

Tribes lift mask mandate within CTUIR boundaries

By JILL-MARIE GAVIN
Confederated Umatilla Journal

MISSION — The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation Board of Trustees voted last week to end the mask mandate on the reservation effective no later than Friday, March 11, at 4 p.m.

The move came Monday, Feb. 28, the same day Oregon Gov. Kate Brown announced Oregon, California and Washington would lift mandates simultaneously at 11:59 p.m. March 11. According to a press release from CTUIR, the vote followed the recommendation of Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center as the public health authority for the tribes. And the mask mandate could end sooner if Yellowhawk gives the OK.

The board of trustees, however, split on the vote.

Board Vice Chair Aaron Ashley, Secretary Sally Kosey and members-at-large Toby Patrick, Boots Pond and Lisa Ganuelas voted in favor of rescinding the mask mandate, which has been in effect since Aug. 13, 2021.

Board Treasurer Sandra Sampson and member-at-large Corinne Sams voted against the polled resolution.

Sampson said she voted no based on the unavailability of vaccines for children age 6 months to 4 years.

“I wanted to see it extended to at least May 15 when kids have opportunity to get vaccinated,” she said. “They are our most vulnerable population when it comes to the omicron and delta variants of COVID. All of Eastern Oregon is still less than 49% vaccinated.”

The resolution ending the mask mandate states the board will continue to fund COVID-19 screeners to monitor for signs and symp-



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File

A sign advises employees they must be wearing masks at an employee entrance to Wildhorse Resort & Casino, Mission, on Friday, June 5, 2020. The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation Board of Trustees voted in late February 2022 to end the mask mandate on the reservation effective no later than Friday, March 11, at 4 p.m.

toms of illness in the Nixyaawii Governance Center until April 29, but that date also could be subject to change. When the mandate ends, it will be at the discretion of each entity’s CEO or executive director on whether they choose to continue to require masks for indoor public use.

Interim-Deputy Executive Director Teara Farrow-Ferman

provided the Confederated Umatilla Journal with a draft memo from the Office of the Executive that states: “The state will end their mask mandate on March 11, 2022, for indoor and outdoor public settings and schools, however, state and federal requirements, such as those for health care settings, public transit and other specialized settings, will

remain in place for a period of time.”

Masks will remain required for indoor settings on Kayak Public Transportation and within the Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center.

Aaron Hines, Yellowhawk chief executive, did not have a firm date for when the indoor use mandate would be lifted at the clinic.

Board Chair Kat Brigham, who

did not vote on the polled resolution, said in a statement: “I trust the removal of the mask mandate because it is based on good data and Yellowhawk’s consistency with the state. Masks will be removed, but please continue to follow the guidelines that continue to remain in place. If you would like to continue to wear your masks, we support you and your safety measures.”

Two teens filmed tossing smoke bombs into Baker County Public Library

By JAYSON JACOBY
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — Three smoke bomb fireworks were tossed into the Baker County Public Library on Thursday, March 3, causing an estimated \$1,000 in heat and smoke damage to flooring and furniture.

Security camera videos show multiple juveniles as potential suspects, said Perry Stokes, director of the Baker County Library District.

Due to an active investigation, and the suspects being juveniles, the district wouldn’t release the images, Stokes said.

Heather Spry, supervisor of circulation and operations at the

library, said the first smoke bomb was thrown into the building from the front entrance, off Resort Street, around 5 p.m.

It landed near a table.

The second incident happened about 15 minutes later, when someone came in through the rear entrance, next to the Powder River, and rolled a smoke bomb that stopped in the movie section, melting a section of carpet.

Spry said there was a longer interval between the second and final incident, about half an hour.

The third smoke bomb, also thrown from the rear entrance, landed beneath a desk in the area that has multiple card catalog computers, near the shelves holding

new books. The smoke bomb melted a section of carpet and also scorched part of the underside of the desk.

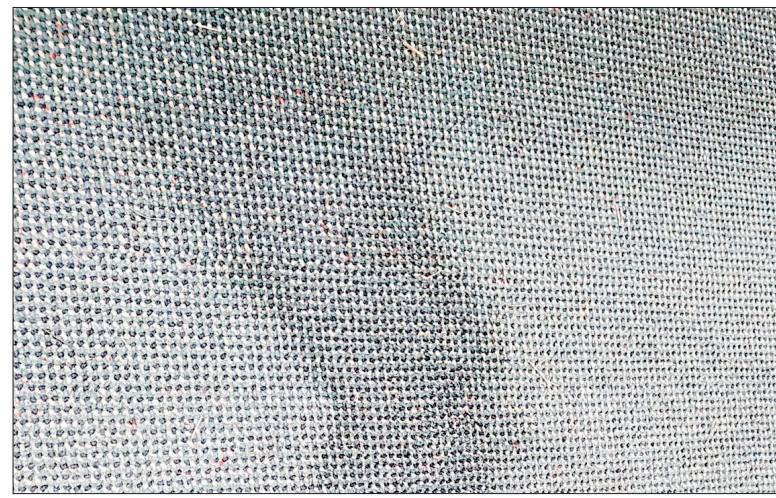
Spry said she called police after the third incident in hopes of deterring whoever was responsible.

Smoke bombs create a small flame and emit smoke.

Spry said video from the security cameras at the front and rear entrances both show the same pair of teenage boys tossing in the smoke bombs.

She said neither was wearing any face covering so it should be possible to identify them.

Stokes said library officials are working with police on the investigation.



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

A smoke bomb melted a section of carpet inside the Baker County Public Library, Baker City, on Thursday, March 3, 2022.

Drone company tests medical delivery service in Pendleton

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — A customer at the Pendleton Unmanned Aerial Systems Range is partnering with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and Interpath Laboratory to test drone-assisted medical test delivery.

In a Tuesday, Feb. 22, press release, Spright, an Arizona UAS company, announced it was going to work with both entities to create a proof-of-concept drone delivery network between Interpath and the Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center on the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Spright held its first test flight between Pendleton and Mission the week before the press release.

Spright and its partners assert that transferring delivery services from vehicles to drones will allow Interpath to deliver and receive lab specimens throughout the day and offer a greener alternative to gas-powered cars.

“Many communities located in remote or rural

areas lack timely and convenient access to essential medical supplies and service,” Spright President Joe Resnik said in a statement. “We look forward to this proof-of-concept, showcasing drone delivery’s ability to solve many of health care’s existing access and efficiency challenges, while also improving patient care and experience.”

In the press release, Interpath President Tom Kennedy added a transition to drones could help his business save money while Yellowhawk CEO Aaron Hines said a successful drone program could improve health care services for the clinic’s patients.

“If this pilot program is successful and we are able to utilize this service, our patients have the opportunity to benefit from more rapid test results and access follow-up medical procedures and services,” Hines said. “This project could help us further our mission of providing high-quality, primary health care for the (CTUIR).”

Spright is a subsidiary of Colorado aviation company Air Methods specializing in emergency patient transport.

19-year-old in jail for slaying in Milton-Freewater

East Oregonian

MILTON-FREEWATER — The Umatilla County Sheriff’s Office has arrested a 19-year-old man for the shooting death of another teen that occurred Saturday, March 5, in Milton-Freewater.

Manuel Adam Peralez Jr., of Walla Walla, now is in the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, on a probable cause charge of second-degree murder, as well as for second-degree disorderly conduct and second-degree criminal trespass.

The sheriff’s office in a press release reported it received 911 calls on March 5 at approximately 12:10 a.m. about gunshots on the 84000 block of Yellow Jacket Road,

Milton-Freewater.

Initial reports indicated two people had been shot. Umatilla County sheriff’s deputies, together with Oregon State Police and Milton-Freewater police, responded to the scene.

According to the press release, the investigation showed people at the residence left before law enforcement arrived and took a gunshot victim to Providence St. Mary Medical Center, Walla Walla.

Jason Samuel Warner, 18, of Milton-Freewater, had been shot multiple times by another male, according to the sheriff’s office, after an altercation during a party at the residence.

Walla Walla Police Department and Walla Walla County Sheriff’s

Office responded to the hospital as well. Warner died at the hospital.

According to the press release, law enforcement early in the investigation identified Peralez as the lone suspect.

Sunday, March 6, at approximately 11 a.m., Peralez walked into the Milton-Freewater Police Department, which notified the Umatilla County Sher-

iff’s Office.

The sheriff’s office working in cooperation with Umatilla County District Attorney’s Office, Walla Walla County Sheriff’s Office and the police departments of Milton-Freewater, Walla Walla and Pasco were able to establish probable cause for Peralez’s arrest.

The investigation is ongoing.

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