

Union County Republicans urge reopening

By **Sabrina Thompson**
La Grande Observer

LA GRANDE — Members Union County Republican Committee organized a peaceful protest Saturday afternoon outside of La Grande’s City Hall to share concerns and grievances about Gov. Kate Brown and the response to COVID-19.

“It is time to get our own state back in business,” Union County Republican Committee secretary Michelle Duffy said. “The closure was intended to prevent overwhelming the hospital and flattening the curve. We’ve done that, now it is time to move on with our lives.”

Duffy was among the 10 or so protesters who came to wave signs on Adams Avenue. Some passing motorists honked and cheered in support of the group.

Local business owner Tony Corig was walking down the street when he decided to join in. Corig owns Direct Music Source and said his store has seen the effect of the closures and would like to see businesses be able to fully open up again.

“My business has been up in sales, but down in customer interaction,” Corig said.

Corig and others in attendance said the purpose of the protest was to have their voices heard and educate the public on issues around the virus and the closures it has caused.

According to committee board member Mike Burton, Brown’s reopening plan is not specific enough and what has happened has left him with little trust in the Governor’s Office. Burton said the county can meet reopening requirements, but Eastern Oregon is stuck waiting to implement Phase I of reopening plans.

The Governor’s Office is reviewing counties’ plans to reopen May 15 so long as they meet certain criteria. These plans include the ability to adequately



Staff photo by Sabrina Thompson

Members of the Union County Republican Committee protest Saturday outside of the La Grande City Hall to urge ending COVID-19 restrictions to reopen the county and local economy. The Governor’s Office is reviewing counties’ plans to reopen May 15 so long as they meet certain criteria, including the ability to adequately test anyone with symptoms and show a decreased number of positive cases or less than hospitalizations.

test anyone with symptoms and contact trace any positive cases, show a decreased number of positive cases or less than five hospitalizations, and enough room and personal protective equipment at hospitals, should a surge of cases occur.

If the county gets the OK to reopen, several businesses can get back to work so long as they take measure to ensure customer and employee safety. Restaurants and bars will get the green light for sit-down service, along with personal care and services businesses, including barbers and salons and in-person gatherings of up to 25 people.

Burton said it shouldn’t be the state or the government who decides this, but a personal choice in how a person and a business responds to the situation. He said he feels our personal liberties have been taken away by the closure and a full reopening is what will give them back.

Marla Schad, committee board member, said there is a possibility of another protest occurring during the Saturday opening of the La Grande Farmers Market.

Most Oregon tenants paid May rent, despite coronavirus crisis

■ Governor issued a statewide moratorium on residential evictions in March

By **Jamie Goldberg**
The Oregonian/Oregonlive via AP StoryShare

PORTLAND — Despite the continued economic devastation from the COVID-19 crisis, the vast majority of renters in Oregon and nationwide paid their May rent within the first six days of the month, data from housing groups show.

The National Multifamily Housing Council, a trade organization representing apartment owners, surveyed 11.4 million apartment units and found that 80.2% of apartment households made full or partial rent payments by May 6. That number is down slightly from 81.7% on May 6 of last year, but up from 78% on April 6 of this year.

The trade organization does not track whether renters paid their full rent or only a portion of their rent.

The numbers look even stronger in Portland and Oregon, more broadly. According to data compiled by RealPage, a company that provides property management software, 88.1% of renters in the Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro area and 89.1% of renters in Oregon had paid rent by May 6.

Those numbers are down by more than 3 percentage points from May 6 of last year when 91.9% of renters in the Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro area and 92.6% of renters in Oregon had paid their rent, according to RealPage.

Many renters waited

longer to pay their rent last month as compared to this month. The National Multifamily Housing Council found that only 69% of apartment households nationwide had paid their rent by April 5, but that 84% of renters had paid rent by April 12. According to RealPage, 79.5% of renters in the Portland area had paid their rent by April 5, while 89.3% had paid rent by April 12.

Data once again shows that lower-income tenants had more difficulty meeting their rent obligations.

While 84.6% of apartment households nationwide living in luxury Class A properties and 83.1% of apartment households in middle-tier Class B properties had paid their rent by May 6, only 73.6% of households in Class C properties, units generally occupied by low-to-moderate income residents, had paid rent by May 6, according to RealPage.

Still, the majority of tenants at all income levels are meeting their rent obligations, even though the COVID-19 crisis has led to unemployment numbers not seen since the Great Depression era.

The Labor Department announced Friday that 20.5 million jobs were lost in April, sending the unemployment rate to 14.7%. More than 360,000 people in Oregon alone filed jobless claims in the first six weeks of the COVID-19 crisis.



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