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Good day to our valued subscriber Frances Votaw of La Grande

LHS Marching Band gets a makeover

■ Community fundraising effort collects more than \$75,000 for 125 new uniforms

By Amanda Weisbrod
The Observer

The La Grande High School Marching Band will step on to the football field this fall with newfound swagger as the group will be donning a fresh look in the form of new uniforms.

The new design features the school's colors of blue and white with an extra dash of flare that the current uniforms are missing, according to Chris Leavitt, LHS and La Grande Middle School director of bands.

Leavitt said the last time the school purchased marching band uniforms was in 1998. He calls this style "the '90s uniform," which he actually wore as a student when he was in the LHS Marching Band.

The '90s uniforms, as plain as they are, were a direct response to the traditional style of uniforms that came before them — "the '70s uniforms" — which featured lace, several buttons and a cape. Leavitt said these extra garnishes made uniform repairs difficult, leading to the minimal-

ist style of the '90s uniforms.

Now, though, the band has found a style that's between the two extremes.

"We wanted to find a middle ground (style of uniform) that we'd be proud of but was easy to maintain," Leavitt said, adding while marching band uniforms usually have a lifespan of about 10 years, LHS has taken such excellent care of theirs that they were able to double that lifespan.

"There's tremendous support in the community for music, and that's a unique thing to our valley."
— Chris Leavitt, director of bands for La Grande High School and Middle School

The band has been raising funds for 125 sets of this 10-piece uniform since January 2018 and finally reached its \$75,000 goal in the fall of that year, according to band moms Tressa Seydel and



Courtesy photo

The LHS Marching band performs in a parade wearing the uniforms purchased in 1998. This style will be retired once the new uniforms are unveiled June 2.

Heather Null, who were co-chairs of this fundraising project as a branch of the Tiger Boosters.

"We received tremendous support from the school district, especially (Superintendent) George Mendoza," Null said.

Seydel chimed in, giving a shout out to the other major sup-

porters of the fundraising efforts.

"The school district, La Grande High School, Tiger Boosters, the Union County Commissioners and the La Grande Soroptimists really stepped up and gave us legs on this thing," she said, adding that nearly a third of the total money raised was by "small efforts" of band

members knocking on doors, businesses holding special deals and individual community members sponsoring either a full or half a uniform.

Seydel said some older community members even sent in check donations with whatever they

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Careful spending and projected increase in state funds strengthens financial health of LG School District

■ Despite PERS increase, LG School District remains financially secure

By Dick Mason
The Observer

Buoyed by a projected \$1.4 million increase in state funding, the La Grande School District's budget looks solid.

The school district's budget committee was presented with a proposed 2019-20 budget of more than \$25 million Wednesday, up 1.5

percent from the present year's budget. The budget will allow the school district to maintain all of its programs and staff.

The school district's budget is built on the assumption that the Legislature will approve a \$9 billion education budget for the 2019-21 biennium. This is up \$800 million from the \$8.2 education budget the Legislature approved two years ago for the current biennium. The projected funding increase is a main reason why

the La Grande School District is set to receive \$1.4 million in additional revenue for 2019-20, said Chris Panike, the La Grande School District's business manager.

Joe Justice, chair of the La Grande School Board, said the budget is indicative of the solid position the school district is in.

"I feel the school district is in a good place financially," he said.

La Grande School District Superintendent

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WesCom News Service File Photo

In this March 5, 2018, file photo, high school students from Lake Oswego, hold a rally for gun control on the steps of the Oregon State Capitol. Democrats in the Oregon Legislature have pushed through a gun-control bill after they sacrificed a different one in a deal with minority Republicans to get an education tax bill over the finish line. The bill that passed the Senate Thursday is aimed at keeping guns out of the hands of domestic abusers and stalkers.

Oregon passes bill to keep guns from stalkers and abusers

By Andrew Selsky
The Associated Press

SALEM — Democrats in the Oregon Legislature pushed through a gun control bill Thursday after they sacrificed a more sweeping one — to the ire of student activists — in a deal with minority Republicans.

The bill senators passed 25-3 on Thursday is aimed at keeping guns out of the hands of domestic abusers and stalkers.

Gov. Kate Brown told reporters earlier Thursday she looks forward to signing what she called "the domestic violence bill" that earlier

passed the House.

"We have been able to make incremental progress as I have been governor, and we will continue to do so in a strategic and thoughtful manner," Brown said.

Brown was behind an agreement to drop legislation that would have allowed businesses to raise firearms purchasing age from 18 to as high as 21, and require safe storage of firearms.

That deal was struck to get the minority Republican senators, who were boycotting the Senate to freeze

its activities, back into the chamber to allow passage of an education tax bill. Democrats also ditched a bill that would have limited exemptions for children receiving immunizations as part of the agreement.

Students complained that lawmakers "used our safety like a bargaining chip." Concern about school shootings were heightened after a student walked into a Portland high school classroom with a shotgun on Friday. The school's football coach wrestled the weapon away as students fled.

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Union County budget up 6%

By Dick Mason
The Observer

Union County will be able to add 1.5 staff positions and maintain all of its programs under a proposed spending plan

approved by its budget committee Wednesday.

The committee voted unanimously to recommend that the Union County Board of Commissioners adopt a general fund budget of nearly \$12 million for 2019-20. The proposed spending plan is up 6% from the present year's budget. The county's financial situation looks bright largely because the Payment in Lieu of Taxes from the federal government was much higher than anticipated, said Shelley Burgess, administrative officer for Union County.

Burgess said the PILT payment for 2018-19 was \$500,000 more

than the county expected. This means the county will begin the 2019-20 fiscal year with a solid amount of funding on hand.

"This will help our beginning fund balance significantly," Burgess said.

PILT payments are what counties receive for federal lands they have for which they receive no tax revenue. Burgess anticipates that the PILT payment Union County will receive in 2019-20 will be \$1 million.

The spending plan includes funding for adding a halftime position in the Union County District Attorney's office

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Full forecast on the back of B section



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