

SPORTS

High expectations

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Women's soccer picked first, volleyball second, 5A
In the land of the goats, 1B

THE OBSERVER

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Weekend

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Good day to our valued subscriber Carolyn Howard of La Grande



Dick Mason/The Observer

Union County Sheriff Boyd Rasmussen, left, Deputy Cody Bowen and Captain Craig Ward spoke Wednesday.

County approves ATV ordinance

By Dick Mason
The Observer

ATV riders received a green light from the Union County Board of Commissioners Wednesday.

The commissioners voted to adopt an ordinance allowing people to ride all-terrain vehicles on most roads under the jurisdiction of Union County. Passage of Ordinance 2019-01 was

welcomed by many including Kevin Loveland, of La Grande, a strong supporter who said it will help draw more people to Union County.

"It will be awesome for our economy. It will boost our restaurants, fuel stations, motels and stores," said Loveland, a La Grande businessman.

Loveland was one of at least 50 people in a packed meeting room in the

Joseph Building annex at a hearing conducted before the vote.

About five people spoke in opposition to the ordinance and at least a dozen expressed their support for it.

Opponents of the ordinance included David Moyal, of La Grande, a retired physician's assistant, who presented information indicating that the ordinance

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Incident training happens Monday

Observer staff

The La Grande Police Department released a final notice for the community that on Aug. 12 local public safety agencies will be partnering with Grande Ronde Hospital, the La Grande School District and the Center for Human Development in a scenario-based training exercise that will simulate a mass casualty incident.

This training will exercise the response, collaboration and incident command protocols of local police officers and medical personnel; the rescue, collection and transport of injured persons; and the triage, treatment and tracking of injured persons.

The training exercise will be located on K Avenue in front of La Grande High School and at Grande Ronde Hospital. During the exercise, K Avenue between Second Street and Sunset Avenue will be closed to through traffic. The street closure, which will be in effect from noon to 5 p.m., is to provide for the safety of the role players and participants in the exercise. Residents who live within the closure area will be able to travel to and from their residences. There will be signs posted in the area providing notice of the training.

The following agencies and organizations are participating in this exercise:

- Union County Emergency Services
- La Grande Police Department
- Union County Sheriff's Office
- Oregon State Police

See **Training** / Page 2A



Ronald Bond/The Observer

An eastbound train passes through the Willow Street crossing Thursday morning. The La Grande City Council on Wednesday authorized the mayor and city manager to take the remaining steps to implement a Quiet Zone.

IT'S (ALMOST) QUIET

City council gives city manager, mayor OK to take final Quiet Zone steps

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

The La Grande City Council took its final step Wednesday to implement La Grande's Quiet Zone.

In a 5-1 vote, the council authorized Mayor Steve Clements and City Manager Robert Strope to take all remaining necessary actions to actualize the Quiet Zone.

The only steps remaining are to complete installation of the safety devices at La Grande's five intersections, and to "provide a notice of Quiet Zone establishment to all concerned parties" at least three weeks before it goes into effect.

Strope told The Observer following Wednesday's meeting that documentation of the completed safety devices has to be included with the filed paperwork. Once the documents to establish the Quiet Zone — which Clements has to sign — are turned in, at least 21 days are required to pass before the last whistle blows in town.

"We should be done with all the stuff we physically are able to control around the 16th of this month," Strope told the council.

He noted one of the intersections has a crossing signal arm that must

be adjusted — work that would need to be completed by Union Pacific — but does not see that being a concern.

"Once all those improvements are done (and) we have the documentation ready, we (will) ID a specific date and time," he said.

With installation of safety devices nearing completion, the Quiet Zone ordinance will likely go into effect by the end of September, Strope said during the meeting.

There was little discussion prior to Wednesday's vote, on which councilor Justin Rock was the lone nay vote. One of the major proponents and activists in establishing the Quiet Zone, Michael Jennings, expressed his gratitude to the council — and especially Mayor Clements and Mayor Pro Tem Gary Lillard — for their efforts.

"My deep heartfelt gratitude (goes) to Councilman Lillard and Mayor Clements for participating directly in the process, and all the council members that supported this effort," Jennings said, later calling the move one that would "go down in the history books."

"This is an important investment for our city," he said. "It will make a differ-



Ronald Bond/The Observer

One of the barriers installed at each of the five crossings in La Grande is shown Thursday.

ence in the quality of life in our city. It's going to grow our city, and the return on investments are something we will realize forever."

During his address to the council, Jennings unfolded an oversized sheet of paper from his personal files on the project that listed several of the options considered over the years.

"Remember when we went back and discussed all the alternatives for different Quiet Zones?" he asked, then, in a show of victory, crumpled up the paper and tossed it over his shoulder, exclaiming,

"It's all done! Thank you very much."

Jennings also commented on the fact that the project is slated to come in well under budget. Four of the five crossings, according to documents obtained by The Observer, as of publication, are each at least \$10,000 under budget, with the fifth more than \$9,000 under. The Willow Street crossing, the most complex with more than \$100,000 of budgeted expenses, has cost only about \$43,000, and less than \$5,000 of the work remains.

Opioid crisis real in rural Oregon

By Dick Mason
The Observer

The numbers provide reason for both hope and alarm.

They are the statistics presented Wednesday night at a community forum in La Grande on opioid abuse, conducted by the Oregon Washington Health Network. They indicate that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention projects that deaths from opioid overdoses in this state will rise 6.5% this year and again in 2020. This is the highest forecast increase among a region of eight western states: Oregon, Washington, California, Arizona, Idaho, Montana, Nevada and Utah.

One reason is that the services available to help people in Oregon cope with opioid addictions are not as widespread as they are in many other states, said Mike Stensrud of the Oregon Washington Health Network. For example, the availability of psychiatrists in many parts of the state is far less than in other states. Psychiatrists, Stensrud said, can be very important in helping people with mental illness overcome addictions.

On the bright side, the number of opioids being prescribed to Oregonians has been falling since 2015, Stensrud said. He credits this to two state programs. One is a Prescription Drug Monitoring Program that provides pharmacists with the tools needed to track what types of drugs patients are getting at other pharmacies. Should a drugist discover that someone is receiving opioid prescriptions from multiple physicians, the pharmacist must notify the patient's doctors so that corrective action can be taken.

A second program, Oregon's Prescription Drug Medication Program, is also helping to reduce opioid prescriptions. Through it the state advises doctors on which ailments opioid painkillers should or should not be prescribed for. Conditions physicians are discouraged from prescribing opioids for include long-term chronic problems like lower-back pain. The reason is that someone on opioids for a long

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WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

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CONTACT US

541-963-3161
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La Grande, Oregon
Email story ideas to news@lagrandeobserver.com.
More contact info on Page 4A.



MONDAY

WOMEN'S SOCCER SEEKS 3-PEAT

Online at lagrandeobserver.com