

COVE

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years ahead, will be determining whether major upgrades should be made to the school or if a new one should be built in its place. The board also will look at the best ways to plan for future growth.

Lindsey has a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Virginia Tech and a master's degree in the same field from Montana State University. He and his wife, Patty, have two sons, both of whom attend Cove High School.

Thew, Eastern Oregon University's head athletic trainer, said he decided to run for a position on the school board because he wants to help keep the schools his children attend strong. Thew and his wife, Christina, are the parents of a sixth-grade daughter and a second-grade son in the Cove School District.

Chris Thew grew up in Cove and is a 2000 graduate of Cove High School. He has a bachelor's degree in physical education and health from EOU and a master's degree in athletic training from the University of Nebraska Omaha. He compared being an athletic trainer to being a physical therapist, with the big difference being he spends more time treating injuries when they initially occur.

Thew taught sports medicine, physical education and health at Eisenhower High School in Yakima, Washington, for seven years before moving with his family back to Cove in 2019. He said one of the best parts of teaching athletic medicine in high school is he was able to inspire a number of his students to pursue careers in medical fields.

One of the reasons Thew returned to Cove was to raise his family. He said he has been impressed with the strong marks Cove students have traditionally achieved on state assessment tests.

Thew said that as a school board member he would work hard to help the Cove School District maintain its strong career technical education programs. He believes a school district should equally meet the needs of students preparing to go college and those who are not.

Positions 3 and 4 also are up for election in the Cove School District and incumbents are candidates for both. John Frisch, who works in the agriculture production field, is running for reelection to Position 3, and Jamie Dickenson, a clinic manager, is running for reelection to Position 4.

Ballots for the May 18 election went out Wednesday, April 28. Voters can deposit ballots at election drop boxes up to 8 p.m. on election night. If returning a ballot by mail, send it several days in advance of the election for it to reach the county elections office in time to count.

Brown defends decision to increase COVID-19 restrictions

By SARA CLINE

Associated Press/Report for America

PORTLAND — Gov. Kate Brown defended her decision Friday, April 30, to implement further restrictions in one-third of Oregon's counties, saying for the second week in a row the state leads the nation with the fastest growing infection rate and that she is "gravely concerned" about hospital capacity.

Restaurants in 15 counties were required to close their indoor dining Friday and capacity was significantly reduced in gyms and indoor entertainment spaces. The restrictions have been criticized by business owners and Republican lawmakers.

"I was presented with data showing two paths that Oregon can take — one in which we took no additional action and stood by while more people die from this disease," Brown said during a news conference Friday. "Or another that would require a temporary tightening of restrictions for certain counties, but could save hundreds of lives."

"I chose to save lives."

This week, the Oregon Health Authority reported that the state recorded its fifth straight week where cases have increases by 20% more.

About 80% of the state's staffed adult ICU beds and 90% of the state's staffed adult non-ICU beds are occupied, based on Oregon Health Authority data provided.

Since the beginning of the month, COVID-19 hospitalizations have more than doubled. As of Thursday, 339 people were hospitalized with the virus in Oregon.

Brown said COVID-19 data over the past month has been "eye opening" and last week she announced that 15 counties — Baker, Clackamas, Columbia, Crook, Deschutes, Grant, Jackson, Josephine, Klamath, Lane, Linn, Marion, Multnomah, Polk and Wasco — would be moved to the "extreme risk" level.

But many have asked, at what cost?

"The move by the Governor's Office is tone deaf and offensive to tens of thousands of Oregonians working in restaurants and bars across our state attempting to pay

their bills. COVID-19 closures and restrictions on indoor dining are clobbering Oregon's restaurants, bars and hospitality sector," Jason Brandt, the President and CEO of the Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association said this week.

Brandt said so far more than 1,000 restaurants and bars have closed due to the pandemic recession.

"The uncertainty and arbitrary nature of targeting restaurants has made it impossible for these local businesses to plan during a time when they're already struggling to survive," Brandt said.

Earlier this week, the association along with 80 county commissioners sent a letter to the governor asking her to reconsider her recent "approach to virus mitigation measures."

Brown said the decision to re-implement restrictions was difficult, but necessary to give time for more people to get vaccinated. In addition the governor announced that \$20 million in relief funds is now available for businesses impacted by the "extreme risk" category.

"Economic relief is something I can do, as your governor, to help Oregonians impacted by this fourth surge," Brown said. "What I can't do is bring back someone's life lost to this virus."

In addition, on Thursday Brown extended the state's COVID-19 emergency order until the end of June. The declaration is the legal underpinning for the executive orders the governor has issued and allows the orders to stay in effect.

Brown reviews and reevaluates each of her emergency orders every 60 days, to determine whether those orders should be continued, modified or rescinded.

This week state Republican lawmakers protested the governor's declaration and increased restriction on the Senate floor by requiring bills be read in full before final passage — a slowing tactic that had been used by Republicans in the House earlier this session before an agreement was reached between the two political parties.

Senate Republican Leader Fred Girod of Lyons called on Democrats to help the Legislature end the governor's emergency declaration.

TREES

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In contrast, the newest legacy tree planted in La Grande came at last year's Arbor Day celebration — a Hiroshima Peace tree planted from the seeds of trees that survived the nuclear bombing in 1945. Oregon holds the largest collection of such trees, and La Grande has two of them. The newest peace tree is in the greenway at Riverside Park.

Among other notable trees is a massive silver maple along Washington Avenue and Fir Street. August Stange, the man who once owned Stange Manor on Walnut Street, planted the tree, which now sits outside La Grande's First Presbyterian Church.

Another set of noteworthy trees is a known as Victory Way, Norwegian maple trees planted in 1923 along Spruce Street, near Greenwood Elementary School, in celebration of the end of World War I.

Originally, there were nearly 250 trees, though construction and road widening over the years have reduced their numbers to just under two dozen.



Alex Wittwer/The Observer
A pair of flowering pear trees in blossom sit outside an office building on Washington Avenue in downtown La Grande Friday, April 30, 2021. La Grande is a Tree City USA member and aims to plant 100 trees a year.

PLANT A TREE

The city of La Grande will provide a tree to plant in the right-of-way for just \$40, and the city's Grow La Grande volunteers will plant it for you. If you want to help La Grande reach its goal of planting 100 trees a year, contact the Urban Forestry Division at trees@cityoflagrade.org or call 541-663-1952 to request your tree. If you want to learn more about Oregon Heritage Trees, visit oregonic.com/oregon-heritage-trees/.

Possibly the most photographed tree in the area lies outside of La Grande along Wallowa Lake Highway north of the city. There, motorists often stop and view the lone maple tree standing in a field in front of the Blue Mountains.

Travelers pull off to the side of the road lining up a shot of the massive tree as sun sets behind it. Local homebuilder Stacey Bowman of Mega Tiny Homes said it is one of his favorites.

Gustafson said she hopes the city will have a fully interactive tree inventory for horticulturists and hobbyists to peruse — a way to see what trees are in the area, their species names, and possibly even their history in an ArcGIS map. She said she is trying to complete the project by next Arbor Day.

GUNS

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law-abiding citizens," Rep. Bobby Levy, R-Echo, said in a press release. "Meanwhile, the majority party is ignoring the serious mental health crisis among our kids that only gets worse the longer they are out of school. Science supports getting kids back to school. That's what we should be doing instead of passing legislation that directly challenges Supreme Court rulings and violates constitutional rights."

Two Republicans were excused.

The vote took place after close to three hours of debate.

The bill does not have an emergency clause, which means that if it becomes law, opponents have 90 days from the close of the 2021 session to obtain 74,680 voter signatures to force a statewide election. The number is set by the Oregon Constitution, which specifies 4% of the votes cast for gov-

ernor in the most recent election, in 2018.

Part of the revamped bill proposes requirements for firearms locks and storage already written into a separate House bill, which the House sent back to committee.

Under the revamped bill, guns must have trigger or cable locks, be stored in a locked container or in a gun room. An offense is a Class C violation, which carries a maximum fine of \$500, unless someone younger than 18 obtains access, in which case it is a Class A violation with a maximum fine of \$2,000. No jail time is imposed for violations.

The bill also requires prompt reporting of stolen firearms. Its first sections are named in honor of Cindy Yuille and Steve Forsyth, who died on Dec. 11, 2012, in the Clackamas Town Center shootings. The assault-style weapon used to kill them was found to have been stolen.

The other part of the revamped bill narrows the scope of a firearms ban included in the original SB 554, which passed the Senate March 25.

The changes still would bar the estimated 300,000 holders of Oregon concealed-handgun licenses from bringing firearms into some public places. State courts, which often are in buildings maintained by counties, already are off-limits to firearms.

Under the House version, licensees would be barred from bringing firearms into the Capitol but not from other state buildings as originally proposed in the Senate.

They would be barred from bringing firearms into the passenger terminal at the Portland airport, defined as one with annual passenger traffic of more than one million. (Eugene and Medford airports had counts around one million passengers annually prior to the onset of the coronavirus pan-

demic.) Passenger boarding areas and firearms shipments in luggage are controlled by federal law.

Firearms bans would be optional at Oregon Health & Science University, seven state universities, 17 community college districts and 197 school districts if their governing boards impose them on buildings and grounds under their control. Notices of bans must be clearly displayed on buildings and grounds and posted online. (Bans would not apply to public sidewalks and streets.)

The revamped version of the bill drops the option for cities, counties and special districts to bar firearms from their buildings and grounds.

Offenses would be considered Class A misdemeanors with maximum punishments of one year in jail and a fine of \$6,250.

The bill also would raise initial filing fees for concealed-handgun licenses from \$50 to \$100, and for renewals, from \$50 to \$75.

Over the counter could be OK again

House bill would end prescriptions for pseudoephedrine

By PETER WONG

Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon no longer would require a prescription for medicines containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine under a bill that cleared the House.

House Bill 2648 went to the Senate on a 54-4 vote on Wednesday, April 28.

The requirement for a prescription was written into law in 2005, when people were buying medicines containing pseudoephedrine — a precursor chemical — for use in making methamphetamine, a powerful stimulant that is illegal. Oregon was the first state to do so.

"We had a meth-lab

problem and it was really bad," Rep. Bill Post, a Republican from Keizer and the bill's floor manager, said. "It worked. Meth labs went way down to almost nothing."

The law made it harder to obtain some medicines commonly used for colds and allergies.

But since then, methamphetamine manufacturing has switched from homegrown labs to Mexico. Methamphetamine remains illegal, although under a ballot measure Oregon voters passed last year, possession of small amounts is no longer a crime.

Ephedrine is banned as a performance-enhancing drug by college sports and some professional sports leagues.

House Bill 2648 retains some restrictions on access to such medicines. People can obtain them by showing a photo identification to establish age — the minimum is 18 — and receive them from behind the store counter. In addition, purchases are tracked by a system known as the National Precursor Log Exchange (NPLEX).

Mississippi, the only other state that required a prescription, recently passed a similar bill.

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