



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

An impromptu conference room is set up in North Powder's former fire station on Tuesday, Nov. 16, 2021. The city's offices and library are to be relocated to the building.

MAYOR

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He said the former fire station is in an excellent location for city hall and the library.

"It is solid and centrally located," Frieboes said.

The building is available because the city recently built a larger new fire station, one which opened earlier this year.

Frieboes, as mayor, also said he wants to help North Powder move forward in its effort to upgrade its wastewater system. He said the city is in the process of obtaining grants to fund the upgrade, which would help it better meet Department of Environmental Quality standards.

The North Powder City Council elected Frieboes as mayor after he applied for the position. He did so after Mike Wisdom, who had served as mayor for two years and eight months, stepped down.

Wisdom said he resigned because he and the council did not see eye to eye on some issues.

Frieboes, who will serve the final 14 months of Wisdom's unexpired term, was the only person who applied for the mayoral opening and was hired after being interviewed by the city council.

Mike Morse, president of the North Powder City Council, believes Frieboes will do well as mayor.

"I feel good. He is well qualified and familiar with



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The building currently housing North Powder's city offices and public library, seen here on Tuesday, Nov. 16, 2021, is decades old.



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Decaying panels and siding at North Powder's current city hall and public library building on Tuesday, Nov. 16, 2021, are evidence of the decades-old building's deterioration.

North Powder," Morse said.

During the approximately six-week period between the time Wisdom resigned on Sept. 13 and Frieboes was named mayor, Morse handled North Powder's mayoral responsibilities. As council president, he was required by the city's charter to take on the role of interim mayor.

Frieboes served as maintenance director for the

North Powder School District for 43 years before retiring in July. Lance Dixon, superintendent of the North Powder School District, said Frieboes has the potential to shine as mayor because of his honesty, integrity, work ethic and concern for North Powder.

"John has the best interest of the city at heart," Dixon said.

TURKEY

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blessed that way," he said. "I've been getting notices from our wholesaler telling us that turkeys are in short supply, but we pre-booked ours far enough in advance that we'll be OK."

The Bellamy Family Farm turkeys will be on sale by order, while Rennie predicts that roughly two-thirds of the store's turkeys sold will be the traditionally ordered birds.

Rennie noted that the store's wholesaler made him aware that canned cranberries may be more scarce than in previous years, but the store is not having any problems bringing in fresh goods.

"There are certain items that historically do well that we're struggling with a bit," he said. "From our wholesaler we see anywhere from 30-40% out of stock from the products as a whole."

Heading into the Thanksgiving holiday with an increased element of uncertainty in receiving full shipments from wholesalers, stores like Market Place Fresh Foods are facing unprecedented challenges, so planning ahead has been a major point of emphasis.

"We're looking forward to a great Thanksgiving and just counting our blessings," Rennie said.

At Grocery Outlet in Island City, owners Randy and Michelle Willson have not come up against any major issues stocking up on Thanksgiving items.

"We've actually been able to fill our shelves all the way up," Randy Willson said. "All my vendors have really stepped up to the plate."

He noted that the store is an opportunistic buyer, so they have been able to continue stocking Grocery Outlet with bargain items. Ahead of the holiday, the store is fully stocked on the typical Thanksgiving food

EXPECT TO PAY MORE FOR THANKSGIVING FEAST

WASHINGTON — Enjoying Thanksgiving dinner with family and friends is a priority for many Americans, but paying attention to how the meal will impact the budget is also important. Farm Bureau's 36th annual survey indicates the average cost of this year's classic Thanksgiving feast for 10 is \$53.31. This is a 14% increase from last year's average of \$46.90. The centerpiece on most Thanksgiving tables — the turkey — costs more than last year, at \$23.99 for a 16-pound bird. At the time of the survey, that came to roughly \$1.50 per pound, up 24% from last year, but there are several mitigating factors.

In order to find the average costs, the Farm Bureau used volunteer shoppers between Oct. 28 and Nov. 8. — but the group, which lobbies on behalf of the agricultural industry, acknowledged that prices have fallen since the survey was conducted. This year, many grocery stores lowered prices later in the year, so a frozen turkey, for example, is actually a lot more affordable right now. Over the last week, the cost for a frozen turkey has fallen from \$1.50 per pound to 88 cents per pound. Veronica Nigh, a senior economist at the Farm Bureau, said several factors help explain the increased costs this year, including disruptions to the supply chain, inflation and high demand for food, especially meat.

— The Observer

items. In addition to turkeys, the store is offering bundle deals that include ingredients used for traditional Thanksgiving dishes.

"We've got plenty of birds on hand," Randy Willson said. "We've been very fortunate."

'It changes every time'

Other grocers in Eastern Oregon expressed similar takes.

"Turkey's on the table. We've got turkey already in our freezer," said Blaine Huffman, owner of Huffman's Select Market in Prairie City. "I'm sure there's going to be items we're going to be short on, but on the whole we're fine."

Grocery stores have had to adapt to a changing supply landscape that has seen shortages crop up in unexpected places.

"We don't know one load from the next what we're going to get — it changes every time," Huffman said. "The food supply chain is vulnerable. A lot of stuff is still sitting (on transport ships) out in the ocean."

Huffman said he had some issues ordering pre-made pies for Thanksgiving, and the store is already out of stock of those items. Supplies for homemade pies, however, are available.

Considering that smaller

markets lack the same buying power as larger chains such as Safeway or Walmart, there was a cause for concern that residents in frontier towns, including John Day or Prairie City, might have to travel farther to fill their shopping carts for the upcoming holiday.

"Before, I was able to buy pallets of certain things like condensed milk," said Mike Shaffer, operations manager for Chester's Market, in John Day, about supplies that are in greater demand during the holiday, but during what he termed the current "logistical nightmare ... if you have to reorder it, that's where you may run into an issue because everybody else is re-ordering, especially for the season."

Shaffer said he ordered key holiday items months in advance, preparing for increased business as the deadline for putting the turkey in the oven looms.

"As far as staples go, we're sitting pretty good," he said.

Supply chain issues have cropped up from a myriad of pandemic-related minutiae, such as labor and raw material shortages, low production yields and increased costs of goods as shipping costs skyrocket due to increases in fuel and container prices.



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ORHSU nursing student Kristen Hunter helps prepare the Union County Warming Station in La Grande for guests on Thursday, Nov. 18, 2021.

WARMING

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features such as separate rooms for families. The shelter is available for anyone in need of a warm place to sleep.

The shelter has a maximum capacity of 20 guests per night. Ladendorff said that nobody was turned away due to the warming station being full in 2020-21. The warming station had 74 separate individuals who were overnight guests and 40 separate individuals who came only for dinner in the 2020-21 winter season.

All guests and staff will again have to follow strict COVID-19 safety protocol rules this season. However, COVID-19 vaccinations are not required for guests or volunteers.

"We do not want vaccinations to be a barrier," Ladendorff said. "We will all act like we are not vaccinated in terms of precautions."



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ORHSU nursing students Kristen Hunter, center, along with Tanner VanLeuven, right, and David Larman volunteer at the warming station in La Grande on Thursday, Nov. 18, 2021.

Ladendorff has observed that many of those who come to the Union County Warming Station are in search of human interaction as well as a hot meal or a place to spend the night.

"They are people who want to meet others, people who want to engage," she said. "They want a human connection."

She said that this seems

to particularly true for many of the individuals who come for dinner but do not stay the night.

Ladendorff said the warming station staff strives to welcome all guests, whether they are looking for a warm meal, bed or smile — or all three.

"All of our volunteers have a passion for this," she said.

Celebrate the Power of Rural

National Rural Health Day 11-18-21

National Rural Health Day is an opportunity to "Celebrate the Power of Rural" by honoring the selfless, community-minded spirit that prevails in rural America. Rural medicine has been called the purest form of health care. Our technology may be state of the art, but our people are as timeless as the landscape that surrounds us. Keep it real – keep it close to home – keep it rural. That's how we do health care.

