

# THE OBSERVER

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INSIDE DISCOVER WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH GO!



## 'Deervid' not yet a concern in Oregon

COVID-19 found in Midwest white-tailed deer populations

By ALEX WITTWER  
EO Media Group

LA GRANDE — The presence of COVID-19 among the white-tailed deer population in Oregon isn't known, according to officials with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and it's unlikely to be a concern.

Reports of infections running rampant in the Midwest's white-tailed deer population spurred numerous news outlets to pen articles extolling the dangers of a COVID-19 reservoir in the wild-life population. The presence of COVID-19 in deer has been detected in 15 states, including Iowa, Michigan, Illinois and New York, according to the US Department of Agriculture.

Oregon officials aren't too concerned however, and said the probability of infection among the hoofed ruminant population was low, and lower still was the chance the deer could reinfect humans.

"It's a low probability," said Colin Gillin, state wildlife veterinarian for ODFW. "It's not been shown that it's a threat to Oregonians."

Gillin said that due to the relatively low population of white-tailed deer in Oregon, as well as the lack of petting zoos, research facilities or farms meant that human-to-deer contact is remote.

In fact, most interactions between Oregonians and white-tailed deer generally involve firearms.

If there's a concern among hunters, Gillin said, proper sanitation, vaccinations and mask wearing can mitigate the risk of exposure of

See, **Deervid**/Page A7



Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group

Gust Tsiatsos, owner of The Local in downtown La Grande, works on improvements to the coffee and ice cream cafe on Tuesday, Feb. 15, 2022.

## PROJECT SPENDING

La Grande Urban Renewal Agency's fiscal year report reveals details of five local renovation projects

By DAVIS CARBAUGH • The Observer

LA GRANDE — The La Grande Urban Renewal Agency recently released its annual fiscal year report, covering spending from July 2020 through June 2021.

The report detailed the agency's spending as well as five projects that were undertaken in the downtown area. Founded in 1999, the Urban Renewal Agency has \$9,407,121 remaining indebtedness out of its original \$21,992,525 allocation.

"In terms of the 2021 year, that was completely a COVID-impacted year for economic development and the agency," La Grande City Manager Robert Strobe said.

The Urban Renewal area encompasses 526 acres in La Grande, which is roughly 20% of the city's acreage. According to the 2020-21 fiscal report, the Urban Renewal area's

frozen base assessed value was \$112,609,450 — the total assessed value was measured at \$169,054,932.

The agency operates with the goals of revitalizing downtown, creating high-quality family-wage jobs, and supporting retail development, housing, transportation and community facilities.

Throughout the last fiscal year, the agency received \$1,044,426 in tax revenues, with total revenues of \$1,602,491. The agency's expenditures were \$632,126 for the general fund and \$251,243 for the debt fund.

The agency's estimated tax revenues in the past fiscal year were \$1,148,000. The budget



Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group

Fernando Villagomez, a bartender at Raul's Cantina, pours a drink for guests on Tuesday, Feb. 15, 2022. The cantina, which expanded Raul's Taqueria on Adams Avenue, is one of several projects that benefitted from the La Grande Urban Renewal Agency.

included \$1,803,014 in revenues for the general fund and \$2,058,730 in requirements for the debt fund.

The 2020-21 report showed contributions to five local establishments, an increase from previous years. The

agency contributed a combined \$250,000 to projects at Raul's Taqueria, the Slate Building, Hines Meat Co., The Local and The Copy Club.

"We actually did reward the

See, **Renewal**/Page A7

## Lostine woman found guilty of elder abuse

Betsy Lathrop convicted of taking father's resources

By BILL BRADSHAW  
Wallowa County Chiefstain

ENTERPRISE — A Lostine woman accused of multiple charges of criminal mistreatment and identity theft involving her father was convicted Wednesday, Feb. 9, in

Wallowa County Circuit Court in Enterprise on four of the 28 counts in the original indictment.

Betsy Jo Ann Lathrop, 55, was accused of 20 counts of first-degree criminal mistreatment in the first degree, a Class C felony, alleged to have taken place between Nov. 21,

2014, and July 8, 2016, in violation of her legal duty to provide care for an elderly person, her father, Robert "Wayne" Lathrop, according to court records. The elder Lathrop died in December 2018. Betsy Lathrop was not his legal guardian, but she did have power of attorney for him, her attorney said.

The jury trial was before Senior Judge John Collins out of Yam-

hill County. He will preside over sentencing at 2 p.m. Feb. 22 in Enterprise.

La Grande attorney Jim Schaeffer, who was appointed by the court as Lathrop's public defender, said on Feb. 14 he expects she will appeal the convictions and any sentence as well.

See, **Abuse**/Page A7

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### WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

	<b>Tonight</b> 26 LOW Partly cloudy		<b>Friday</b> 49/32 Mostly sunny
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### CONTACT US

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