

Spring
HOME & GARDEN
March 2021

Keeping your garden pest free without chemicals
Master gardener urges patience when it comes to spring planting
Home maintenance a part of spring cleaning
Exterior lighting can add ambience to a property

Inside
Home & Garden guide

Inside
Marching into Spring, 1B
Riverfest to return, 2A

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Oregon to boost vaccine eligibility

New rule almost doubles number of people who can get COVID-19 protection

By GARY A. WARNER
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — More than 1 million more people will be eligible for the COVID-19 vaccines in the next two upcoming eligibility phases, state officials said Tuesday, March 16.

The groups to be added on March 29 and May 1 will nearly double the number of people eligible for vaccination. Like most

states, Oregon is already struggling with the gap between vaccine eligibility and availability.

To date, there has only been enough vaccine available to inoculate less than half of the approximately 1.36 million Oregonians already eligible. There are an estimated 2.8 million adults in Oregon out of a population of just under 4.3 million.

The numbers for the next eligibility groups have not been announced, but were provided by OHA in response to a query by EO Media Group. OHA Director Pat Allen is scheduled to testify on the status of the state's vaccination program on Wednesday, March 17, before the House Subcommittee on COVID-19.

The last change to the eligibility list was March 1, when everyone age 65 and older was approved to get vaccinated.

On March 29, eligibility will be extended to an estimated 530,000 more people, according to OHA. The group includes those 45 and older with medical conditions that put them at higher risk of severe illness or death, pregnant women 16 and older and homeless people.

On May 1, an estimated 550,000 more people will be eligible. The minimum age for those with medical conditions will be extended to 16 and older. It also includes essential workers as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and members of multi-generational households.

See, Vaccines/Page 5A



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Union County sheriff's deputies Dustin Heath (left), Justin Hernandez (center) and Tony Humphries pose for a portrait Wednesday, March 17, 2021, in the newly renovated space at the sheriff's office in La Grande. The trio will be in charge of leading the revived reserve program.

RESERVES RESTART

Union County sheriff says programs could help with goal of adding deputies

By ALEX WITTWER
The Observer

UNION COUNTY — The Union County Sheriff's Office is reviving the deputy reserve program.

Sheriff Cody Bowen, who started as a reserve officer in 2009, said the program is a critical way for the sheriff's office to get involved with the community — a hallmark of his campaign to bring transparency and openness to the law enforcement agency.

"It's an important way for people to give back to the community," Bowen said. "It's a necessity for this department to be a part of this community, and we have to have reserves."

Bowen said he wasn't sure why the previous administration canceled the program, but he hopes reviving it will provide open channels for the community to interact with the sheriff's office — and provide a way for people interested in law enforcement to become



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Union County sheriff's deputy Patricia Kelly pauses for a portrait in the sheriff's office Wednesday, March 17, 2021. Kelly, along with deputy Kyle Witty, will lead the sheriff's cadet program.

officers in the future.

Nearly all of the deputies in the sheriff's office have at one time or another served in a reserve program. Bowen said he hopes to add about 10 reserve deputies to the office through

the program. He also said he's looking to hire more full-time staff in the future.

"This office has been understaffed ever since its existence,"

See, Reserves/Page 5A

Legislative logjam nears do-or-die day

House bill intended to honor Oregon's missing in action advances to Senate

By GARY A. WARNER
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — With a third of the session gone, the Oregon Legislature has 4,000 bills on its plate, with House Republicans using a parliamentary slowdown to delay legislation already running late because of COVID-19.

About 90 committees meet this week and the House and Senate each scheduled floor sessions. A busy week, but also one that will push a big portion of the logjam into the legislative abyss.

Friday is do-or-die deadline

The logjam will get looser Friday, March 19, with the first "witching hour," the Legislature's self-imposed deadlines for most bills to move or die. Most policy bills that are not scheduled for a work session by Friday go into the trash can for this year's regular session.

The deadline does not affect budget bills or those in "safe harbor" committees such as Rules or Ways and Means, which are exempt from the deadline. The size of the cull won't be known until Monday, March 22, when the chief clerks of each chamber will have a list of surviving bills.

More bills will fall away on April 13, the deadline for those work sessions, where committees amend and vote on bills.

Brakes vs. no breaks

Monday, March 15, was "National Napping Day," which felt appropriate for many lawmakers and observers. House Republicans again required that each bill be read out loud in its entirety, as a way of tapping the brakes on the Democratic supermajority's pace of approving their agenda.

Normally, bills are read by title only unless there is an objection. The GOP has objected each floor session.

See, Logjam/Page 5A

Wallowa coach resigns after official complaint

David Howe faces allegations of urging Wallowa High athletes to participate in tournaments in Idaho

By ELLEN MORRIS BISHOP
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA — Wallowa High School Principal David Howe resigned his position as the school's girls basketball coach Monday night, March 15, in the face of an official complaint filed by the school's football team with the Wallowa superintendent of schools March 2.

The outcome of the complaint is pending and still in review.

Head football coach Matt Brockamp, Wallowa Superintendent of Schools Tammy Jones and Wallowa School Board Chairman Woody Wolfe all declined to comment or provide the Chieftain with the text of the March 2 complaint or a second complaint filed with the school board on March 8.

"My duties as principal and my duties as the girls basketball

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

- March 2, Wallowa High School files an official complaint against Wallowa High School Principal David Howe.
- March 8, Wallowa School District Board of Directors receives second complaint.
- Monday, March 15, Howe resigns his position as the school's girls basketball coach.

coach seem to be in conflict with each other and therefore I will be resigning my position as girls basketball coach, effective immediately," Howe said in a prepared statement to the Wallowa School Board on Monday.

Howe's resignation was precipitated by the complaint as well as allegations of encouraging and supporting Wallowa High School athletes to participate in high school tournaments in Idaho earlier this year. Under Oregon School Activities Asso-

ciation rules, participation in out-of-state sports events requires student athletes to self-quarantine for two weeks after the out-of-state games. Brockamp had protested Howe's action, out of concern that students who participated in the Idaho basketball games would not be able to play the first and possibly other games in Wallowa's short, five-game football season.

"As a head coach, I made my concerns known to WHS about unsanctioned, out-of-state basketball tournaments jeopard-

dizing our opportunity to play an OSAA-sanctioned football season," Brockamp stated at an emotion-charged school board meeting March 8. At that meeting he called for "a fundamental change in Wallowa High School."

The concerns about Idaho basketball games are coupled with controversy over Wallowa High School's failure to schedule a replacement game for the canceled Elgin contest, which had been scheduled for March 6.

"I was instructed to tell my football team, which has worked hard preparing for a month outside in the snow, that WHS would not schedule them another home game with another team," Brockamp said at the March 8 meeting.

See, Coach/Page 5A

INDEX

Business..... 1B	Dear Abby.... 8B	Obituaries..... 3A
Classified..... 4B	Horoscope.... 6B	Opinion..... 4A
Comics..... 7B	Letters..... 4A	Spiritual..... 6A
Crossword.... 4B	Lottery..... 3A	Sudoku..... 7B

WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

Tonight 38 LOW Spotty showers

Friday 51/31 Spotty showers

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Issue 33
4 sections, 38 pages
La Grande, Oregon

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