

TODAY

On Jan. 15, 2009, US Airways Capt. Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger ditched his Airbus 320 in the Hudson River after a flock of birds disabled both engines; all 155 people aboard survived.

In 1862, the U.S. Senate confirmed President Abraham Lincoln's choice of Edwin M. Stanton to be the new Secretary of War, replacing Simon Cameron.

In 1892, the original rules of basketball, devised by James Naismith, were published for the first time in Springfield, Massachusetts, where the game originated.

In 1929, civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. was born in Atlanta.

In 1943, work was completed on the Pentagon, the headquarters of the U.S. Department of War (now Defense).

In 1967, the Green Bay Packers of the National Football League defeated the Kansas City Chiefs of the American Football League 35-10 in the first AFL-NFL World Championship Game, retroactively known as Super Bowl I.

In 1973, President Richard M. Nixon announced the suspension of all U.S. offensive action in North Vietnam, citing progress in peace negotiations.

In 1976, Sara Jane Moore was sentenced to life in prison for her attempt on the life of President Gerald R. Ford in San Francisco. (Moore was released on the last day of 2007.)

In 1981, the police drama series "Hill Street Blues" premiered on NBC.

In 1993, a historic disarmament ceremony ended in Paris with the last of 125 countries signing a treaty banning chemical weapons.

In 2001, Wikipedia, a web-based encyclopedia, made its debut.

In 2014, a highly critical and bipartisan Senate report declared that the deadly September 2012 assault on the American diplomatic compound in Benghazi, Libya, could have been prevented; the report spread blame among the State Department, the military and U.S. intelligence.

In 2020, Chinese officials said they couldn't rule out the possibility that a new coronavirus in central China could spread between humans, though they said the risk of transmission appeared to be low. House Democratic leaders carried articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump across the U.S. Capitol in a formal procession to the Senate.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Margaret O'Brien is 84. Actor Andrea Martin is 75. College and Pro Football Hall of Famer Randy White is 69. Actor-director Mario Van Peebles is 65. Rock musician Adam Jones (Tool) is 57. Actor James Nesbitt is 57. Actor Chad Lowe is 54. Alt-country singer Will Oldham (aka Bonnie Prince Billy) is 52. Actor Regina King is 51. Actor Dorian Missick is 46. Actor Eddie Cahill is 44. Former NFL quarterback Drew Brees is 43. Rapper/reggae-gaeton artist Pitbull is 41. Actor Victor Rasuk is 37. Actor Jesse Schram is 36. Electronic dance musician Skrillex is 34. Actor/singer Dove Cameron is 26. Singer-songwriter Grace VanderWaal (TV: "America's Got Talent") is 18.

CORRECTION

The Page A2 story "Shortage of COVID-19 tests hits La Grande," published Thursday, Jan. 13, misstated the time of the next COVID-19 testing event at the Union County Fairgrounds. The event on Jan. 18 is set to take place from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

LOTTERY

Wednesday, Jan. 12, 2022
Megabucks
 7-20-32-33-41-46
 Jackpot: \$8.2 million
Lucky Lines
 1-6-11-14-19-22-26-29
 Estimated jackpot: \$75,000
Powerball
 12-21-22-30-33
 Powerball: 24
 Power Play: x4
 Jackpot: \$38 million
Win for Life
 16-28-65-71
Pick 4
 1 p.m.: 5-9-0-0
 4 p.m.: 2-0-9-4
 7 p.m.: 9-3-0-0
 10 p.m.: 1-6-2-8
Thursday, Jan. 13, 2022
Lucky Lines
 3-6-11-15-18-21-27-32
 Jackpot: \$76,000
Pick 4
 1 p.m.: 2-6-8-1
 4 p.m.: 3-8-6-7
 7 p.m.: 6-4-4-9
 10 p.m.: 7-8-7-7

Rising COVID-19 numbers prompt change

La Grande School District moving to moderate-risk category

By **DICK MASON**
 The Observer

LA GRANDE — Rising COVID-19 numbers in the La Grande School District are bringing back restrictions.

Starting Tuesday, Jan. 18, the district will move from the its current low-risk category — under its communicable disease plan — into its moderate-risk category in an effort to curb the infection rate among its students and staff, according to a La Grande School District press release.

The change will mean that recesses will be organized so that children will only be with students in the same grade level, students will be seated in classrooms based on seating charts, physical distancing will be kept at 3 feet or more to the maximum extend possible, screenings of staff and students will be reintroduced and visitors and volunteers will not be allowed in schools.

The school district reported that between Tuesday, Jan. 4, and Wednesday, Jan. 13, it had more than 150 COVID-19 events. The school district defines an event as when a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, has a close contact with someone with COVID-19 or has COVID-19 symptoms. Eighteen of the school district's Jan. 4-13 COVID-19 events involved staff members.

In a Jan. 13 press release, Mendoza said the move into a higher risk category and increased restrictions is necessary due to the increase in infections in the district and because "projections by the state of Oregon and



Alex Wittwer/The Observer, File

Christie Neilson, a substitute teacher at La Grande High School, watches as students leave for the bell on Thursday, Oct. 14, 2021. Starting Tuesday, Jan. 18, 2022, the La Grande School District will move from its current low-risk category — under its communicable disease plan — into its moderate-risk category in an effort to curb its infection rate.



Alex Wittwer/The Observer, File

A sign reminds students to wear a mask in class at La Grande High School on Monday, Aug. 23, 2021.

Union County demonstrate recent increases in cases are the beginning of a strong surge."

Uptick in numbers

The school district's latest weekly statistics show that 37 students and two staff members missed school during the week of Jan. 3-7, the first week back after the holiday break, because

of positive COVID-19 tests, COVID-19 symptoms or close contact with those who have COVID-19. This was up from the week of Dec. 13-17 when five students and no staff missed school because of COVID-19 during the last week of school in 2021.

During the week of Jan. 3-7, one staff member from Greenwood Elementary School missed school

because of COVID-19, and the other staff member was from La Grande Middle School. This was the first time in 11 weeks that any staff members had missed work days at school because of COVID-19.

The school district's latest statistics also indicate eight students — three from Central Elementary, two each from Greenwood Elementary and La Grande Middle School, and one from La Grande High School — missed school after testing positive for COVID-19.

A total of 24 students, according to the Jan. 3-7 statistics, were out because of close contact with someone who was COVID-19 positive. Seven students were from Central Elementary, six were from Island City Elementary, five from Greenwood Elementary, four from La Grande High School and two from La Grande Middle School.

Five students were out because of primary COVID-19 symptoms — two each at Island City Elementary and La Grande Middle School — and Greenwood Elementary had one student out.

Council positions to be up for grabs

City of La Grande taking applications for council election

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**
 The Observer

LA GRANDE — The city of La Grande is preparing to take applications for four upcoming openings on the city council.

The openings are for the mayor's position and seats five through seven on the council. The mayor's term is two years. Councilors serve four-year terms.

A primary election is set to be held on Tuesday, May 17, with the intention of officially nominating



candidates for the four positions.

Primary elections take place only if three or more candidates file for the same position on the council. Section 29 of the La Grande City Charter states that if two or less candidates file for one position, their names are slotted on November's general election ballot.

In addition to Mayor Steve Clements' position, the council positions of

Gary Lillard, John Bozarth and Justin Rock are due for election. The four positions officially expire on the final day of 2022. Clements is currently serving his fourth consecutive term as mayor.

Potential qualified candidates are required to have lived in La Grande for the full six months preceding the primary election in May. Candidates are nominated by a petition, which requires 20 sig-

MORE INFORMATION

Candidate packets will be available beginning Jan. 18 and are due back by 1 p.m. on March 1. Packets may be picked up and applications returned to the city recorder's office on the second floor of La Grande City Hall, 1000 Adams Ave. Contact City Recorder Sandra Patterson at 541-962-1351 or spatterson@cityofla-grande.org for more information about the requirements for mayor and city councilors.

natures from voters who reside in La Grande. Following the primary election, candidates have until Sept. 2 to withdraw from the general election, which will take place on Nov. 8.

Path to Lee murder trial hits another delay

Defense attorney Craig Russell withdraws due to scheduling conflict

The Observer

LA GRANDE — The defense attorney for Ronald Lee, a Cove man accused of killing his wife in 2018, has withdrawn from the case.

Craig Russell, of Pendleton-based Russell Law Group, filed a motion to withdraw as Lee's attorney due to scheduling difficulties. In Russell's attached affidavit, dated Thursday, Jan. 6, he said he would be unavailable during the upcoming summer trial and that public defender Dean Gushwa would be taking the lead for the remainder of the case.

"Having reviewed my caseload, trial docket for the year of 2022, and with consideration of my service obligations with the United States Army, I do not believe that I can continue representation in this case without ethically falling short to either Mr. Lee or my existing clients," Russell wrote in the affidavit.

Gushwa and the defense will appear at a motions hearing at 9 a.m. on Jan. 19, which will address the state's pending motions. The court deliberated the defense's motions on Dec. 23, but the Jan. 19 hearing will include the defense's motion to force the state to detail before trial any prior bad acts or criminal behavior it alleges Lee committed and are not part of the charges he faces.

After several delays, the trial is now scheduled to

begin on July 7 and extend through Aug. 5.

The trial in front of a 12-person jury was previously slated to start Jan. 6, but was pushed back after a new interview with co-defendant Steve Hamilton added a new wrinkle to the case. Circuit Court Judge Thomas Powers granted a motion to postpone the trial at a pretrial hearing on Dec. 23 at the Union County Courthouse in La Grande after the defense stated it would not be able to review the new information from Hamilton in time for the original trial.

The state accuses Lee of killing his wife, Loretta Williams, at her home in Cove in November 2018. Lee is facing charges of murder and conspiracy to commit murder and is being held at the Union County Jail.

The most recent delay comes in the wake of previous roadblocks in the trial related to Lee's health. The 73-year-old suffered a stroke in January 2020 and was hospitalized in Salem. A trial was set for November 2020, but the court canceled the trial after a mental evaluation following the stroke deemed Lee to be a danger to himself and others.

As the case appeared to be coming close to a trial, the new evidence from an interview with Hamilton raised questions from both sides. The defense and the plaintiff both agreed that previous interviews with Hamilton have been inconsistent, causing challenges while considering evidence.

A pre-trial conference is set for June 6 at 9 a.m., which would be the final step before the trial begins.

BRIEFS

Reward of \$16,500 offered for tips on illegal wolf kill

WALLOWA COUNTY — Conservation groups announced Thursday, Jan. 13, that they are offering a \$16,500 reward for information that leads to an arrest and conviction in an illegal wolf killing last week in Wallowa County.

A 2-year-old collared female wolf was found dead southeast of Wallowa and reported just after 10:30 a.m. on Jan. 8. Oregon State Police reported the killing on Jan. 11. The wolf, designated OR-106, was found on Parsnip Creek Road in the Sled Springs game management unit. OSP said the wolf had dispersed from the Chesnimus Pack in northern Wallowa County.

The Humane Society of the United States, the Center for Biological Diversity, Predator Defense, Western Watersheds Project, Cascadia Wildlands, Oregon Wild, Speak for Wolves and Northeast Oregon Ecosystems are pledging funding to the reward.

The killing is among more than 30 poaching incidents in Oregon since wolves were reintroduced, according to Stephanie Taylor, president of Speak for Wolves.

The shooting comes on the heels of the poisoning of wolves in Northeastern Oregon in 2021, the release noted.

In addition to the amount offered by the conservation groups, The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Turn in Poachers division is offering a potential \$300 reward for information regarding illegal wolf killings.

Those with information may contact Oregon State Police Sgt. Isaac Cyr between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday to Friday through ODFW's Turn in Poachers (TIP) hotline at 800-452-7888, *OSP via mobile, or via email to TIP@state.or.us.

DEQ issues air quality advisory for Southern, Eastern Oregon

PORTLAND —The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality on Thursday, Jan. 13, issued an air quality advisory for Southern and Eastern Oregon, including Baker County, according to a press release.

The advisory is due to stagnant air conditions trapping smoke and other air pollutants near the ground where people breathe, the release said.

Also affected are Douglas, Harney, Jackson, Josephine, Klamath, Lake and Malheur counties.

The advisory is in place at least until Jan. 17, the release said.

Heavy weekend traffic expected at Salt Creek Summit

JOSEPH — Potential road delays and heavy traffic are expected at Salt Creek Summit Sno-Park on Saturday through Monday, Jan. 15-17, the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest warned travelers.

Sam Wiswell, a recreation specialist with the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, said the traffic will be due to multiple organizations hosting events during the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend, including the Wallowa County Gamblers Snowmobile Club and avalanche safety education courses.

Members of the public should be aware that parking may be limited in the area, and visitors wishing to have a quieter experience may want to consider recreating in other locations.

For more information about the national forest, www.fs.usda.gov/wallowa-whitman.

— EO Media Group