

## FEAST

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gardens, but could also find themselves in a tougher position if supply were cut off due to weather or other adverse events.

“Rural communities tend to be a little weak when it comes to food security,” Nesbitt said. “Troy is roughly an hour from Enterprise. Imnaha is roughly 45 minutes, maybe, from Enterprise, 35 to Joseph. The nice thing about those areas is it’s easy to grow good food, and they are self-sufficient in that respect. You have to be of that mindset to live in a place like that, that you are going to load up on groceries and only go (to a larger town) so often.”

Miller also noted the higher level of self-sufficiency in Wallowa County, but many people nationwide are solely reliant on grocery stores.

“As far as self-sufficiency, some people in Wallowa County have wonderful knowledge on how to hunt, fish, raise gardens or livestock, forage, glean and preserve food,”

she said. “And some of those people are willing to share that knowledge with others who want to learn. However, most people get the bulk of their food from grocery stores. And like most everywhere in the U.S., our grocery stores have about a four-day supply of food at any given time and will quickly experience empty shelves if there are supply-chain disruptions, such as road closures due to weather or fires, or other disasters such as epidemics that disrupt highly consolidated industries such as meat processing.”

Added Nesbitt: “Because we are so far away from distribution centers, it makes more sense to think about how our local food systems support us.”

The speakers at Tuesday’s forum include Genuine Wallowa County/Wallowa County Provisions’ Kristy Athens, Prairie Creek Farms’ Patrick Thiel and Community Connection Food Bank’s Jessica Espinoza.

“The panelists are asked to briefly share their role in the food system, challenges they face and opportunities they see,” Miller said.

Breakout sessions will follow

the keynote speakers that will be open to discussion for those who are in attendance, even in the virtual format.

“Conversations have the opportunity to go where they go, and so any number of things can come out of it,” Nesbitt said. “It could be issues around nutrition and food security for those on assistance. It could be around community gardens and partnerships with schools. Could be around how to make distribution among producers. How to make the distribution of their product easier.”

Nesbitt also said there is an education side to the discussion.

“Another aspect of these FEAST conversations is how do we connect folks in poverty with fresh food,” she said, noting that and other educational elements are brought up.

The event runs from 5:30-7:30 p.m. Tuesday and is on Zoom. Door prizes will be available for entrants, who can register at [tinyurl.com/WCFEAST](http://tinyurl.com/WCFEAST). Email [caitlin.rushlow@gmail.com](mailto:caitlin.rushlow@gmail.com) for more details.



Ellen Morris Bishop/Wallowa County Chieftain, File

Robin Martin and Lynn Curry put the finishing touches on a fresh vegetable platter for the FEAST luncheon in 2018. This year’s FEAST event in Wallowa County is going virtual.

## PARKING

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now open to the public, it is time to assist our downtown businesses to make sure that customers have access to their stores,” said City Manager Robert Strobe in a press release.

The La Grande Police Department’s code enforcement officer will issue warnings for first-time parking violations from March 22 until April 5, when tickets with fines kick in.

The city stopped enforcing downtown parking rules a year ago, after Gov. Kate Brown

issued a stay-at-home order and closed stores to the public except those providing services and products deemed essential. The governor also ordered businesses to allow people to work remotely as much as possible. La Grande Police Chief Gary Bell said the city ceased the enforcement in part to help people living downtown who needed parking spaces.

“We wanted to lessen their hardship,” Bell said.

The money the city collects from fines for parking violations helps pay the code enforcement officer’s salary. Bell said, though, that revenue covers only

a portion of the position’s cost.

“Our code enforcement officer does many other things,” Bell said. “We are not reliant on parking fines to sustain the position.”

The officer’s other responsibilities include enforcing nuisance ordinances, including those involving weed abatement and abandoned vehicles. La Grande police officers once dealt with such issues, but in recent years the department shifted the responsibility to the code enforcement officer. Bell said that was in response to a significant increase in reports of code violations.

“We wanted to unburden them from these tasks so they will have more time to respond to calls,” Bell said.

Larry Fry, the owner of 1104 Adams Antiques, supports the move to bring back parking fines because it will reduce how far people have to walk to get to a store. He noted many stores downtown rely on people traveling through town for business. Fry said these people are not willing to walk very far to get to a business.

“They will walk one block but not two or three blocks,” he said.

Fry also said the parking fines add a sense of order to

downtown La Grande.

“You can’t have chaos,” Fry said. “Regulations are put in place for a reason and that is to prevent chaos.”

Keisha Anderson, a real estate agent with John J. Howard and Associates Real Estate, 1207 Adams Ave., is not a fan of the fines coming back because it means she and other people who work downtown again will have to move their vehicles regularly out of two-hour zones because there is not enough free parking downtown.

“Many of us will be left shuffling our cars every two hours,” Anderson said.

John Howard, the owner

of John J. Howard and Associates, said the city could take several steps to improve the parking space situation. He said the city should encourage Union Pacific Railroad employees to park in spaces and lots on their corporation’s property instead of the space the city has for 24-hour parking adjacent to railroad property, which he said many railroad employees use. This would open up many parking spaces for people coming downtown.

Howard also said he would like to have the city offer discounts to get people to buy permits for downtown parking.

## REDISTRICTING

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situation is “unprecedented.” Translation: Nobody knows what to do because its never been done before. Adding to the drama: The numbers will likely earn Oregon a sixth congressional seat, its first in 40 years. The new district will have to be shoehorned into the existing congressional map.

The Legislature has a “back to the future” solution. It’s asking the Oregon Supreme Court to set the deadlines aside, reset the clock, and give lawmakers another shot at redistricting when the data arrives in the fall. A special session of the Legislature would meet to approve the work.

Secretary of State Shemia Fagan supports the idea.

The Legislature wants up to 90 days after the data arrives to create the maps.

Fagan does not support that timeline. Pushing redistricting into December would be cutting things close. Any hitch and Oregon could have blank maps right up to the January deadlines for candidates to file for the May primaries. As the state’s official election referee, she might have to step in.

House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, and Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, filed a petition with the Oregon Supreme Court to stop Fagan from drawing her own maps.

Fagan wants the Legislature to draw districts using alternative data to the U.S. Census. The Oregon constitution doesn’t explicitly demand redistricting be done with the census numbers.

But it always has used the census, lawmakers say. Doing things different from how its been done for more than a century would be a surefire way to tangle with federal courts wanting to ensure Oregon was fol-

lowing civil rights and voting rights laws.

While the court sifts through the paperwork, the Legislature is planning/hoping/praying the Oregon Supreme Court will pick its solution. A way to move things along in advance would be to hold the 10 required hearings — two in each of the five congressional districts.

Which brings things back to COVID-19. The usual “road trip” of lawmakers to districts to hear from voters aren’t happening this year because of COVID-19. All 10 redistricting hearings will be virtual.

The hearing Wednesday, March 10, was for Congressional District 2, a nearly 70,000-square-mile expanse that share borders with California, Nevada, Idaho and Washington. Anyone living east of the Cascades, plus a chunk of the southwest part of the state, lives in the 2nd District.

All four of the other congressional districts are represented by Democrats. The 2nd is solidly Republican, with freshman U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, in the seat.

The hearing Wednesday would require something of a technical miracle. Video testimony expected from Wallowa County, Bend, Medford, Klamath Falls and several other spots in the district taxed the Legislature’s internet capabilities. Bally phone lines, echoing microphones, stuck mute buttons and more led to frequent silent spots. Many of the people who signed up to testify either couldn’t get through or gave up prior to their turn in the queue.

Two who signed up discovered they lived in other congressional districts.

One caller wanted to know why Wallowa County had been left off a map of Greater Idaho.

Some of the panel mem-

### HOW TO PARTICIPATE

- The second virtual hearing by the Oregon Legislature’s redistricting committees will be Saturday, March 20 at 1 p.m.
- The hearing is for residents of the 2nd Congressional District. The hearing will deal not only with the future boundaries of the 2nd Congressional District but also the state House and Senate districts in the area.
- The area encompasses the following counties: Baker, Crook, Deschutes, Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Hood River, Jackson, Jefferson, Klamath, Lake, Malheur, Morrow, Sherman, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, Wasco and Wheeler and parts of Josephine County.
- To sign up to testify online or submit written comments, go to [bit.ly/oregondistricts](http://bit.ly/oregondistricts).
- Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, in a recent press release said it is vital to have testimony from Northeastern Oregon residents. He asked constituents interested in testifying to be as specific as you can be with comments to the committee. He also said the following legal requirements for redistricting may be helpful for constituents formulating testimony:
  - Be contiguous.
  - Utilize existing geographic or political boundaries.
  - Be of equal population.
  - Not divide communities of common interest.
  - Be connected by transportation links.
- Hansell also said if you are not able to access the internet, call: Patrick Brennan, Legislative Policy And Research Office analyst, at 503-986-1674, or Michael Lantz, counsel, at 503-986-1736 for further instructions.
- More information

bers squinted, “What?”

Rep. Daniel Bonham, R-Dallas, finally piped-up to explain the caller’s query was about a theoretical secession of much of Eastern Oregon to form “Greater Idaho” with the neighboring state to the east.

Bonham even helpfully added that maps circulating for the mythical “Greater Idaho” state did not include Wallowa County, though he wasn’t sure why. With the mystery aside, the discussion could return to Oregon.

For more than an hour, the committee heard three main themes: The district was much too large. It included different communities with different identities, and in the case of Malheur County, a completely different time zone (Rocky Mountain Time).

Finally, the desires of people in the district too often were ignored in the capitals of Washington and Salem. How they were ignored depended on each testimonial.

In a written statement,

Umatilla County Commissioner George Murdock struck a note between hope and resignation over the likely outcome of the process.

“My greatest concern is that our district could be gerrymandered in order to further diminish representation for a portion of Oregon that reflects ideology, values, and interests much different than the remainder of Oregon,” Murdock said.

New districts should “geographically make sense” to retain an Eastern Oregon voice in Washington and Salem.

“If Oregon gets a new seat, we are not naive enough to expect more representation for Eastern Oregon but we would like to retain what we have,” Murdock said.

Nathan Soltz, chairman of the Democratic Party of Oregon’s 2nd Congressional District Committee, said the sparse population and vast landscape made it difficult for communities to feel any mutual connection.

“You can drive from

Medford to Enterprise — about 10 hours — and never leave CD2,” he said.

Ann Snyder of Ashwood in Jefferson County agreed the boundaries created an oversized area with too many acres and not enough people.

“District 2 is geographically too big for one person to accurately represent,” Snyder said in written testimony. “Trying to cover an area from Medford to Hood River and the Cascades to the Idaho border is too much, and the people are too diverse.”

Brad Bennington of Jackson County said lawmakers needed to listen more to rural voters.

“There is more to the state than just Portland and Salem,” he said. “There are a lot of people who feel they haven’t been heard.”

Bennington said he would give the legislators the “benefit of the doubt” in drawing political maps.

“Democrats can keep themselves in the supermajority until the day the sun doesn’t come up,” he said.

But Barbara Klein of Ashland said she experienced the opposite feeling. She wanted congressional and state districts that would have more in common with the arts town at the foot of the Siskiyou Mountains.

“Don’t separate us from Bend, Deschutes County,” she said. “Communities that have shared values, a bit more left leaning.”

Todd Nash of Enterprise said it would be difficult to draw political maps with so little population to pool into a district.

“We have about 320 acres per person,” he said.

Craig Martell of Baker City said proximity and highway connections should guide the grouping of communities in districts.

“Baker City and La Grande, only 44 miles apart on Interstate 84, belong in

the same district,” he wrote. “As lines are currently drawn, Senate District 30 is a grotesque gerrymandered monstrosity.”

Mimi Alkire of Deschutes County represented the League of Women Voters, which supports the creation of an independent redistricting committee to draw the lines instead of lawmakers.

“Redistricting has been used to restrict and dilute voters,” she said. “Voters should choose their representatives, not have representatives choosing their voters.”

Resolutions have been introduced in the Legislature to move to a commission like those already used in California and several other states. Several speakers endorsed such a plan. But even if approved by the House and Senate, the change to the state constitution would need voter approval. Any change wouldn’t occur until the 2031 redistricting.

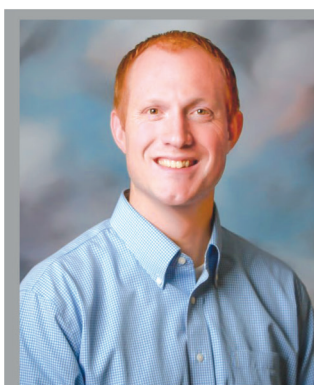
Joanne Mina, volunteer coordinator for the Latino Community Association, based in Bend, said it was important for lawmakers to make sure the census numbers were a complete count.

“The Latinx population has grown from a few thousands in the 90s to over 20 thousand strong across all of Central Oregon — our region is united by commerce, culture and values,” she said. “Central Oregon is not what it used to be, we are more vibrant, enriched and bold because of all the people that make up our community.”

At the end of the evening, Salinas, chair of the House committee, said the gathering of so many people from so many places had been time well spent.

“A robust debate,” she said.

The video ended. The committee will hold a second hearing on Saturday, March 20, at 1 p.m.



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Joel Myer  
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