," said Union County Public Works Director Doug Wright.

The flooding is caused by spring snowmelt and unusually heavy rainfall, according to Marilyn Lohmann, a hydrologist with the National Weather Service office in Pendleton.

"The rain has compounded the problem," Lohmann said.

She said late Tuesday morning Union and Wallowa counties had received two to three inches of rain over the past 48 hours. The amount of precipitation is very high for this time of year.

"It is a once-in-a-20-year event," Lohmann said.

She said many parts of the region over that 48-hour period received two to three times as much rain than they normally do in all of April. Lohmann explained that the excessive rain was caused by a pool of moisture that came in from the Pacific Ocean.

Union is among the local cities hardest hit by flooding. On Tuesday, portions of Little Creek overflowed. Among the areas impacted by the high water was the Forest Service ranger station building, which is owned by the city and includes structures renters live in.

Water seeped into one of the homes and was pumped out between 5 a.m. and 6 a.m. Tuesday, said Union's city administrator, Doug Wiggins. The ranger station structures have not had to be evacuated.

Also in Union, floodwaters have surrounded two homes near the Eastern Oregon Livestock Show Grounds.

"The houses (appear to be) on islands," Wiggins said Tuesday morning.

Fortunately, as of Tuesday evening, water has not seeped into either of the homes.

In La Grande, flooding in the south

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Ronald Bond/The Observer

The Grande Ronde River flooded much of Hilgard State Park, which is shown Monday afternoon in the top three photos. BOTTOM: The Grande Ronde River, which has been rising due to a deluge of rain and snowpack melt-off in recent days, is shown at Perry. The National Weather Service has a flood warning in place for streams and creeks in Union County and western Wallowa County through 4:45 p.m. today.

You have now entered the Quiet Zone...

LG receives green light for Quiet Zone

By Dick Mason
The Observer

Ear-piercing noises may soon disappear from the soundtrack of downtown La Grande.

The Federal Railroad Administration has notified the City of La Grande that its application to establish a Quiet Zone has been approved. This means La Grande may now put a plan in place prohibiting train operators from blasting their horns while rolling through downtown La Grande.

Mayor Steve Clements was delighted to hear the news.

"This is fantastic," he said. "It has been a long process which has come to pass."

Clements credits Father Hank Albrecht, the former

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A veteran's legacy

Byron Whipple is retiring from his position as veteran service officer this month

By Francisca Benitez
The Observer

Byron Whipple has been the Union County veteran service officer for 10 years.

After a fruitful decade at the La Grande Center for Human Development, he is retiring this month.

As a veteran service officer, Whipple helps make sure veterans are getting the benefits they qualify for and that they are connected to all the services they can utilize.

"Our job here is to assist veterans in anything they need," Whipple said.

He often helps veterans submit applications to the veterans affairs department that result in them getting a larger monthly check in benefits each month, or even a large sum of back pay. The process can be long and difficult, as there is a lot of paperwork, and evidence from doctors must be collected for injuries. It can be tricky and hard to navigate, and Whipple helps make it easier.

Whipple served in the Navy for 22 years beginning just after he graduated high

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Whipple

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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section

Tonight 37 LOW Spotty showers
Thursday 49/35 Showers around

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