

DAILY
PLANNER

TODAY

Today is Wednesday, Jan. 29, the 29th day of 2020. There are 337 days left in the year.

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT

On Jan. 29, 2002, in his first State of the Union address, President George W. Bush said terrorists were still threatening America — and he warned of “an axis of evil” consisting of North Korea, Iran and Iraq.

ON THIS DATE

In 1820, King George III died at Windsor Castle at age 81; he was succeeded by his son, who became King George IV.

In 1856, Britain’s Queen Victoria introduced the Victoria Cross to reward military acts of valor during the Crimean War.

In 1861, Kansas became the 34th state of the Union.

In 1936, the first inductees of baseball’s Hall of Fame, including Ty Cobb and Babe Ruth, were named in Cooperstown, New York.

In 1963, the first charter members of the Pro Football Hall of Fame were named in Canton, Ohio (they were enshrined when the Hall opened in September 1963). Poet Robert Frost died in Boston at age 88.

LOTTERY

Megabucks: \$2.6 million
2-6-21-31-34-39

Mega Millions: \$155 million
17-36-47-51-62-21 x3

Powerball: \$394 million
2-9-17-36-67-18 x2

Win for Life: Jan. 27
22-26-46-66

Pick 4: Jan. 28
• 1 p.m.: 9-6-1-3
• 4 p.m.: 4-0-3-5
• 7 p.m.: 9-5-0-7
• 10 p.m.: 3-9-3-2

Pick 4: Jan. 27
• 1 p.m.: 3-2-5-8
• 4 p.m.: 8-2-0-4
• 7 p.m.: 0-3-6-1
• 10 p.m.: 5-9-1-1

CORRECTION

In the Page A1 story “Women get ‘Extreme,’” published Monday, Jan. 27, the story misspelled the name of Gabe Dunham, the first-place finisher in the 200-mile race.

NEWSPAPER LATE?

Every effort is made to deliver your Observer in a timely manner. Occasionally conditions exist that make delivery more difficult.

If you are not on a motor route, delivery should be before 5:30 p.m.

If your delivery is by motor carrier, delivery should be by 6 p.m.

The Observer office closes at 5 p.m. If you do not receive your paper please call 541-963-3161.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“Misquotations are the only quotations that are never misquoted.”

— Hesketh Pearson, British biographer (1887-1964)

Elgin School District

Radon picture improves at Elgin

By Dick Mason
The Observer

ELGIN — The Elgin School Board received good news Monday night.

School District superintendent Dianne Greif told the board that radon levels in the district’s buildings may be significantly less than initially believed. Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive, colorless and tasteless gas that can cause health problems, including lung cancer from prolonged exposure.

The InterMountain Education Service District tested radon levels in all of the Elgin School District’s classrooms in the fall of 2019. The results of the testing indicated many of the classrooms had radon levels of at least 4.0 picocuries per liter of air, a level at which the Environmental Protection Agency recommends mitigation action. However, follow-up testing by the ESD indicated radon levels in all of the school district’s classrooms were significantly below the 4.0 picocuries level, although it also indicated the air in some classrooms was



Glaze



Greif

at or above threshold.

The discrepancy between the four-day tests may have been because of the weather conditions, according to Larry Glaze, the IMESD’s operations director, who is certified by the National Radon Proficiency Program to measure radon levels.

Glaze said on Tuesday it was very cold and there was little wind during the first test and windy and warmer the second time, and such variations can have a big influence on radon test results.

Due to the wide discrepancy, Glaze recommended testing throughout the 2020-21 school year in Elgin’s classrooms to get a more accurate assessment of the the average radon levels.

Greif told the school board she will have the service district conduct the analysis.

"We want to have a more extensive test," Greif said.

The superintendent also said a state grant the InterMountain ESD received will cover the cost of the additional testing.

Should the third test reveal radon levels are too high, the school district would take steps to lower the levels.

Glaze said this can be done by placing pipes with fans over pits dug under buildings and having them run up over their roofs to prevent radon from passing through the structures.

"The fans suck up the radon from under the buildings," Glaze said.

The Legislature in 2015 passed a law requiring all Oregon school districts to have their buildings tested for radon by Jan. 1, 2021, Glaze said.

Glaze said the ESD is serving as the consultant for radon mitigation work in the Ukiah and Milton-Freewater school districts and has already done this in the Umatilla School District.

The board also addressed Elgin High School’s graduation rate during Monday’s meeting. Oregon Department of Education statistics released Thursday indicated the school’s 2018-19 graduation rate was 75% while the state average was 80%. The dip followed graduation rates of 86.2% in 2017-18 and 94.4% in 2016-17, all above the state average both years.

Greif attributes the low 2018-19 mark to a trio of seniors who enrolled at Elgin High School after the school year started. The students later left in mid-year without enrolling in other schools, leaving EHS charged with their failure to graduate.

Overall, Elgin High School had four students who did not graduate, counting the three seniors who enrolled after the 2018-19 school year started, Greif said.

The school board also discussed the need to replace the high school’s aging bleachers at Monday’s meeting. Greif said there is one company in the region that can do the work this summer. She said the school district must soon arrange to have the company do this work because its summer schedule is filling up. Greif said if the district does not act quickly the new bleachers will not be installed until the summer of 2021.

The school board agreed via consensus Monday to have Grief arrange to have the company do this bleacher installation work this summer. Greif said the new bleachers will have hand-capped accessibility features.

Oregon

‘Mask bill’ to be tackled in 2020

By Jake Thomas
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Rioters who conceal their faces with masks would face increased penalties under a bill that’ll be introduced in the upcoming legislative session.

Sponsored by Rep. Sherrie Sprenger, R-Scio, the bill is aimed at the “alarming increase of violent riots in Oregon,” according to a statement.

In recent years, Portland has seen a rise in heated political protests that have erupted into street brawls or riots. The confrontations have typically involved right-wing demonstrators squaring off with anti-fascist (commonly referred to as “Antifa”) counter-protesters, who often wear masks.

“As a former sheriff’s deputy, I know how important it is for law enforcement to be able to accurately and swiftly identify those who are involved in inciting these riots and committing crimes,” said Sprenger in a statement.

Noting the difficulty law enforcement faces in responding to these situations, the statement pointed out that former Portland Police Chief Danielle Outlaw called for a similar policy last summer.

According to the statement, about 15 other states and some local governments across the country have similar laws.

The statement notes that the bill would not outlaw masks, but would increase penalties if someone conceals their face with the intent to riot. Rioting is currently a Class C felony and the bill would bump the offense up to a Class B felony if someone wears a mask to conceal their identity while committing the crime.

In Oregon, a Class B felony is punishable by up to 10 years in prison and a Class C by 5 years.

The upcoming legislative session, which begins in February, can last for 35 days and is expected to be dominated by a greenhouse gas-reduction bill.

NEWS BRIEFS

Free ‘Women and Wealth’ workshop planned

LA GRANDE — Melinda Wells, of Walker Wells, an insurance, investment and financial advisory firm, will present “Women and Wealth,” a free educational workshop Tuesday in Ackerman Hall, room 208, at Eastern Oregon University, La Grande.

Women are 80% more likely than men to be in poverty after age 65, Wells stated in a press release, adding, “It is critically important that women specifically educate themselves.” She cited a Vanguard study that showed men have 50% higher balances in their retirement plans than women — even though women are 11% more likely to participate in a retirement plan than men. This imbalance, according to Wells, has created a retirement savings gap between men and women.

“As a fiduciary, I am always committed to working in my clients’ best interests. They are the best part about working in this industry,” Wells stated in the release. “I am excited about sharing this information with women because of firsthand experience with families that struggle through financial education.”

“Women and Wealth” will offer a high level but generic education workshop on the unique financial needs of women. The class is limited to 20

participants. To reserve your spot, contact Wells at 541-963-7433 or www.walkerwellsfinancialadvisor.com.

Cove City Council meets Tuesday

COVE — The Cove City Council will discuss upcoming budget training, goal setting and other items during a meeting Tuesday starting at 7 p.m. at city hall, 504 Alder St.

The council also will hold a public hearing on a conditional use permit variance for Bear and Lavender.

Repairing cackling goose a first for wildlife center

PENDLETON — Blue Mountain Wildlife in Pendleton is helping a cackling goose to recover after a serious collision with a fence.

Blue Mountain Wildlife is the premier wildlife rehabilitation facility in Eastern Oregon, serving an area the size of New York state. The center cares for hundreds of ailing birds a year, primarily raptors. But the center reported aiding a cackling goose is a first.

Employees at the Amazon Data Center near Boardman found the injured goose inside the facility’s perimeter fence and named it Gizmo, according to the wildlife center’s weekly update. The data center is on the flight path between the Columbia River and a field where geese feed during the day.

Gizmo, however, did not

quite clear the fence on the way back to the river. The collision fractured the metacarpals in the left wing and the tibiotarsus in its left leg. Center staff worked to repair the injuries, even giving Gizmo a leg cast.

“Gizmo is eating,” according to the report, “and will hopefully be recovered in time for spring migration.”

BLM will publish priority list of land access issues, invite public review

WASHINGTON, D.C. — As part of its efforts to implement the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act, the Bureau of Land Management is seeking public assistance in identifying agency-managed lands on which the public can hunt, fish or use for other recreational purposes but to which there is no legal public access or where access is significantly restricted.

Recommendations from the public will aid the BLM in creating a report to Congress that provides options for reasonably providing access to such lands, such as by acquiring an easement, right-of-way or fee title from a willing owner.

The bureau plans to post its first priority list online at its ePlanning website by March 12. The BLM will update the priority list every two years for at least the next decade. The public nomination period to identify parcels for inclusion on the

bureau’s priority list will open Friday and close Feb. 29. The bureau will publish subsequent updates prior to the release of future lists to seek additional information and suggestions from the public.

All lands nominated for inclusion on the priority list must be managed by the BLM, encompass at least 640 contiguous acres and have significantly restricted or no public access. The BLM also must consider the likelihood of resolving identified access issues when determining whether to include parcels on the list. When submitting nominations, the public must include the location of the land or parcel, total acreage affected (if known), a description or narrative explaining the lack of access and any additional information the BLM should consider when determining if the land should be on the priority list.

The bureau will not include personally identifying information concerning owners or ownership of any parcels in preparing the priority list or related congressional reports. Public nominations will be accepted via the BLM’s ePlanning website.

This effort advances a primary goal of the Dingell Act (S. 47), which President Donald Trump signed in March 2019. To learn more about the Dingell Act and how it affects public lands, visit www.blm.gov/about/laws-and-regulations/dingell-act.

— Observer staff

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Women and Wealth

Ackerman Hall #208 Alumni Room, EOU campus

February 4th @ 6pm

Questions? 541-963-7433

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