

RESPOND

Continued from Page 1B

what could help with long-term recovery:

“Don’t overreact. Contain areas of infection. Keep the areas uninfected healthy. Let the uninfected areas keep producing while the infected areas are quarantined. We should have closed the state borders instead of waiting until we had to close people in. We could have done trucking transfers at the borders to keep business running.”

The flooring company reported it laid off 30% of its 25 employees but 90% of its workforce was working fewer hours. And recovery, according to the response, could take half a year.

“All businesses need to be allowed to re-open,” business answered in the question section. “Government needs to announce encouraging and scientific statistics (this is NOT as bad as was predicted, not as bad as the flu, being open will NOT increase your chances of dying from it, isolating will weaken your immune system, etc.) so that people are not afraid to go to work, to have people in their homes, and visit businesses.”

The owner of a small digital marketing company in La Grande shared the lockdown has “delayed or impinged” on family health care his family needs.

“Lifting these orders (allowing ‘non-essential’ medical visits/treatments) is essential for the health and safety of my family,” according to the response.

One business applied for a federal Economic Injury Disaster Loan but did not receive funding. Most of the businesses reported they did not know about the program that can provide funding to businesses experiencing a temporary loss of revenue.

Three of the local businesses applied for and received federal Paycheck Protection Program loans, which aims to help businesses keep employees on the payroll. However, the flooring company stated the additional \$600 a week in unemployment benefits is incentivizing people not to work.

“A 20% increase would have made sense,” the response states. “An EXTRA \$600.00 a week is ridiculous. Those people are getting more money than the employers who are trying to keep them at work. They’re getting a lot more money than loyal, hard-working employees who stay, willing to see this time through to keep a good job.”

You can access the survey and responses at the Oregon State Chamber of Commerce website, www.oregonchamber.org.

RODEO

Continued from Page 1B

year or postpone it until 2021. That will depend on whether the state is opening and what the governor’s phased guidelines specify. They are cautiously optimistic the show can go on as it has for 74 years.

“We’re not trying to endanger the community. We’re not trying to bring in the virus. We’re just trying to ride this out in the hope that we can have a rodeo and support the community,” Jones said.

The board has wrestled with the decision to cancel or hold the rodeo since early March when it became apparent lots of public events were likely to be scratched due to state-mandated COVID-19 social distancing requirements and stay-home orders.

“The first thing we

thought of was that we would have to cancel this year. That would have been the easy thing to do,” Jones said.

But directors considered the economic and social repercussions of cancellation, it became evident the “easy” solution was rife with complications.

For one, Jones said, 18-25% of the total tourism revenue for businesses in Wallowa County, especially restaurants, bars, and lodging, is generated during Chief Joseph Days. If the event was canceled, especially this year, Jones said he thought the economic consequences could be a potential disaster for business.

“You might just as well hit ‘em over the head,” he said. “I think this year a lot of people are looking at the revenue from Chief Joseph Days visitors as their profit for the year, like my family did when they ran Russell’s

at the Lake long ago.”

For another, Chief Joseph Days is more than a rodeo. For many, it’s a time when family and friends visit. It’s time when former Wallowa County residents return home for a week.

“For the economic impact alone, we just couldn’t cancel,” Jones said. “Then we began thinking of all those other things, and we just had to

hang on and hope.”

The Chief Joseph Days directors are sticking with the traditional, last weekend of July dates. And keeping their fingers crossed that by then the

state will be more open., allowing generous crowds to fill the grandstands, the riders, ropers, and performers to assemble, along with the broncs, bulls, and steers.



Beth Spell

House District 60

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OTEC Board of Directors Position 3 Harney County



Raised in Grant County and a Harney County Resident for 37+ years, my entire working career has been in customer service (US Bank, small business owner, and ODFW). I hope to continue that service for the member-owners of Oregon Trail Electric. Now retired, I have the time and energy to work with the OTEC Board and offer a fresh perspective to continue to provide reasonable, reliable power for you.

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