

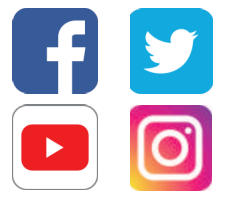


BUSINESS The Door Guy celebrates 25 years in La Grande

Inside Preliminary settlement reached in suit against Baker City chief, 2A

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Good day to our valued subscriber Johnnie Moore of La Grande

Issue of bail postponed in Cove murder case

Observer Staff

Steve Hamilton appeared via video call from the Union County Jail Monday for a brief bail hearing in which the hearing was postponed until June 25, the date already settled upon as the plea hearing for the case.

The bail hearing was pushed back in order to give Hamilton's lawyer, Kara Davis of Pendleton, more time to get acquainted with the case. She mentioned Hamilton likely does not have the money to pay bail anyway, but she was not able to work out the details with her client before the hearing.

Kelsie McDaniel, who represents the state as Union County's District Attorney, See **Cove** / Page 5A

New NP high school and gym almost complete

By Dick Mason
The Observer

The future is almost in perfect focus for students, teachers and staff in the North Powder School District.

The construction of the school district's new high school classroom building and gym is less than a month from being completed.

"There is a lot of excitement and curiosity," said Lance Dixon, North Powder School District superintendent.

Construction crews are expected to be finished with all work for the high school and gym by the end May. The work being done now includes painting stripes on the gym floor and electrical projects.

After the end of May, the project's contractor, McCormack Construction See **School** / Page 5A

Through the fire and the flames

■ Fifteen LHS students take on fire first-hand during a field burn day organized by GCT Wildfire Co.

By Francisca Benitez
The Observer

On Monday, in an empty field near the La Grande Drive-in, 15 high school students got the opportunity to witness a field burn day, which is an important part of training to become a wildland firefighter.

The students were enveloped in smoke as they watched a team of about eight firefighters in training in full gear dig trenches using heavy hoes to stop grass fires that were started by an instructor.

The firefighters in training wielded the hoes with precision. This was the final step in their training before they would become fully certified wildland firefighters.

"Today they are learning about how to run an engine, how the engine crew and the hand crew work hand-in-hand together," said Katie Wood, teacher of the LHS firefighting class. The students attended the

field day as part of a semester-long class at La Grande High School in which the students study fire safety and work to earn many of the certifications necessary to join a fire crew.

Lexee Gomes, LHS senior, said the class consists of "a lot of safety stuff and how to use different tools and different types of fires."

She said she took the class because she was considering doing wildland firefighting as a summer job. Gomes said she has since decided on a different job for the summer, but is enjoying the class nonetheless.

"It's still fun to learn about it all, and my dad is a firefighter too," she said.

Although the class has been taught at LHS for more than a decade, this is the first time students have experienced a field day as part of the class.

Gust Tsiastos, a La Grande contractor and land developer See **Fire** / Page 5A



Alexandra Tsiastos photos

A cloud of smoke falls over the La Grande High School students as the firefighters in training spring into action to put out the controlled grass fire by quickly digging a trench.



Ronald Bond/The Observer

The La Grande softball team paid a visit to residents at the Grande Ronde Retirement Residence Saturday.

Tigers lend seniors a caring hand

■ La Grande softball team visited Grande Ronde Retirement Residence Saturday

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

The La Grande High School softball team has become known for its success on the field the last three years, but over the weekend, the Tigers hit a home run off the field.

The team took time to visit with residents at Grande Ronde Retirement Residence Saturday in an afternoon that impacted both residents and players alike.

"We just enjoy it," resident Carolyn Howard said. "It's really neat to get to know them individually."

LHS head coach Woody Wright said Saturday's visit falls within the team's core values, which includes giving back to the community, and it is a way for the team to have an effect beyond the softball field.

"It's more than just the game, and that's what we're trying to look at," Wright said as his players visited with several residents at the retirement residence in southeast La Grande. "At the end of the day, that's what it's all about."

Wright said while the team may be having ample on-field success, the impression made by events like Saturday will last much longer.

"These are the things they're really going to take with them," he said.

Senior Kara Gooderham said she was excited for the visit from the moment she learned the team was going to go, and the fervor didn't wane.

"It wasn't something we've always See **Tigers** / Page 5A

City of Union benefits from conservative spending, efficient accounting software

By Dick Mason
The Observer

The City of Union's budget committee will not be facing any anguishing decisions this spring.

Union's financial picture appears strong, for the city's proposed spending plan for 2019-20 is up 12 percent. The city has presented a proposed 2019-20 spending plan of \$5.3 million to its budget committee, which is \$650,000 more than the present year's budget.

City of Union Administrator Doug Wiggins credits the increase to careful attention to expenditures over the past year, which means the city will begin the 2019-20 fiscal year with more cash on hand.

"More conservative spending means we will have more carryover from last year," Wiggins said.

The City of Union's budget does not call for any personnel or program cuts or additions.

Portions of the budget that are strong include the city's sewer capital project fund. Wiggins said this portion of the budget will give the city a good start at raising the money needed to build a \$5 million lagoon water treatment system. Wiggins said by June of 2020 he hopes the city has between \$500,000 and \$750,000 in this

fund, which would put the city a step closer to landing government matching grants for the lagoon project.

The proposed lagoon system would replace the present chemical treatment system in which treated effluent is poured into Catherine Creek in the winter and used at other times to water Buffalo Peak Golf Course. It costs more to operate this system than it would a lagoon since more manpower is needed, Wiggins said.

The city's proposed 2019-2020 budget also has a fund for the development of Union's old U.S. Forest Service ranger station. Wiggins hopes in about a year the fund will have between \$175,000 and \$200,000.

The ranger station, near the northwest edge of Union, was built in 1937 and deeded to the City of Union in 1993. The ranger station has a four-bedroom house, a three-bedroom house, a two-bedroom house, an old oil storage building, a barn, a utility building, a utility garage and two garages detached from the houses.

The city rents the houses, and two of the other buildings are used by Union's public works department.

The city council recently created a committee to make recommendations on how the ranger station can be renovated so that it could better serve Union and boost its economy.

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Tonight 32 Low Partly cloudy
Thursday 60/32 Partly sunny

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