

DAILY
PLANNER

TODAY

Today is Tuesday, Sept. 8, the 252nd day of 2020. There are 114 days left in the year.

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT

On Sept. 8, 1974, President Gerald R. Ford granted a “full, free, and absolute pardon” to former President Richard Nixon covering his entire term in office.

ON THIS DATE

In 1565, a Spanish expedition established the first permanent European settlement in North America at present-day St. Augustine, Fla.

In 1892, an early version of “The Pledge of Allegiance,” written by Francis Bellamy, appeared in “The Youth’s Companion.” It went: “I pledge allegiance to my Flag and the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

In 1900, Galveston, Texas, was struck by a hurricane that killed an estimated 8,000 people.

In 1935, Sen. Huey P. Long, a Louisiana Democrat, was shot and mortally wounded inside the Louisiana State Capitol; he died two days later. (The assailant was identified as Dr. Carl Weiss, who was gunned down by Long’s bodyguards.)

In 1941, the 900-day Siege of Leningrad by German forces began during World War II.

In 1943, during World War II, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower announced Italy’s surrender.

In 1964, public schools in Prince Edward County, Virginia, reopened after being closed for five years by officials attempting to prevent court-ordered racial desegregation.

In 1986, “The Oprah Winfrey Show” began the first of 25 seasons.

In 2005, Congress hastened to provide an additional \$51.8 billion for relief and recovery from Hurricane Katrina; President George W. Bush pledged to make it “easy and simple as possible” for uncoun- ted, uprooted storm victims to collect food stamps and other government benefits.

In 2014, Ray Rice was let go by the Baltimore Ravens and suspended indefinitely by the NFL after a video was released showing the running back striking his then-fiancee, Janay Palmer, in an elevator. (An arbitrator vacated the suspension two months later, but Rice never played in the NFL again.)

LOTTERY

Megabucks: \$1.3 million
4-9-22-30-40-48

Mega Millions: \$78 million
15-25-26-38-47—22 x4

Powerball: \$56 million
1-4-11-20-69—PB-18 x2

Win for Life: Sept. 2
15-29-44-67

Pick 4: Sept. 6

• 1 p.m.: 7-1-9-5

• 4 p.m.: 8-4-9-6

• 7 p.m.: 2-0-9-7

• 10 p.m.: 1-2-1-7

Pick 4: Sept. 5

• 1 p.m.: 4-0-2-4

• 4 p.m.: 0-9-1-4

• 7 p.m.: 2-6-5-1

• 10 p.m.: 8-6-3-8

Pick 4: Sept. 4

• 1 p.m.: 1-6-1-0

• 4 p.m.: 7-8-6-7

• 7 p.m.: 0-9-5-1

• 10 p.m.: 8-8-1-0

DELIVERY ISSUES?

If you have any problems receiving your Observer, call the office at 541-963-3161.

New BMTD public access channel coming

By Dick Mason
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Union and Baker county residents who receive their television signals from the Blue Mountain Translator District soon will be closer to the emergency pulses of their communities.

The district may be just a week away from getting a non-commercial, public access-type television channel on the air that will allow many Union and Baker county residents to keep up with what their government is doing on the local level and receive emergency information much more quickly.

BMTD Executive Director Alex McHaddad said on Saturday, Sept. 5, he hopes the channel can be launched on Sept. 14.

The new channel will provide live broadcasts of meetings of county commissioners meetings, city councils and school boards, information about emergency situations and more. It also will carry what the translator district has



Photo contributed by Alex McHaddad
This transmitter on Mount Fanny, Union County, broadcasts television signals for the Blue Mountain Translator District, which is working on adding a new public access-type channel.

been livestreaming on its website since mid-April.

“It will be a simulcast of the livestream,” McHaddad said. BMTD had planned to have the channel on the air last spring but the project was held up because of a delay in the arrival in some of the equipment it needed.

McHaddad said the new channel will primarily benefit those in Union and Baker counties who rely on the district for their television signals and do not have internet connection. He said he believes many of these Northeast Oregon residents are seniors.

McHaddad said emergency service providers, including Union County and Grande Ronde Hospital, will be able to get urgent messages out on the public access channel quickly.

The BMTD Board is working with TelVue Corporation, a broadcast technology firm, and Sinclair Broadcasting in airing the channel at a cost of about \$23,000. McHaddad said he hopes sponsorships will help offset the cost.

Tim Wallender, president of the BMTD board, said the new channel will serve a particularly valuable role during the COVID-19 pandemic because in many instances people are not allowed to attend meetings of school boards, county commissions and city councils due to social distancing rules.

“This is one government entity helping other government entities get their word out,” Wallender said.

Senate Bill 394, which the Legislature passed in 2019, made the addition of the channel possible. The bill allows a public translator district the authority to use the technology to create public access-like channels.

The Blue Mountain Translator District, founded in 1978, has broadcast towers on Mount Fanny and Mount Harris in Union County and Beaver Mountain in Baker County and is funded by service fees. It provides about 24 channels to viewers, including ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox.

State denies Phase 2 appeal from Umatilla County

By Alex Castle
EO Media Group

UMATILLA COUNTY — The timing of when Umatilla County will be permitted to move back to Phase 2 of reopening is up in the air after the state denied its appeal last week.

“I no longer have any forecast on when Phase 2 will happen,” Umatilla County Public Health Director Joe Fiumara said on Wednesday, Sept. 2. “We were aiming for that three-week mark, which was next week. I can no longer tell that to anybody with any confidence.”

Umatilla County Commissioner John Shafer confirmed the county’s appeal was denied during a Sept. 2 conference call with Oregon Health Authority Director Pat Allen and state epidemiologist Dr. Dean Sidelinger.

The county had appealed to the state to move into Phase 2 starting Friday, Sept. 4, but Fiumara said the state presented the county with a set of requirements before any appeal for Phase 2 will be granted.

“Where my understanding is for where we are right now, they are not going to allow Umatilla County to move to Phase 2 until such time that we meet all six public health indicators and our case rate for that week is less than 100 per 100,000,” Fiumara said.

In a Sept. 3 press release announcing the county’s appeal was denied, Gov. Kate Brown confirmed that due to higher case counts than earlier in the pandemic, no county will be permitted into Phase 2 without a case rate below



File photo by Ben Lonergan/EO Media Group
People bowl at desert Lanes Family Fun Center, Hermiston, on June 8. When Umatilla County returns to Phase 2, bowling alleys, arcades and movie theaters will be among operations with the approval to reopen.

100 per 100,000 people.

“The original prerequisites for Phase 2 were based on trend-based metrics,” the release stated. “At that time, counties had a relatively low infection rate.”

In Phase 2, indoor and outdoor recreation and entertainment venues, such as movie theaters and pools, are able to reopen, in addition to youth clubs and playgrounds.

According to a Sept. 3 update of the Oregon Health Authority’s public data dashboard, Umatilla County is not meeting three of the six metrics for evaluating a county’s status during the pandemic. Those metrics are uptrends in hospitalizations over the last 14 days, uptrends in positive test rate in the last week and an uptrend of more than 5% in new cases over the last week.

There were eight county residents hospitalized with the virus as of Sept. 3, according to Umatilla County Public Health. The Oregon Health Authority doesn’t

publicly provide the numbers it uses to determine that there’s been an uptrend in the last 14 days, but Umatilla County Public Health reported there were seven hospitalizations in an Aug. 20 press release.

The Oregon Health Authority also calculated a case rate of 180 per 100,000 people in Umatilla County for the week of Aug. 23-29, along with a positive test rate of 13.3% that same week.

Those calculations seemed from reports the week prior, which listed the county at a case rate of 113 per 100,000 (representing a fourth consecutive week of declining numbers) but a positive test rate of 16.3% the week of Aug. 16-22.

While those numbers suggest a downtrend in positive test rate from one week to the next, Fiumara said the Oregon Health Authority indicated the metric was determined as showing an uptrend because the rate increased from the beginning of the week to the end of the week Aug. 23-29.

News BRIEFS

Joseph City Council discusses urban growth boundary, ordinance proposal

JOSEPH — Illness kept members of the Joseph City Council from attending an uneventful meeting in person.

The short meeting took place Thursday, Sept. 3, in the parking lot outside the Community Center, where the council has been meeting to ensure social distancing.

City Administrator Larry Braden said Friday that illness affected him, two council members, two staff members. He said none of the illnesses were serious, but given the COVID-19 pandemic, they chose not to attend.

Even though the council has a quorum in attendance, the local governing body made no decisions.

Braden said the council during the 45-minute meeting discussed an update on the city’s urban growth boundary. He said the city began the process of expanding zoning or property boundaries last winter after seeing a state economic analysis. The council must adopt the analysis, which may occur this winter.

Braden said changes in the boundary could take place several months later, possibly in March or April.

The council also discussed an update on the city’s process of having the American Legal Publishing Corp. codify and serve as a third-party host for city ordinances. Braden said by completing that process, city ordinances would be easily accessible to the public.

The council’s next meeting will be at 6 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 8.

Men face charges for string of thefts in Grant County

JOHN DAY — Five young men face a variety of charges related to a string of thefts — including 14 chainsaws and 12 firearms — over the last year in Grant County.

The thefts began Sept. 14, 2019, and continued until June 26, according to multiple indictments Grant County District Attorney Jim Carpenter filed Aug. 19. The court documents reported at least 38 victims and list a variety of goods, including chainsaws, guns and tools.

The district attorney charged the following:

- Tanner E. Walczyk, born in 1999, of Mount Vernon, with more than 100 counts from September 2019 to June 2020, including 30 counts of criminal conspiracy, 22 counts of theft and 18 counts of unlawful entry into motor vehicle. Walczyk faces separate charges in Umatilla County of robbery and assault, according to a Feb. 14 indictment in Umatilla County.

- Austin J. Catron, 18, of John Day, with more than 70 counts from September 2019 to June 2020, including 20 counts of criminal conspiracy, 15 counts of first-degree theft and 13 counts of second-degree theft.

- Clayton W. Ellis, born in 1998, of Prairie City, with 16 counts, including four counts of criminal conspiracy, two counts of first-degree theft and one count of second-degree burglary.

- Jonas C. Waite of Pilot Rock is charged with four counts of criminal conspiracy, one count of second-degree theft and one count of unlawful entry into a motor vehicle allegedly committed Sept. 27, 2019, according to an Aug. 19 indictment.

- Cody R. Combs, born in 2000, of Prairie City, with one count each of criminal conspiracy, second-degree theft and second-degree criminal trespass.

In a July 1 press release about the thefts, Carpenter said Grant County experienced an uptick in thefts, including the thefts of chainsaws, firearms, tools and other equipment. Carpenter also encouraged residents to lock their cars and homes, not leave valuables in plain sight and be vigilant in watching out for themselves and their neighbors.

Fires and smoke dominate Lostine council

LOSTINE — Fires and smoke management were at the top of the agenda Wednesday, Sept. 2, when the Lostine City Council held its monthly meeting.

Lisa Mahon and Katy Nesbitt introduced the council to Wallowa County’s community response plan for smoke management. The committee is conducting a survey with the aim of developing better alerts to high smoke volume and to provide the public with ways to handle the smoke.

Mayor/Fire Chief Dusty Tippet said the city’s fire department had received more than the normal number of calls. He said there was a good turnout from volunteer firefighters but hopes to meet with the Oregon Department of Forestry to discuss how the city and the state can better work as a firefighting team.

In another matter, City Recorder Toni Clary discussed the possibility of moving the Lostine Post Office from city hall to Neal Park on Elizabeth Street. Clary said the post office will require the city to have a survey of the property, which will cost between \$2,000-\$5,000, and to propose a monthly lease rate.

Council members asked what the monthly cost to maintain such a move would be, and Clary said she would inquire.

— EO Media Group

Oregon on pace for fire season similar to 2019

The Observer

LA GRANDE — Barring a major flare-up in the next couple of weeks, Oregon appears it is on the way to escaping the 2020 fire season in relatively decent shape, especially when compared to some of the ravaging fire seasons of the recent past.

According to inciweb.nwcg.gov, which tracks the progress of fires in the U.S., Oregon has recorded a little less than 110,000 acres burned in fires on its website, and the bulk of that is coming from just three blazes — the Indian Creek, Lionshead and White River fires.

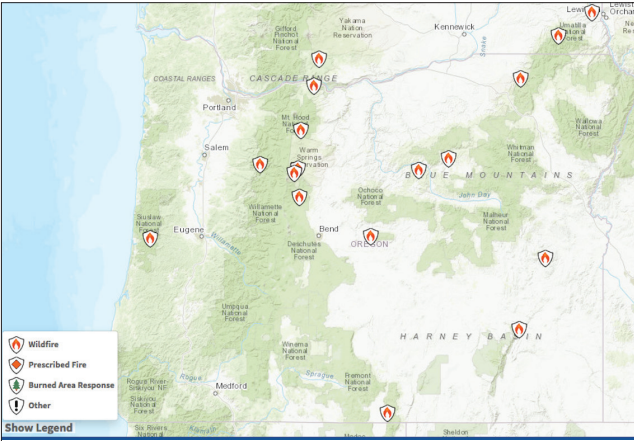
The season, to this point, appears to be on a path similar to the 2019 season. An Oregonian/OregonLive report on last year’s season said that between Oregon and Washington, just more than 200,000 acres burned. The

fires reported on Inciweb through Monday, Sept. 7, are at a combined total of about 207,000 acres in the two states.

Inciweb’s site does not necessarily include, at least in Oregon, hundreds of small fires that are quickly contained. For example, through Monday, the Oregon Department of Forestry website reported 749 fires, totaling just less than 17,000 acres — an average of about 22 acres per fire. Conversely, Inciweb includes only 16 fires in Oregon on its site at an average of about 6,741 acres apiece.

But regardless, the numbers don’t match 2017 or 2018, when, according to The Oregonian’s article, fires burn well more than 1 million acres between Oregon and Washington both years, including 1.3 million in 2018.

The three biggest fires



Screenshot from inciweb.nwcg.gov
This screenshot of a map at inciweb.nwcg.gov shows where wildfires are burning Monday, Sept. 7, in Oregon.

in the state have accounted for more than 80,000 acres of damage. The Indian Creek fire near Juntura is larger than the next four biggest fires combined and has scorched at least 48,128 acres. Lionshead is responsible for 18,615 acres burning, and White River has cooked 17,507 acres.

Those are the only three

Oregon blazes, according to the Inciweb data, that are larger than 5,000 acres. A trio of fires have burned between 4,000 and 5,000 acres — the P-515 Fire (4,609 acres), Green Ridge Fire (4,338 acres) and the Frog Fire (4,020 acres). Laurel, Neals and Crane fires all burned between 1,000 and 3,000 acres.