

# BARRIERS

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“We have more resources locally, in the span of my career, than we’ve ever had,” he said at the downtown meeting. “But, we also have more social issues in the span of my career than we’ve ever had.”

“Our hope is that through proactive, regular outreach efforts and providing some low barrier services those who are experiencing substance use and mental health challenges will begin to trust us,” Grigg said. “Even if those individuals do not agree to services or assistance at the time, that relationship of trust developed over time will lead to seeking of services in

the future. The hope is that when they are then ready to seek assistance they will go to those they trust.”

## New opportunities

While the Center for Human Development focuses primarily on mental health and substance abuse services, recent funding as a result of Measure 110 has opened the door for potential expanded assistance related to housing.

The 2020 ballot measure reclassified penalties for possession of controlled substances, putting an emphasis on addiction treatment and recovery. While the measure has limited law enforcement’s reach in terms of drug abuse, the initiative increased funding



Grigg Bell Strope

for recovery centers and mental health organizations across Oregon.

CHD, along with community behavioral health programs in Wallowa and Baker counties, was awarded funding in August 2021 as a direct result of Measure 110 for the purpose of outreach to individuals struggling with substance abuse. CHD received six months of added funding for this specific cause, along with an additional six months due to COVID-19-related hiring difficulties across the state.

“These dollars are currently being used to expand

the supported employment services and additional proactive outreach to individuals in the community experiencing substance use disorder,” Grigg said. “We hope that CHD can increase outreach to all individuals experiencing substance use disorder, including those without stable housing.”

Grigg also noted that CHD is in the process of applying for additional funds that would lead to collaborating with other local entities and increased efforts toward rental assistance for local homeless individuals. A portion of the funding, if granted, would be directed toward additional recovery housing units in Union County.

“If awarded additional M110 funding, CHD hopes to develop 24/7 Substance

Use Disorder Mobile Outreach and Crisis Services. Teams providing these services would potentially include a mental health counselor, a certified alcohol and drug counselor (CADC) and a certified recovery mentor (CRM),” Grigg said. “A team like this would be available to respond 24/7 to individuals in the community experiencing challenges with substance use regardless of their setting.”

## Continued efforts

While law enforcement and the city are making diligent efforts to address recovery instability in La Grande, mental health resources are viewed as a key approach to the recent concerns regarding Max Square.

At the city meeting in

December, Strope noted that the city engages regularly with the League of Oregon Cities to collaborate with other cities and gather input from towns that may have similar concerns as La Grande moves forward. Grigg noted that available state resources could be more abundant as a result of Union County being a small county, and an increase in staff and funding through Measure 110 could lead to partnerships such as having mental health experts on call through police dispatch.

“CHD will continue efforts to find ways to improve housing options for those experiencing behavioral health challenges,” Grigg said.

One way to access services is to call the CHD mental health crisis line at 541-962-8800, option 6.

# FOOTBALL

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released a statement on behalf of the district, stating that La Grande accepts the findings of the investigation and is grateful for the willing collaboration of coaches, staff, students, officials and community during the investigation process.

“From the beginning of this process, La Grande and Gladstone have been strong in our intent toward solidarity and reciprocity in resolving a difficult situation in order to build trust and strength in the relationship between our districts,” the statement read.

According to OSAA, the organization is working with the officials’ association that called the playoff game in order to implement implicit bias training and OSAA’s racial equity training. The statement also indicated that OSAA is working with all its officials’ associations on protocols involved

in reporting any potential acts of discrimination during athletic competitions.

La Grande and Gladstone both conducted elements of the OSAA’s S.T.A.R. Initiative, which promotes sportsmanship and equality within athletic events. Prior to any outcome of the investigation, both school districts took steps to rebuild relations for future sporting events.

“We participated and did everything they needed us to do. I was always confident in our kids and our coaches,” La Grande Athletic Director Darren Goodman said. “We have great kids, great coaches and great families.”

Other outcomes of the investigation included the implementation of OSAA’s Racial Equity Training at La Grande, conversations between La Grande and other league member about expected behavior at future athletic competitions, creating a point of contact at La Grande and Gladstone

to welcome visiting teams to their venues, reviewing the language in the student codes of conduct at both school districts and a meeting between both teams’ captains, athletic directors and coaches to ensure positive relations moving forward.

According to OSAA, the La Grande and Gladstone boys basketball teams planned a shared meal and shaking of hands at halfcourt on the day of the scheduled matchup on Dec. 20. The game was canceled due to inclement weather, but the plans represented a first step in healing the relations between schools.

“In our school district, we will continue to actively teach, model and reinforce that words matter,” Mendoza’s statement read. “Our focus going forward will be to repair and restore our relationship with Gladstone as well as proactively create healthy environments and experiences for all stakeholders.”



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain, File  
**Ryan Sheehy, CEO of Fleet Development, speaks to the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners Dec. 15, 2021. The board approved an amended lease agreement for his Wallowa County Community Solar project Wednesday, Jan. 19.**

# Commissioners OK amended lease for solar energy project

By **BILL BRADSHAW**  
 Wallowa County Chieftain

**ENTERPRISE** — Another step forward was taken for a new solar energy project just outside of Enterprise on Wednesday, Jan. 19, as the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners approved an amended lease agreement for the project.

The agreement is for a lease for Ryan Sheehy’s Fleet Development to transform an unused 2.5-acre corner of the county’s former asphalt plant site at Fish Hatchery Lane and Homan Lane into a solar power farm that would provide energy to local customers through Pacific Power’s grid. Sheehy’s Wallowa County Community Solar has been working for more than three years on planning a 360-kilowatt community solar project on the industrial-zoned county land.

The original lease was

approved in late 2020. Sheehy recently asked county counsel Paige Sully to request of the commissioners that the county sign an agreement with Community Bank to make the project collateral so he can obtain necessary funding for the project.

“This is a situation where we would assign the lease to Community Bank, but it would only take effect upon defaulting the loan agreement between Community Bank and Wallowa County (Community Solar),” Sully told the commissioners. “By virtue of the lease being assigned to them, Community Bank would accept all obligations of the lease agreement, they would assume all of the Wallowa County Community Solar’s obligations to the county in the event that they were to take possession of the lease agreement.”

Sully said she does not believe such a foreclosure

is likely.

“I see very little risk in that occurring,” she said. “This is necessary for Wallowa County Community Solar to move forward. ... I recommend that you approve it.”

Commissioner Todd Nash asked for some clarification on just what would be foreclosed upon in such an event.

Sully said that should such a foreclosure occur, it would be for the lease and the bank would likely sell the project to a new contractor who would want the lease and be subject to its provisions.

As the commissioners considered a vote on the matter, Commissioner John Hillock abstained, as his business, Enterprise Electric, has done some work on the project and he wouldn’t want it to appear as a conflict of interest.

The other two commissioners voted to approve the amended lease agreement.



Alex Wittwer/The Observer, File  
**Reunee Hays, left, looks at a hospital record with fellow house supervisor Danita Thamert in the intensive care unit at Grande Ronde Hospital on Monday, Aug. 30, 2021.**

# HOSPITALS

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curve of hospitalizations by stepping up public health measures to reduce the spread of infection,” Graven said.

Still, the latest surge in hospitalizations is compounded by staffing shortages, difficulty finding a place to discharge some patients who no longer need hospital treatment and a shortage of blood and monoclonal antibodies, said Hultberg, the hospital trade group’s president and chief executive officer.

Coronavirus hospitalizations in the region that includes Portland have already set new highs. The next few weeks, Hultberg said, are going to be particularly bad.

The omicron surge is substantially different from past surges, primarily because the variant is far more contagious but also less virulent. Hultberg said the variant’s impact on hospitals has also been different.

The wave that peaked

in September hit Southern and Central Oregon particularly hard, while the current surge is affecting the entire state, she said, and the people hospitalized with COVID-19 right now are experiencing less severe courses of illness.

And whereas previously the heaviest strain was on intensive care units, now it’s the emergency departments and other medical units facing the brunt of the surge.

While staffing shortages have been an issue throughout the pandemic, at no point have health officials or hospital systems spoken so regularly of the problem.

Hultberg didn’t provide specific numbers for the state, but made clear the shortage of workers is affecting hospitals across Oregon, forcing many to hire travel nurses.

Rural hospitals are facing a particular challenge because agency nurses tend to go where they can earn more money, which is usually in the cities.

“Oregon hospitals are resilient,” Hultberg said.

“But the pandemic has taken a significant toll.”

GRH

# Take Care of You

IN 2022

[grh.org/takecareofyou](http://grh.org/takecareofyou)

**GRANDE RONDE HOSPITAL AND CLINICS**

For many of us, this time of year is when we think about our health and wellness, but for the employees of Grande Ronde Hospital and Clinics we love to think about your health and wellness all year long! Check out our social media pages and our website throughout January, as together we hear from experts in behavioral and physical health speak to the small steps we can take for a better YOU in 2022!

Find us on Facebook and Instagram.