



Union County businesses to receive \$735,000

Commissioners vote to give money from CARES Act to 94 local businesses

By Dick Mason
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The Union County Board of Commissioners is extending a hand of assistance to nearly 100 Union County businesses.

The board voted on Friday, Dec. 18, to give \$735,409 in federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security funding for COVID-19 relief to 94 Union County businesses. The county received the CARES funding from the state earlier this month.

The commissioners decided to give a total of \$504,586.50 to Tier I applicants. These are businesses that lost revenue in both of the freezes Gov. Kate Brown's executive orders put into effect this year.

The freezes ran from mid-March to mid-May and later from mid-November to early December. The freezes were an effort to prevent the continuing spread of COVID-19.

The remainder of the CARES funding, \$230,822.50, went to Tier 2 applicants. These are businesses hurt by one of the freezes or that demonstrated their revenue was down 25% or more for at least one month between March 1 and Nov. 30 compared to 2019 due to COVID-19.

"I wish we could give more, but I'm hopeful that this will make a difference," said Paul Anderes, chair of the county board.

The county notified businesses of the availability of CARES funding on Dec. 7, and they had until noon Dec. 15 to apply for it. All businesses applying received equal consideration regardless of when they applied, as long as it was before the deadline.

Every city in Union County has businesses that will receive

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Dick Mason/The Observer, File

Thomas Houck, a food distribution and warehouse assistant with the Community Connection of Northeast Oregon Regional Food Bank, moves pallets of food March 21, 2020. The Oregon Community Foundation, a statewide philanthropic network, provided \$78,000 to CCNO this year.

STAYING AFLOAT

Philanthropy helps keep local nonprofits going

By Kaleb Lay
The Observer

UNION COUNTY — As the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the systemic issues of food insecurity, health care access and unemployment, more and more people have leaned on the services of nonprofit organizations to get them through the crisis.

Oregon Community Foundation, a statewide philanthropic network, has been doing its part to make sure those nonprofits can keep up their work, including providing support to nonprofits in Union County.

OCF had donated more than \$1.4 million to nonprofits in Eastern Oregon as of mid-November, nearly \$118,000 of which went to organizations in Union County. The organization has shifted its focus to helping Oregon's nonprofits survive the upheaval of COVID-19 since the pandemic began.

"What we have funded since March is a whole lot different than our typical previous, what we called our Community Grants Process ... and it was really responding to community needs," said Cheryl Puddy, a program officer with OCF.

LOCAL RECIPIENTS OF OREGON COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FUNDS

- \$78,000 to Community Connection of Northeast Oregon, La Grande
- \$25,000 to Northeast Oregon Network, La Grande
- \$5,450 to Eastern Oregon Regional Arts Council (Art Center East, La Grande)
- \$5,000 to Eastern Oregon Film Festival, La Grande

"We threw that process out the window. ... We knew we could not do that during the time of COVID, so we turned that whole program into what we called our Oregon Community Relief Fund."

The largest donation in Union County went to Community Connection of Northeast Oregon, which operates the Northeast Oregon Regional Food Bank and provides services to the community from housing rehabilitation

to public transit and senior services, among much more.

CCNO received a total of \$78,000 from the Oregon Community Foundation, \$68,500 of which came from their Oregon Community Relief Fund. The other \$9,500 was allocated from the Foundation's general fund.

Another benefactor of the OCF's philanthropy in 2020 was the Northeast Oregon Network, La Grande, which works to reduce barriers to health care in Union, Wallowa, Baker, Umatilla and Malheur counties. NEON received \$25,000 from the Oregon Community

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Tensions rise inside and outside Oregon's Capitol

By Sara Cline
Associated Press/Report for America

SALEM — State police declared an unlawful assembly at Oregon's Capitol building Monday morning, Dec. 21, as protesters opposed to COVID-19 restrictions attempted to force their way in during the third special legislative session.

Lawmakers are at the Capitol to consider measures that would provide \$800 million in relief to people struggling from the COVID-19 pandemic and this summer's massive wildfires.

Police said, while entering the building, protestors used chemical agents and bear spray against officers. At least two people were arrested after a smaller group of protestors were successful in entering a portion of the Capitol building. Outside protestors banged their fists against the

doors chanting, "Let us in."

Police blocked off streets surrounding the Capitol building, but as of noon people remained, shouting "Arrest Kate Brown." One person climbed on top of a 20-foot tall relief sculpture, next to the front steps of the building, and waved an American flag as people cheered.

Other protestors walked around with rifles slung across their body as state police, within armored vehicles, repeatedly announced that people must leave the area.

"The Oregon State Police encourage people to exercise their first amendment rights, but it must be lawfully," state police said in a statement Monday. "If you commit a crime you will be subject to arrest."

The Capitol is closed to the public during the special ses-



Andrew Selsky/AP Photo

Pro-Trump and anti-mask demonstrators protest outside the Oregon State Capitol on Monday, Dec. 21, 2020, as legislators meet for an emergency session.

sion as part of a COVID-19 safety measure. However virtual testimony about the proposed bills that are expected to be discussed by lawmakers Monday was allowed during Thursday and Saturday hearings.

There were tense moments inside and outside the Capitol.

On the Senate floor Monday morning, Republican Sen. Dallas Heard stood before his colleagues

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WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

Tonight 19 Low Colder
Wednesday 35/20 Mostly sunny

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