

## TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Thursday, March 11, the 70th day of 2021. There are 295 days left in the year.

### TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT IN HISTORY:

On March 11, 1918, what were believed to be the first confirmed U.S. cases of a deadly global flu pandemic were reported among U.S. Army soldiers stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas; 46 would die. (The worldwide outbreak of influenza claimed an estimated 20 to 40 million lives.)

### ON THIS DATE:

In 1862, during the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln removed Gen. George B. McClellan as general-in-chief of the Union armies, leaving him in command of the Army of the Potomac, a post McClellan also ended up losing.

In 1942, as Japanese forces continued to advance in the Pacific during World War II, U.S. Army Gen. Douglas MacArthur left the Philippines for Australia, where he vowed on March 20, "I shall return" — a promise he kept more than 2½ years later.

In 1954, the U.S. Army charged that Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy, R-Wis., and his subcommittee's chief counsel, Roy Cohn, had exerted pressure to obtain favored treatment for Pvt. G. David Schine, a former consultant to the subcommittee. (The confrontation culminated in the famous Senate Army-McCarthy hearings.)

In 1955, Sir Alexander Fleming, the discoverer of penicillin, died in London at age 73.

In 1959, the Lorraine Hansberry drama "A Raisin in the Sun" opened at New York's Ethel Barrymore Theater.

In 1977, more than 130 hostages held in Washington, D.C., by Hanafi Muslims were freed after ambassadors from three Islamic nations joined the negotiations.

In 1985, Mikhail S. Gorbachev was chosen to succeed the late Konstantin U. Chernenko as general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party.

In 1986, the state of Georgia pardoned Leo Frank, a Jewish businessman lynched in 1915 for the murder of 13-year-old Mary Phagan.

In 2004, ten bombs exploded in quick succession across the commuter rail network in Madrid, Spain, killing 191 people in an attack linked to al-Qaida-inspired militants.

In 2006, former Serb leader Slobodan Milosevic was found dead of a heart attack in his prison cell in the Netherlands, abruptly ending his four-year U.N. war crimes trial; he was 64.

Ten years ago: A magnitude-9.0 earthquake and resulting tsunami struck Japan's northeastern coast, killing nearly 20,000 people and severely damaging the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power station.

# LGHS varsity football team set to play Thursday

By ALEX WITTWER  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The La Grande High School varsity football team is gearing up for its first game of the new season, facing off against the Nyssa Bulldogs on Thursday, March 11.

The season opener will be the team's first game in more than a year — and its first as returning champions.

The Tiger's last game was the OSAA Class 4A Football State Championship against the Banks Braves on Nov. 30, 2019. La Grande shut out the defending champions 21-0.

In stark contrast to the boisterous and cheering pro-La Grande crowds that filled the stadium at that game in Hermiston, the Tigers will be nearly alone in Nyssa as the only spectators at the match will be families of the home team.

"You know it's going to be awful different, that's for sure, because it's nice to have the crowds involved," La Grande head football coach Rich McIlmoil said.

The community has



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

La Grande High School head football coach Rich McIlmoil (right) stands with members of the varsity and junior varsity teams as they practice Tuesday, March 9, 2021. The Tigers varsity squad competes in its first game of the season on Thursday against the Nyssa Bulldogs at Nyssa. The game also will be the Tigers first since winning the Class 4A Football State Championship in 2019.

been supportive of the team throughout the coronavirus pandemic, he said, and while not playing in front of fans will be awkward, "at

least the boys get to play."

McIlmoil said he has a positive outlook toward the upcoming match.

"I think we look pretty

good," he said, "and I have no doubt in my mind that our boys are going to compete as hard as they can."

Besides the change of

crowds, there have been new adjustments in the Oregon School Activities Association regarding league sports this year — specifically, forming a hybrid league of high schools in Nyssa, Vale, Burns, Ontario, Baker and La Grande. While the last three schools are 4A, Nyssa, Burns and Vale are normally 3A schools.

"Out here in Eastern Oregon it'll be pretty comparable," the coach said of the hybrid league. "I think we'll see a lot of kids that are out of shape and not ready to hit right away, but as we get a few games under our belt, or as games continue, the kids will only get better with every snap of the ball, that's for sure."

In addition, the OSAA has yet to announce any form of championship, which means the Tigers will hold on to their title by default. Even so, the Tigers look to compete as hard as the year before.

"We want that No. 1 spot," said McIlmoil. "That's what we're going for every year."

## Colleagues recall Elgin football coach, teacher

By DICK MASON

The Observer

ELGIN — Elgin High School has lost one of its most popular educators.

Jeff Rysdam, a social studies teacher at the school and its head football coach, died Monday, March 8.

Rysdam taught in the Elgin School District for about eight years and had been the high school's head football coach since 2017.

"He was always trying to give kids opportunities and introduce them to new things," said Elgin School District Superintendent Dianne Greif.

Elgin High assistant football coach Brock Eckstein echoed this sentiment.

"He was 100% dedicated to kids, to their academic and athletic futures," Eckstein said. "Every kid at Elgin High School has nothing but good things to say about him."

He said the walls of Rysdam's classroom were covered with cards and invitations from his students.

"He had a special bond with all of his students," Eckstein said.

Rysdam graduated from Elgin High School in 1996 and later from Eastern



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

The football field at Elgin High School is empty on the early afternoon of Wednesday, March 10, 2021. The Elgin School District announced Jeff Rysdam, a social studies teacher at the school and its head football coach, died Monday, March 8.

Oregon University.

He led the EHS football team to the state playoffs in 2018 and 2019. The Huskies' 2018 appearance in the state playoffs was their first in a decade.

Greif noted that Rysdam, who was also the high school's athletic director, led his players on community service projects including the annual cleanup of the Elgin Stampede Grounds and Elgin's annual cleanup day.

Rysdam also took his players to college football games at Oregon State University in Corvallis, Wash-

ington State University in Pullman and Boise State University in Boise, Idaho, to introduce his players to new higher education environments.

Greif said Rysdam had a colorful and engaging personality that helped him connect with students.

"He was definitely a student favorite," Greif said. "Before school, at lunch and after school there were as many students in his classroom as space would allow."

The Observer was not able to confirm the cause of Rysdam's death.

## Union City Council adopts goals for 2021

### Council reviews restructuring water and sewer rates

By DICK MASON

The Observer

UNION — The Union City Council's vision for 2021 now is in sharper focus.

The city council at its meeting Monday, March 8, voted to adopt a set of goals for 2021. The goals address six categories: ordinance review, the old ranger station in Union, economic development, the city's park, the city's charter and emergency services.

The council discussed the goals at a Jan. 23 work session.

The ordinances the council plans to review include one for water and sewer rates. The council in 2020 began seriously looking into restructuring the city's rates for water and sewer so they are more equitable. The council is pursuing this objective after a report indicated the rate structures for Union's water and sewer service are resulting in some light users paying more than they should.

The ranger station goals are focused on renovating the buildings there for public use and obtaining recognition as a national historic site, a plus that might help to attract tourists to Union, said Union City Administrator Doug Wiggins.

The city's economic goals include completing a community assessment report, which would go to the city council to identify

grants to help businesses.

Goals concerning the park include continuing a partnership between the city and the Union School District with regard to improving the site. Through the program, Union High School students are helping city staff write applications for grants that will finance park improvement programs. The students are doing this while working with their teachers, said Union School District Superintendent Carter Wells.

A second park goal concerns a trail project. One possible path would run along Catherine Creek in Union just as it does at the park. This would provide residents with a place to exercise and could draw visitors from outside the area. Wiggins said the city is trying to obtain easements from landowners for the trail. Once the city obtains that public access, it would be able to apply for grants for the trail extension.

The charter goal calls for the council to establish a committee to put forward a revised charter that the community supports. Voters in the November 2020 general election voted down a revised city charter.

The emergency services goal calls for the formation of a committee to explore a possible merger of the Union Fire Department and the Union Rural Fire Department. The Union City Council voted Feb. 8, to take a look at helping the two fire departments merge in an effort to boost efficiency.

## Lostine finalizes contract for new post office location

By BILL BRADSHAW

Wallowa County Chieftain

LOSTINE — The city of Lostine signed the final contract for a new post office and plans are underway to move from Highway 82 across from city hall, the city's recorder, Toni Clary, said in an email Thursday, March 4.

The city council met the previous evening to finalize the contract.

Mayor Dusty Tippet said Monday, March 8, the final aspect of the contract was negotiating the rates for the electrical power. He said that was completed March 4 and a Pacific Power and Light power pole now can

be installed. He said no water or septic utilities will be needed for the 70-by-50-foot modular building that will be on the southeastern corner of Neal Park behind city hall and on Elizabeth Street. Tippet said the groundbreaking for the building should be in April.

"I wouldn't expect it'll

take super long," the mayor said of anticipated construction time.

The lease for the post office expires in August. The facility is in a portion of a home, and the homeowners declined to renew the lease because they wish to regain use of that portion of their building.

## Enterprise City Council votes to postpone Summerfest until next next year

By BILL BRADSHAW

Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — There will not be a Summerfest in Enterprise this year, the city council agreed during its Monday, March 8, meeting, preferring to wait until 2022 to give time for a larger event, according to a press release.

Councilor Christie Huston of the Projects Committee said because the event is normally in June, most council members are new to the council, and given the COVID-19 troubles of the past year, it is better to wait until next year to hold the event.

Huston also discussed options for memorializing Michele Young, a prior city administrator. The council decided to name the council

chambers in her honor and to ask Young's family for permission to hang a large picture of her in the chambers with a plaque showing her years of service.

Young, who died in September, served 31-1/2 years as city administrator before retiring in 2018.

Plans call for the design of a plaque to recognize all former and current mayors, which Young was working on prior to her leaving.

In another matter, the council heard a presentation on the Wallowa County Smoke Management Community Response Plan by Lisa Mahon. She gave an explanation of the process of this project. After her presentation, the council voted to submit the plan to the Oregon Department



Wallowa County Chieftain, File

Face-painting artist Kierra Naisbitt puts the finishing touches on Alana Caine's butterfly face at the Enterprise Summerfest in 2018. The Enterprise City Council voted Monday, March 8, 2021, to wait until 2022 to hold the June event.

of Forestry and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. A sim-

ilar presentation was made to the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners on

Wednesday, March 3.

The council also considered applications for Community-Economic-Tourism Related Activities grants to help fund community events. Grants up for consideration would provide \$2,000 each to Juniper Jam, the Courthouse Concert Series, the Woodlands and Watershed Festival, Alpenfest, Mountain High Broncs and Bulls, and Main Street Show and Shine. Representatives of each event were given the opportunity to make a pitch for the grants. After the presentations, the city's administrator, Lacey McQuead, said the CETRA/Motel Tax Committee would meet and prepare a recommendation for grant awards to

be heard during the April meeting.

In other business, the council:

- Heard from Council President Jenni Word that the police committee is on the final steps of completing the pre-employment process for police chief. The city in February offered the job to Wallowa County sheriff's deputy Kevin McQuead pending successful completion of the pre-employment checks.

- Approved the planning commission's formal recommendation for the new Design and Development Standards for the city. Anderson Perry prepared the standards. After the council's vote, the standards went into effect immediately.