

DAILY
PLANNER

Today is Tuesday, March 2, the 61st day of 2021. There are 304 days left in the year.

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT IN HISTORY:

On March 2, 1932, the 20th Amendment to the Constitution, which moved the date of the presidential inauguration from March 4 to January 20, was passed by Congress and sent to the states for ratification.

ON THIS DATE:

In 1867, Howard University, a historically Black school of higher learning in Washington, D.C., was founded. Congress passed, over President Andrew Johnson's veto, the first of four Reconstruction Acts.

In 1877, Republican Rutherford B. Hayes was declared the winner of the 1876 presidential election over Democrat Samuel J. Tilden, even though Tilden had won the popular vote.

In 1917, Puerto Ricans were granted U.S. citizenship as President Woodrow Wilson signed the Jones-Shafroth Act.

In 1939, Roman Catholic Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli (puh-CHEL'-ee) was elected pope on his 63rd birthday; he took the name Pius XII. The Massachusetts legislature voted to ratify the Bill of Rights, 147 years after the first 10 amendments to the U.S. Constitution had gone into effect. (Georgia and Connecticut soon followed.)

In 1943, the three-day Battle of the Bismarck Sea began in the southwest Pacific during World War II; U.S. and Australian warplanes were able to inflict heavy damage on an Imperial Japanese convoy.

In 1962, Wilt Chamberlain scored 100 points for the Philadelphia Warriors in a game against the New York Knicks, an NBA record that still stands. (Philadelphia won, 169-147.)

In 1965, the movie version of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical "The Sound of Music," starring Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer, had its world premiere in New York.

In 1977, the U.S. House of Representatives adopted a strict code of ethics.

In 1985, the government approved a screening test for AIDS that detected antibodies to the virus, allowing possibly contaminated blood to be excluded from the blood supply.

In 1995, the Internet search engine website Yahoo! was incorporated by founders Jerry Yang and David Filo.

Ten years ago: The Supreme Court ruled, 8-1, that a grieving father's pain over mocking protests at his Marine son's funeral had to yield to First Amendment protections for free speech in a decision favoring the Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka, Kansas.

Five years ago: The U.N. Security Council unanimously approved the toughest sanctions against North Korea in two decades.

Group purchases Union church property

DICK MASON

The Observer

UNION — The former Union United Methodist Church building complex no longer is in peril.

A local nonprofit, the Friends of the Historic Union Community Hall, purchased the Union United Methodist Church property and its three buildings from the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. The purchase, finalized on Wednesday, Feb. 24, was made with \$25,000 raised by the Friends of the Historic Union Community Hall.

The Oregon-Idaho Conference of the United Methodist Church assumed ownership of the property in 2019 after the church closed because of declining membership. The Oregon-Idaho Conference oversees all Methodist churches in Oregon and Southern Idaho.

The conference next put the church building, its fellowship hall and parsonage up for sale. The complex, now named the Historic Union Community Hall, has been closed for at least a year.

The purchase is a relief for community members, said LaVon Hall, Friends of



Dick Mason/The Observer

The Friends of the Historic Union Community Hall has purchased the former Union United Methodist Church property, shown here on Feb. 28, 2021, to preserve the landmark as a community center.

the Historic Union Community Hall board member. Hall said many were worried someone might purchase the complex and tear it down for its old bricks or to start a new business.

Any such steps would have torn the hearts of many who consider the Union United Methodist Church building a community icon, which has been the site of countless family milestone moments,

including weddings and anniversary celebrations. "We are so thankful (it will be saved)," Hall said.

The Friends of the Historic Union Community Hall organization was created in February 2020 and immediately launched a fundraising drive. Hall sensed that many people were not optimistic that money for the purchase could be raised.

"They thought it was a pie

in the sky dream," she said.

Terra Richter, president of Friends of the Historic Union Community Hall nonprofit, was impressed with how many people reached out to help.

"Union's residents, regional businesses and service providers have been a driving force since our organization's conception in February 2020," Richter said in a press release.

The Friends of the His-

toric Union Community Hall achieved its initial objective, but a lot of work remains ahead.

"The building is in need of rehabilitation with several large projects requiring immediate attention and funding," the press release stated.

Hall said the complex's buildings, which need long-term maintenance but are in relatively good condition, soon will be rented to the public. The church sanctuary, built in 1905, will be available for weddings and funerals and its fellowship hall for community events like family reunions and birthday celebrations. The parsonage will be available later as a rental.

A socially distanced open house with an online viewing option will take place at the end of April.

During this event, people will be able to tour the buildings, updates will be provided on upcoming events, and organizations that assisted in the purchase of the popular landmark will be recognized.

Hall said in addition to selfless efforts of many people, some divine intervention made the purchase of the buildings possible.

"God was on our side," she said.

Another federal lawsuit challenges Hammonds' Oregon grazing permit

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI

Capital Press

SALEM — Environmentalists have asked a federal judge to again cancel the grazing permit for Oregon's Hammond family, claiming its restoration violated administrative, environmental and land management laws.

In January, the U.S. Interior Department re-authorized the Hammonds to graze cattle on four public land allotments totaling 26,400 acres, partly due to the family's historic use and proximity to the federal property.

Steven Hammond, who operates the ranch, and his father, Dwight, originally lost permission to graze the allotments near Diamond in 2014 when the government refused to renew their permit after they were criminally charged with setting fires to rangelands.

The Hammonds were convicted and completed their initial prison terms, then ordered back behind bars after the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled they had to serve five-year mandatory minimum sentences for arson.

Their return to prison in early 2016 sparked protests that culminated in a month-long stand-off with federal agents at the Malheur National Wildlife that attracted



Capital Press, File

Hammond Ranches recently received reauthorization to use grazing allotments in Eastern Oregon, but an environmental lawsuit seeks to overturn that decision.

national attention.

The ranchers were released early in 2018 after receiving a full pardon from former President Donald Trump, which prompted the Interior Department to renew the ranchers' grazing permit the following year due to "changed circumstances."

However, environmental groups convinced a federal judge to reverse that decision in 2019 because the grazing permit was renewed contrary to regulations.

The Interior Department then opened up the grazing allotments to applications from other ranchers but ultimately decided

to issue a new permit to the Hammond family earlier this year.

The Western Watersheds Project, Oregon Natural Desert Association, Wildearth Guardians and Center for Biological Diversity have now filed another lawsuit seeking to rescind the grazing permit's most recent approval.

The environmental plaintiffs argue the federal government's decision involved "rushed, opaque, and highly unusual public processes" that were "tainted by political influence and are not the product of reasoned, lawful decision-making," the complaint said.

According to the complaint, the federal government approved the grazing permit "without opportunities for public participation required by law" and wrongly determined the Hammonds were more qualified than other applicants.

The decision also didn't comply with land use protections for the sage grouse and with a statute aimed at conserving the "long term ecological integrity" of Steens Mountain in Eastern Oregon, the complaint said.

Alan Schroeder, attorney for the Hammonds, referred questions about the lawsuit to Steven Hammond, who wasn't available for comment as of press time.

Agreement puts Wallowa County in liability bind

By BILL BRADSHAW

Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — To maintain state services for Wallowa County, the county commissioners said they felt pressured into signing an intergovernmental agreement for a variety of auxiliary services at their Feb. 17, meeting.

The one-year agreement with the Oregon Health Authority is for community mental health; addiction treatment, recovery and prevention; and problem gambling services. But it puts the county in the liability crosshairs if any problems should arise.

Commissioner Susan Roberts said she wanted it in the record that, "while the state manages to avoid liability, counties like Wallowa can't."

She cited a case in Lane County's mental health court where there was a massive lawsuit against the county after a person murdered two people, tried to murder a third and the families of the victims sued the county.

"There's everything in there that protects the state; there's nothing in there that protects the county," Roberts said.

She said she felt that in order to obtain the state services, Wallowa County has no choice but to sign the agreement.

"We have started looking at every one of these (contracts) and we would prefer that the state not hold itself harmless but put all of that penalty on the counties that we can ill afford to pay — a \$5 million lawsuit or more," she said. "With almost every one of these contracts, the state takes itself out of the realm (of liability) but leaves the county in the firing line but ... we've had some discussion about this and we're just letting the public know that these things are hanging out there for our counties, that we're not protected ... we're not given that protection from the state when we sign these contracts. We don't have much choice if we want to give these services to the people in our community. We sign them, but we've got our fingers and toes crossed that nothing will occur that will come back to punish us."

Commissioner John Hillock said some counties are able to find an alternative.

"A lot of counties have opted out of doing it and ... could then put in their own provider," he said.

Roberts acknowledged that was a possibility for wealthier counties, but said it wasn't feasible for Wallowa County.

"We have tried in the past to get out of this and there doesn't seem to be a way," she said. "They provide their own; they hire and contract their own. That's the difference. We don't have that ability. I just wanted to get that in on the record."

Hillock agreed the county is caught in the middle in a variety of areas.

"It seems like everything we do, whether it's this or the sheriff's office or whatever, there's a certain amount of liability that comes back on the county," he said. "It's no different than running any of our businesses or spraying on weeds. There's always liability."

Public weighs in on east moraine management

450-plus respond to survey about managing Wallowa Lake moraine

The Observer

ENTERPRISE — Cooperation from recreationists and local land managers are helping guide the management of Wallowa County's recent acquisition of the Wallowa Lake East Moraine.

More than 450 people responded to an online survey last spring that asked about their interests and concerns for the future management of the land, now in Wallowa County ownership. County and Wallowa Land Trust staff followed up the survey last summer with focus groups to gain further information on the moraine's many uses, according to a press release from the trust.

Eric Greenwell, the trust's conservation director, said the data is helping the Wallowa Lake Moraines Partnership, which includes the county, the trust and Wallowa Resources, develop a multiple-use management plan, particularly as it relates to recreation.

"In developing the management plan the partnership is seeking to keep all uses in balance and keep people safe," Greenwell said in the press release. "The survey and focus group questions were designed to gather input regarding specific values and uses, which the partnership has already acquired funding for and committed to preserving."

The majority of respondents stated they use the property for recreation, but input came from people who grazed, hunted, gathered roots and harvested timber on the property in the past. The survey questions



Wallowa County Chieftain, File

More than 450 people responded to a survey about managing the Wallowa East Moraine. Results are available at the Campaign for the East Moraine website, www.morainecampaign.org.

were qualitative and quantitative, according to the press release.

Of the survey respondents, 63% were full-time residents, 16% part-time residents with the remaining 21% were visitors. Approximately 35 people participated in the seven focus groups — all but one live in the county full-time.

For the focus groups, recreation was broken down into equestrian, pedestrian and mountain bike uses.

Katy Nesbitt, Wallowa County natural resources director, said the focus group members gave insight into not only the popular uses of the moraine when it was in private ownership as well as some of the potential conflicts. She said the feedback also showed little conflict among users.

While the management plan is in devel-

opment, the partners agree educating the public will be an ongoing endeavor. According to the release stated, not all respondents were convinced that balancing multiple uses was achievable.

"Setting clear expectations with the community and following through will be critical especially in the beginning," Greenwell said. This is a huge community achievement, but again and again respondents echoed the sentiment, "keep it as it is," or expressed concern for a future of increased use, use conflicts and overdevelopment."

The East Moraine Community Forest Survey results are on the Campaign for the East Moraine website, www.morainecampaign.org. The link to the survey report and the full raw data are just beneath the main banner and aerial shot of Wallowa Lake.