

TODAY

Today is Saturday, July 3, the 184th day of 2021. There are 181 days left in the year.

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT IN HISTORY:

On July 3, 1775, Gen. George Washington took command of the Continental Army at Cambridge, Massachusetts.

ON THIS DATE:

In 1863, the three-day Civil War Battle of Gettysburg in Pennsylvania ended in a major victory for the North as Confederate troops failed to breach Union positions during an assault known as Pickett's Charge.

In 1913, during a 50th anniversary reunion at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Civil War veterans reenacted Pickett's Charge, which ended with embraces and handshakes between the former enemies.

In 1944, during World War II, Soviet forces recaptured Minsk from the Germans.

In 1950, the first carrier strikes of the Korean War took place as the USS Valley Forge and the HMS Triumph sent fighter planes against North Korean targets.

In 1971, singer Jim Morrison of The Doors died in Paris at age 27.

In 1976, Israel launched its daring mission to rescue 106 passengers and Air France crew members being held at Entebbe Airport in Uganda by pro-Palestinian hijackers; the commandos succeeded in rescuing all but four of the hostages.

In 1979, Dan White, convicted of voluntary manslaughter in the shooting deaths of San Francisco Mayor George Moscone (mahs-KOH'-nee) and Supervisor Harvey Milk, was sentenced to seven years and eight months in prison. (He ended up serving five years.)

In 1986, President Ronald Reagan presided over a gala ceremony in New York Harbor that saw the re-lighting of the renovated Statue of Liberty.

In 1988, the USS Vincennes shot down an Iran Air jetliner over the Persian Gulf, killing all 290 people aboard.

In 1996, Russians went to the polls to re-elect Boris Yeltsin president over his Communist challenger, Gennady Zyuganov (geh-NAH'-dee zhoo-GAH'-nahf), in a runoff.

In 2003, the U.S. put a \$25 million bounty on Saddam Hussein, and \$15 million apiece for his two sons. (The \$30 million reward for Odai and Qusai Hussein went to a tipster whose information led U.S. troops to their hideout, where the brothers were killed in a gunbattle.)

In 2013, Egypt's first democratically elected president, Mohammed Morsi, was overthrown by the military after just one year by the same kind of Arab Spring uprising that had brought the Islamist leader to power.

Ten years ago: Novak Djokovic won his first Wimbledon, beating defending champion Rafael Nadal 6-4, 6-1, 1-6, 6-3.

Five years ago: A devastating truck bombing on a bustling commercial street in downtown Baghdad killed nearly 300 people. Actor Noel Neill, who played Superman's love interest, Lois Lane, in both a movie serial and on TV, died in Tucson, Arizona, at age 95.

One year ago: Speaking at the foot of Mount Rushmore on the eve of Independence Day, President Donald Trump asserted that protesters pushing for racial justice were engaging in a "merciless campaign to wipe out our history." Amid a rampant resurgence of the coronavirus, Texas began mandating face coverings on the orders of Republican Gov. Greg Abbott, who said it seemed that people were "not comprehending the magnitude of the problem."

LOTTERY

Wednesday, June 30, 2021

Megabucks

02-05-08-24-43-44

Jackpot: \$4.8 million

Lucky Lines

01-05-10-15-20-22-27-30

Estimated jackpot: \$13,000

Powerball

24-29-50-65-66

Powerball: 14

Power Play: 4

Jackpot: \$101 million

Win for Life

04-73-74-75

Pick 4

1 p.m.: 4-0-9-8

4 p.m.: 1-7-5-6

7 p.m.: 4-0-9-8

10 p.m.: 9-8-0-8

Thursday, July 1, 2021

Lucky Lines

03-06-11-16-18-22-27-31

Jackpot: \$14,000

Pick 4

1 p.m.: 8-0-0-9

4 p.m.: 3-4-6-0

7 p.m.: 0-7-9-7

10 p.m.: 8-5-6-5

Boosting safety on Morgan Lake Road

County OKs plan to install new guardrail on west side of Morgan Lake Road

By DICK MASON

The Observer

LA GRANDE — Driving down Morgan Lake Road will be much safer several years from now.

The Union County Board of Commissioners voted Wednesday, June 30, to approve a \$1.2 million cooperative funding agreement that will fund the installation of a new guardrail almost a mile long from Skyline Lane to Marvin Road on Morgan Lake Road. The guardrail will replace an old one on the south side of Morgan Lake Road, the one drivers moving downhill travel alongside.

A portion of the funding will also pay for road grading work over the same stretch of road.

About 92% of the project will be paid for through the state's All Roads Transportation Safety Program with Union County picking up the tab for the remainder of the project. The All Roads Transportation Safety Program addresses safety for all public roads in the state. It is funded by the federal government.

The Oregon Department of Transportation will administer the work, which will likely start in 2023, according to Doug Wright, Union County's public works director.

Wright said Union County was awarded the grant primarily because of the relatively high number of crashes on the 1-mile



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

The guardrail along Morgan Lake Road in La Grande shows signs of wear and tear on Wednesday, June 30, 2021. City officials approved funding for replacing an aging guardrail that stretches along a 1-mile portion of the road, paving the way for a safer ride between La Grande and the lake.

stretch of Morgan Lake roadway. The safety record of stretches of roads plays a role in determining who qualifies for All Roads Transportation Safety Program grants.

Wright said that once the guardrail is installed, Union County will maintain it.

Other business

During the June 30 meeting, the board of commissioners also voted to ratify a new three-year contract for Union County's public works employees. The contract, negotiated by the public works employee's union and Union County, calls for the wages of employees to be increased by \$1.25 per hour starting July 1 and \$1 an hour beginning July 1, 2022, and July 1, 2023.

Terms of the agreement call for the county's contributions to health insurance for employees to remain at \$1,208 per month for the remainder of 2021 and to be boosted by up to \$75 a month each of the following two years of the contract.

Union County has 19 public works employees.

The Union County Commission, in another action item, voted to adopt a total 2021-22 budget of \$50.5 million, one which does not call for personnel cuts or program reductions and adds four corrections officers and one reentry officer.

The \$50.5 million spending plan is about \$1 million less than the current 2020-21 budget. Union County Administrative Officer Shelley Burgess

said one reason for the budget decrease is many grant-funded projects, including a major one at La Grande/Union County Airport, were completed in the past fiscal year.

The spending plan was recommended for adoption in May by Union County's budget committee.

On the animal control front, the board of commissioners voted to adopt a new animal control ordinance, which is an updated version of the current one. One of the biggest changes in the ordinance is a new limit on the number of cats Union County residents can own. The ordinance restricts ownership to 10 cats that are at least 4 months old. The ordinance took effect immediately after being adopted.

ODF official urges caution this summer

By BILL BRADSHAW

Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Fire managers in Wallowa County and throughout the state are particularly concerned as weather and drought combine to make for a potentially explosive Fourth of July weekend.

During a meeting of the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners, Matt Howard, deputy agency administrator for the Oregon Department of Forestry's Wallowa Unit, expressed his concerns over the conditions for potential wildfires.

"As we go into the July fireworks tomorrow, there's no doubt that in my 34-year career, that this is the most critical July 1 going into the July Fourth weekend that I've seen in my career, both from fire danger and fire severity that we're seeing August-like conditions," Howard said. "Every measure we look at on fire severity is setting new records for this date. We're usually four to six weeks ahead of time in some of our fire indices. It's kind of spooky, because we're still six weeks out to the middle of August, which is typically and historically our highest potential for costly wildfires and damaging wildfires. So, fire prevention



U.S. Forest Service/Contributed Photo

The Joseph Canyon Fire was first reported Friday, June 4, 2021. Fire officials are urging caution as the Fourth of July weekend approaches.

is heavy on my mind. It's heavy on all fire managers' minds across the state. It doesn't matter what the agency you're from."

Howard told the commissioners the year so far has seen a marked increase in fire calls.

"In April, alone, just due to the drought, here in Wallowa County, we went on 16 fire runs," he said. "A lot of those were mutual aid with some of the rural and the city departments, but 16 fire runs in April is unprecedented, really."

While some fires have been lightning-caused, too many are human-caused, which are preventable.

"In my opinion, people were burning for the time of year and not for the conditions, and that's one of

by reputable professional pyrotechnics and cause little concern. It's usually unsupervised youths who are the most worrisome.

"We want everybody to celebrate our independence, but we want people to do it smartly," he said. "And if they have youths participating, that they be supervised and safe."

Howard emphasized that it's illegal to use fireworks on ODF and U.S. Forest Service Land. He also said people who are not cautious about fire could be held liable.

"There's a message going out from ODF in the Eastern Oregon District, talking about fire liability and if there's a human-caused fire and we can find the responsible party and we can prove that they were willful, malicious or negligent in the cause of that wildland fire, then they could be liable for all suppression costs — aircraft, ground resources, right from the beginning," he said. "It's a caution, I think, for the general public because nobody wants to have that liability on their shoulders. I'm certain there's nobody out there who wants to start a fire, but we've already had a high amount of human-caused fires and anything I can do to prevent those ... I'm all about."

my concerns going into the Fourth," he said. "I'm going to be one of the first ones to celebrate our independence. (But) one of my biggest concerns is human-caused fires started specifically around the Fourth of July use of fireworks."

Commissioner Todd Nash asked Howard to clarify between official fireworks displays and personal use of fireworks.

"To be clear, regarding the conversation we had earlier, you weren't as concerned about the organized event on Wallowa Lake as with individuals doing fireworks," Nash said.

Howard agreed, saying that the "Shake the Lake" display set for Sunday night and another professional display in Troy are done

Joseph council censures councilor

Vote removes Kathy Bingham from role as mayor pro-tem

By BILL BRADSHAW

Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH — Joseph City Councilor Kathy Bingham was removed from her office as mayor pro-tem, removed from her committee assignments and banned from interaction with city employees after being censured by the council after it addressed complaints against her Wednesday, June 30.

Five letters of complaint were submitted to City Hall in recent months, largely alleging Bingham acted inappropriately in her role as a councilor.

One of the complaints the council considered most serious was the Feb. 21 claim by local businessman Gary Bethscheider that Bingham accused him of "flipping her off" during a heated budget discussion at the February council meeting. He denied that happened in his letter.

In a motion agreed upon during executive session and made formal during the open session, Councilor Tammy Jones moved, "I make a motion that regarding Gary Bethscheider's complaint that he did not 'flip off' Councilor Bingham. Furthermore, the council finds that Councilor Bingham did not make a formal complaint against Mr. Bethscheider. Finally, the council regrets the way this matter was handled and letting the accusations become public and formally apologizes to Mr. Bethscheider."

Other claims against Bingham — detailed during executive session and therefore not part of the public record — included harassment of city employees, violation of executive session privacy and letters supporting the claims.

Repeatedly, council motions found the allegations "unsubstantiated" and thus, no action was taken.

However, while claims of harassment did not "rise to the level of harassment," Bingham was found to have not acted appropriately under council rules.

Several of the complainants said they were satisfied with the council's actions, even though their complaints were deemed unsubstantiated.

During the discussion of a motion he made, Councilor Stephen Bartlow said, "We keep hearing the word 'unsubstantiated.' What is asked for are the names of witnesses and specific details that can be checked out. I don't want to discourage anyone from our city to bring complaints. We're just asking for some substantial witnesses or other evidences that will help us pursue the complaint."

Jude Graham, who wrote two of the complaint letters, said, "They did a good job tonight."

She agreed more substantial evidence was needed, as Bartlow explained.

"Councilor Bartlow explained that — he explained what they meant by unsubstantiated," she said. "They wanted witnesses and I witnessed some things, but they wanted more. I understand that. If you have situations, you need more than two witnesses."

Michael Lockhart, another complainant, also agreed the council acted properly.

NEWS BRIEF

No fireworks ban planned in Island City

ISLAND CITY — The city of Island City, unlike La Grande, will not be banning the use of fireworks as the Fourth of July approaches, according to a press release from the city.

"We believe that our community members will be responsible and will take all necessary precautions to celebrate our country's independence safely and responsibly. We applaud

the desire to celebrate the patriotism of our great nation," the press release said.

The press release came out around 9 a.m. Thursday, July 1, two days after the La Grande Fire Department announced that fireworks and outdoor recreational fires are prohibited in the La Grande city limits until further notice. The ban was announced in the wake of abnormally dry conditions and hot temperatures for this time of year in Northeastern Oregon.

"Statewide and regionally,

extremely dry, hot conditions are causing a lot of cities to press 'pause' on their Fourth of July celebrations. There are a few fireworks displays still scheduled for our area, and we encourage our residents to view those that are conducted by professionals," the Island City press release stated.

Island City has been working with the La Grande Rural Fire Department for guidance when it comes to providing guidelines for setting off legal fireworks.

— The Observer