



Tingelstad looks to next level

In Sports

RE-ELECT **BOYD RASMUSSEN** for **SHERIFF**
Paid for by committee to Re-elect Boyd Rasmussen.



Mayors- Duffy, Elgin; Rea, Island City; McLean, Imbler; Wisdom, North Powder

THE OBSERVER
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Good day to our valued subscriber Pete Caldwell of La Grande

Union County sheriff candidates answer questions

■ Q&A with candidates inside, on pages 4 and 5

By Phil Wright
The Observer

UNION COUNTY — Four men are vying to be the next sheriff of Union County. Boyd Rasmussen has held the role for four terms and seeks a fifth. He has persuaded voters time and again, but this may be the toughest election he has faced. Two men he knows want him out of office. Bill Miller has a lengthy law enforcement career and worked as a sergeant for Rasmussen before leaving the position in August 2018 for a job in parole and probation. Miller said he wants to bring integrity to the sheriff's office. Rasmussen and Miller have their cadre of supporters. The pair



of lawmen have been the topic of dueling letters of endorsements. Sheriff's deputy Cody Bowen could be the wild card in the race. Bowen was president of the local law enforcement union when it endorsed Rasmussen late last fall. After getting into the race in January, he stepped down as the association's head and subsequently received its endorsement. But that support was not unanimous. Bowen has less policing and management experience than either Rasmussen or Miller, but he

is younger and is a popular figure. Shane Rollins of Cove also is in the mix. He served in the Army National Reserve and Marines, including 10 years with its military police. He retired in 2014, clocking a 21-year career in the military. He also worked on a special security force for a hotel in La Vegas. Rollins is running the quietest campaign, but the question is whether he could be enough of an outsider with a respected military background to play the role of spoiler and maybe change maker. The Observer wanted to know more about the candidates, their views on the sheriff's office and what issues matter to them. The newspaper emailed the men the same six questions, and each candidate responded. Their responses were edited for spelling, punctuation, grammar and style, nothing more.

We considered not editing them in any fashion, but that could put The Observer in the position of having to argue a typo or such was not the fault of the paper. The Observer also edits other responses we receive via email, so we treated the answers from the candidates no differently. Also, law enforcement sometimes has its own guides for style that differ from the newspaper's, sometimes capitalizing words such as sheriff or governor when the newspaper would not. There was no reason to confuse readers or ding candidates for differences in style. We asked the candidates to limit each answer to 150 words, but we are not counting. We designed the questions to elicit insightful or even provocative answers. Those questions and answers are inside on pages 4 and 5.

By the numbers*

Worldwide cases: 2,631,839
Worldwide deaths: 182,100
U.S. cases: 865,585
U.S. deaths: 48,816
Oregon cases: 2,177
Oregon deaths: 86
Union County cases: 4
Union County deaths: 0
Wallowa County cases: 1
Wallowa County deaths: 0
**As of 2 p.m. Friday, April 24. Sources: World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Oregon Health Authority*

Businesses may get grant help

■ County lacks ability to provide direct help

By Sabrina Thompson
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The Union County Board of Commissioners approved an intergovernmental Community Development Block Grant to provide funding to small businesses feeling the negative fiscal effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The grant is not yet in effect and is awaiting approval from the city of La Grande, the lead applicant, according to Union County Commissioner Donna Beverage. Business Oregon will provide the funds for the \$150,000 grant, which the Northeast Oregon Economic Development District will oversee. Cities in Union County are working to support residents with getting food and supplies, including providing daily meals during and shopping assistance, and the city of La Grande implemented a loan program to help local businesses. Union County, however, is taking a less direct approach with the grant, which the county reported can provide "technical assistance, grants, loans and other financial assistance to establish, stabilize and expand services or businesses to support home health and quarantine." Eligible uses include "short term working capital and assistance to small businesses to enable retention of jobs held by low and moderate income persons."

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LHS grads will be honored on the go

By Dick Mason
The Observer

LA GRANDE — La Grande High School will not have a traditional graduation next month, but it likely will be unforgettable. LHS announced Thursday that the school will have a drive-through ceremony on May 30 in lieu of a traditional commencement because of the COVID-19 pandemic. "Our staff is working diligently to find creative ways to honor our seniors, including many nontraditional means of recognition," according to an LHS news release. The graduation will be conducted at LHS and the La Grande Drive-in Theater. Commencement exercises will begin at 10 a.m. after graduates in vehicles with their families line up in a staging area near campus. They will then drive to the main entrance of LHS to be awarded their diplomas in cars. Seniors will wear commencement caps and gowns, which may also have cords and medals. The vehicles may be decorated much like caps are traditionally.

See, Grads/Page 8A

DA moves to sideline judge

■ Memo argues that Circuit Judge Wes Williams is unfair to state

By Sabrina Thompson
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The Union County District Attorney's Office filed a motion to disqualify Circuit Judge Wes Williams from overseeing any of its cases. Oregon law allows attorneys to disqualify a judge from presiding over a case without submitting a reason. District Attorney Kelsie McDaniel, however, took the unusual step of providing a 31-page memorandum to spell out why she does not believe her office can receive a fair trial under Williams. "It was a very thoughtful decision we didn't take lightly," McDaniel said. "We talked to multiple community partners and heard complaints and concerns from those partners before we filed this motion." McDaniel filed the motion April 6 on Oregon v. Michael R. Royal, a felony case involving the unlawful use of a weapon. McDaniel's lengthy memo does not include the Royal case but provides examples of



Staff photo by Ronald Bond

The Union County Courthouse in La Grande is shown Thursday. The Union County District Attorney's Office has filed a motion to disqualify Circuit Judge Wes Williams from overseeing any of its cases.

previous cases to support the claim that "the state cannot receive a fair and impartial trial or hearing before Judge Williams in any criminal or civil matter to which the State of Oregon, the Union County District Attorney's Office or Kelsie J. Davis

McDaniel is a named party."

McDaniel in the memo argues there are six "general areas" that serve as the basis for the reason to sideline Williams:

See, Judge/Page 8A

La Grande School Board alters budget schedule

■ Budget committee likely won't begin meetings until June because of coronavirus concerns and restrictions

By Dick Mason
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The La Grande School District's budget calendar is set to be pushed back due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The La Grande School Board agreed via consensus at a work session Wednesday night to delay the start of its budget committee meetings for 2020-21 because of the uncertainty caused by the pan-

demic. When it meets May 13, the board will vote to officially change its budget calendar. The budget committee will first meet in June rather than in mid-May due to the change. The rescheduling will allow the budget committee to have a better idea of how much state funding the school district will receive in 2020-21. The budget will be based in part on the state's May 20 Oregon

Revenue Forecast. It is believed that the revenue forecast will be down from previous forecasts because of steps the state has taken to protect the public from COVID-19. These measures have included shutting down many businesses, which has reduced how much income tax revenue Oregon will be receiving. La Grande School District Business Manager Chris Panike said there has been speculation that budget cuts will be needed.

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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section



Tonight
39 LOW
Partly cloudy



Sunday
67/43
Partly sunny

CONTACT US

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Issue 50
2 sections, 16 pages
La Grande, Oregon

Email story ideas to news@lagrandeobserver.com.
More contact info on Page 4A.

TUESDAY HEALTHY HABITS

Online at lagrandeobserver.com



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FOR SHERIFF

“Better Relationships for Safer Communities”

Please remember to check your registration status and vote

Paid for by committee to elect Cody Bowman.

