

LEARNING

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of right now, I don't think there's a plan in Pendleton School District to get rid of snow days. That's not saying that it's not off the table, but there is no plan to get rid of them on our end."

The ability to integrate online learning has created more flexibility for school districts, according to La Grande School District Superintendent George Mendoza.

"I definitely think that choices and options, whether it's home school and homelink programs, or

whether it's online schools and whether it's brick and mortar — it's here to stay," he said. "And being flexible at home, online learning and hybrid approaches are here to stay. So anything that has to do with technology that enhances online as well as in-person learning is something we're going to keep having to do, and we will. We're happy to do that."

Mendoza said that the school district had been pivoting toward integrating technology like Google Classroom and Canvas into its curriculum and toolkit, but the pandemic had accelerated that effort.

"We were already

working on doing more with Google Classroom, posting lessons and activities and offering feedback and information and creating engagement through that, but (the pandemic) definitely made it something we had to get better at and do better at," he said. "Having the ability for teachers to be able to create a classroom in person as well as a classroom online — to me, that's part of the future and part of what has to remain for the future."

Mendoza cautioned that online learning should also emphasize online citizenship and building healthy relationships

online with classmates.

"We got good kids, but everybody needs to be better about how they interact on social media, and how they interact in digital messaging," he said. "That's part of the future, I think, and not only just good character education, but I think we need to make sure that we help kids have good relationships electronically."

Part of that education future could include online classes taken at universities through partnerships with the school district.

"Any time you can create more options for kids or opportunities for kids, that's



Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group

Uriah Gatliff, a student at La Grande Middle School, works on an assignment during class on Thursday, April 7, 2022. La Grande School District Superintendent George Mendoza said that while the district was pivoting toward implementing Chromebooks and Google platforms prior to the pandemic, COVID-19 accelerated the process.

part of the future," Mendoza said. "Future kids and families want options more

than ever, and we need to make sure we're trying to create that opportunity."

BOND

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bond won with 66% voter support.

"This shows that everyone has been benefiting from it. We should be able to benefit as well," said Robin Jolin, a La Grande School District parent.

The 2-for-1 bargain is not the only thing Measure 31-105 has going for it. Passage of the proposed bond would not raise tax rates of the district's property owners because of the recent refinancing of the 20-year, \$31.5-million bond voters approved in 2014 in the La Grande School District for capital construction and maintenance.

This means that the \$1.93 tax rate per \$1,000 of assessed property value now being paid for school district bond taxes will remain the same if Measure 31-105 passes.

"Your tax rate will stay the same," La Grande School District Superintendent George Mendoza said during a Bond Information Night presentation April 5 at Greenwood Elementary School.

The superintendent also noted that the length of time taxpayers will be making bond payments will remain the same whether or not Measure 31-105 passes. This means payment will be made by taxpayers through 2035.

Should the measure fail, property owners in the La Grande School District would see their taxes drop 28 cents to \$1.65 per \$1,000 of assessed property value because they would be paying only for the refinanced \$31.5 million bond, meaning the owner of a \$150,000 home would be paying \$42 less a year in property taxes and the owner of a \$200,000 home would be spending \$56 dollars less a year in taxes, Mendoza said.

Two buildings long past their prime

Passage of the bond would not only mean the Annex would be replaced, but also the district's main-



This artist's rendering, released in February 2022, shows what the proposed new multi-use building at La Grande Middle School could look like. Voters will decide on a bond to pay for it in the May 17 election.



Measure 31-105, if passed by voters in the May 17, 2022, election, would pay for replacing the old Annex building on the La Grande Middle School grounds, as well as the adjacent maintenance structure, in order to make room for a new athletic and academic center for the school district.

tenance, facilities and grounds structure — built in 1911 — would also be torn down. The district's maintenance, facilities and grounds services would be moved to a 10,500-square-foot space the school district would rent on Adams Avenue at the Adams Professional Plaza.

Mayes said this move is needed because of the poor condition of the current maintenance facility.

However, most of the focus at Bond Information Night sessions has been on the need to replace the aging Annex building, which features a full-size gym that is used extensively by the school district, especially La Grande Middle School, and for community athletic activities.

Mendoza said the Annex gym is often used from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m. on

weekdays for physical education classes and school district athletic programs.

Nonprofit community organizations, which the district allows to use the facility for no cost, often cannot use the Annex until 7:30 p.m. or 8 p.m. Plans call for the proposed new building to have two gyms, which would greatly ease the log-jam demand for space.

Mayes noted that the proposed new academic and athletic center would meet Americans with Disabilities Act accessible standards, a plus since the

LEARN MORE ABOUT PROPOSED BOND

LA GRANDE — The La Grande School District is conducting a series of Bond Information Night programs in April on the \$4.485 million bond the district will ask voters to approve in the May 17 election to build a new academic and athletic center.

The remaining Bond Information Nights are on Monday, April 11, in La Grande Middle School's commons; Thursday, April 14, in La Grande High School's AV auditorium; and Thursday, April 21, in Island City Elementary School's library. Each of the information nights start at 6 p.m.

People who cannot attend in person can watch the sessions virtually by using the Google Meet link on the La Grande School District's Facebook page.

Annex, close to 100 years old, is hard for people with mobility issues to get into.

"That in itself is a huge reason why we should replace the building," said Mayes, who served as principal of Central Elementary School for seven years before retiring at the end of June 2021.

She does not believe the school district should continue spending money to maintain the aging Annex building.

"We are at that point where it is not sufficient to keep putting band-aids on it," Mayes said.

Mendoza said this may not be an ideal time to seek the bond because of issues like inflation, yet there is now a rare opportunity due to the availability of the state matching grant.

"Now is the time we

have the opportunity to move forward," he said.

The superintendent stressed that if voters decide not to take advan-

tage of the 2-for-1 deal, there's no guarantee the district would be awarded future Oregon School Capital Improvement Matching grants because school districts have to compete for them. He also noted that there's no guarantee the state will continue the matching grant program.

Long a topic of conversation

Mayes said that discussions of replacing the Annex gym have been going on for decades because of its poor condition.

"It can't happen soon enough," she said, adding the gym is drafty and can get so cold that some people wear gloves inside the building.

Mayes said the school district is fortunate to have the opportunity to pass a bond that is guaranteed a matching grant and would not raise the current tax rate.

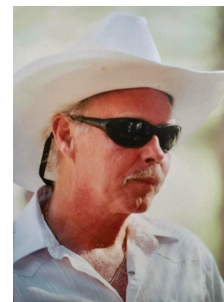
"It seems like all the stars have lined up for the perfect scenario," she said.

Ballots for the by-mail election will be sent out by the Union County Clerk's Office on April 27 and must be returned by May 17.

Richard L. Springer

December 9, 1950 - December 17, 2020

Richard "Rick" Lee Springer, 70, died on Dec. 17, 2020, in La Grande, Oregon, after an extended illness with Parkinson's disease. Friends are invited to join family in sharing memories of his life, love and practical jokes on Saturday, April 16, 2022, at 2 p.m. at the Elgin Community Center.



Rick was born on Dec. 9, 1950, to Marvin LeRoy Springer and Vivian Barbara "Betty" (Sanders) Springer in Baker City, Oregon. Childhood summers were spent with his grandparents and other extended family, making memories with his cousins, Marcie and Sheila. He lived in small towns throughout the Willamette Valley and in 1969 graduated from Colfax (California) High School, where he played football and basketball. From an early age, he was known as a joker who loved to make people laugh. He may have ended up with more than he bargained for by passing down his ornery ways to five relentless daughters whom he shared with Sue Ann (Charles) Springer. When asked about never having a son, Rick would brag that he had girls to tag along while hunting, fishing, camping, racing cars and (hopefully) finding more huckleberries and mushrooms than they could eat.

Rick spent his young adult years working in the timber industry and as a grocery store meatcutter. After earning degrees in accounting and community service from Blue Mountain Community College and Eastern Oregon State College, he worked in downtown La Grande at an accounting firm. He later returned to the timber industry for more than 20 years and was especially proud of his position as Total Quality Manager at Boise Cascade. He was instrumental in establishing the Grande Ronde Motorsports Association, which served as host for dirt track races at the Union County Fairgrounds in the 1980s and 1990s. He was also an ambitious volunteer and member of the Fraternal Order of the Eagles, American Quarter Horse Association, American Cribbage Congress, American Red Cross and the Union County Cruisin' Corvette Club.

Rick enjoyed spending time with friends barbecuing, listening to country music and dancing. He felt most at home in rural settings with space for snowmobiling, four-wheelers and tending to the horses. He is remembered by family as being someone who made life fun, often distributing money for his Super Bowl betting pools and giving away strips of lottery tickets. His grandchildren held an especially dear place in his heart. Rick was grateful to spend his last years with his dearest friend and love of his life, Phyllis Wright, who brought out his most generous and loving traits.

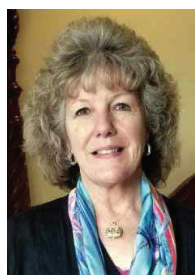
Rick was preceded in death by his parents, Marvin Springer and Betty and Mike O'Hara; siblings, Ron Springer, Candy Yunk and infant brother, Michael Springer; and cousin, Marcia Winebarger Pender. He is survived by his cousin, Sheila Valentine of Baker City; five daughters, La Nanna (Paul) Bewley of Corvallis, Ricanna (Jack) Halsey of Aiken, South Carolina, Leianna (James) Wheeler of Monroe, Lorcinda (James) Johnston of La Grande, and Elainea (Paul) Howland of Pendleton; 13 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren; and a few very cherished nephews, niece and second cousins.

Rick's pranks, outgoing nature and genuine desire to help others in need will be missed by all.

Jakki L. (Berg) Boehne

December 29, 1955 - April 5, 2022

It is with great sadness we announce the passing of Jakki Lee Boehne on Tuesday, April 5, 2022, at the age of 66. Jakki will be lovingly remembered and missed by her family and friends. A funeral service will be held at the La Grande Faith Lutheran Church on Saturday, April 9, 2022, at 2 p.m.



Jakki was born in La Grande, Oregon, on Dec. 29, 1955, to Cecil A. Berg and Helen R. Berg. She graduated from La Grande High School in 1974 and went on to earn her BA at Eastern Oregon State College (now EOU) in 1978. Jakki started her teaching career in Elgin, Oregon, teaching third grade. She then was hired by the La Grande School District and worked as a first grade and kindergarten teacher until her retirement.

Jakki married Paul Boehne in 1991 in La Grande. They enjoyed their farm out in the valley and it was the source of inspiration for Jakki's pictures and greeting cards.

Jakki loved sewing! And she loved her dogs! She loved to cook and process vegetables raised on her farm in a wonderful canning kitchen. She was proud of her lifelong friendships made with her high school friends, and the many friends she made and maintained through her teaching career and into retirement. Jakki was a member of Faith Lutheran Church and was active in supporting the ministry in multiple ways.

Jakki was preceded in death by her parents, Cecil A. and Helen R. Berg; a sister, Cecile Danice; and a brother, Tod Michael Berg. She is survived by her husband, Paul; sister and brother-in-law, Linda and Monte King of Roseburg, Oregon; niece, Natalie Chong of Roseburg, Oregon; nephew and wife, Troy and Jamie King of Roseburg, Oregon; nephew, Parker Berg of North Carolina; and three great-nieces.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions can be made to SHINE Preschool, 104 S. 12th St., La Grande, OR 97850; the Blue Mountain Humane Association, 3212 Hwy 30, La Grande, OR 97850; or Ducks Unlimited Memorial Contribution, One Waterfowl Way, Memphis, TN 38120.

Online condolences may be made to the family at www.lovelandfuneralchapel.com.

Brian Trice

August 17, 1970 - March 15, 2022

Brian Trice passed away on March 15, 2022, in Nampa, Idaho, due to complications that developed while battling respiratory illness. He was 51 years old. Brian was born Aug. 17, 1970, in La Grande, Oregon, to Arthur Trice and Shirley Trice-Harris. Brian was the oldest of three boys, with younger brothers Eric and Marc Trice. He was the proud father of Tevin Trice (Samantha) and grandfather of Keaton Trice.



He is survived by his parents, Arthur and Shirley; his brother, Eric; girlfriend, Kimberly; son, Tevin (Samantha); grandson, Keaton; and many aunts, uncles and cousins that will miss him dearly. Brian was preceded in death by his brother, Marc Trice; grandmother, (Grandma) Donna Campbell; grandfather, Lucky Trice; uncle, Doug Trice; and aunt, Margie Cordova.

Brian loved his family. He particularly loved being a grandfather and was looking forward to a second grandson. He was a loving and devoted son, and his family was extremely important to him. Brian was authentic, a real what-you-see-is-what-you-get kind of man. He was the first one to arrive and one of the last to leave for work or any activity. He loved to be outdoors, from hunting elk to fishing off a riverbank or from a kayak.

Brian was always generous with his time and knowledge and was willing to teach anyone who wanted to learn. He had a gift for making people laugh and being the life of the party. Brian was driven, hardworking and always improving himself. He was deeply loved, and he will be deeply missed.