

COUNTY

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terrible. It is a stressful situation. It is frustrating.”

No other position cuts are called for in the spending plan approved by the budget committee.

Union County’s budget committee voted to recommend adopting a total spending plan of \$57.906 million for 2022-23.

The proposed budget is up primarily due to \$5.204 million Union County has received in American Rescue Plan Act funding plus additional government grants, Burgess said.

The county has received American Rescue Plan Act funding to help deal with COVID-19-related issues. Burgess said the funding is giving the county the opportunity to address deferred infrastructure needs and make equipment purchases.

The total spending plan approved by the county includes a proposed general fund budget of \$12.78 million, down 9% from 2021-22.

Burgess said there are two major reasons for the decline — the loss of the three deputies and two corrections officer positions and the fact that

the county had \$500,000 in federal funding in its 2021-22 budget to help small businesses hurt by the COVID-19 pandemic, funding it does not have in its 2022-23 budget.

The general fund is revenue that comes to the county from taxes, fees, interest earnings, and other sources that can be used for the general operation of the county.

Burgess said 47% of Union County’s general fund revenue comes from property taxes. The second highest source at 9% is the payment in lieu of taxes funding Union County receives from the federal

government. PILT funding is provided to counties with federal lands to compensate them for property tax revenue they would have received if the land were privately owned.

The Union County Board of Commissioners will vote on adoption of the recommended 2022-23 budget at its Wednesday, June 29, meeting.

The session will start at 9 a.m. in the board of commissioners meeting room in the Joseph Building. A public hearing on the proposed budget will be conducted before the board of commissioners vote.



Dick Mason/The Observer, File  
Deputy Morris Capers, with the Union County Sheriff's Office, on Friday, May 20, 2022, returns to his vehicle after checking out the Elgin Stampede Grounds during his patrol.

EOU

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with balloons and decorations, included 2020 graduates who did not have a chance to receive their diploma in person the previous year.

In 2018, Eastern graduates did not experience the packed football stadium and extra seating typical of a regular year’s commencement because the university was replacing the football field turf, a project that helped Eastern continue to serve as a hub for numerous collegiate and high school athletic events.

According to the university’s registrar, the 2022 commencement team and university officials are still in the process of monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic trends if any potential restrictions or attendance routines need to be adjusted.

The in-person event is open to the public. Seating is available on a first-come-first-served basis with ADA seating directly on the field. Viewers can also tune in to a livestream at the following link, youtube.com/user/EOUAV.

Other commencement activities are planned for Friday, June 10: the Oregon Health and Sci-

TO LEARN MORE

Additional commencement information is available at www.eou.edu/commencement.

ence University will hold its annual convention and awards ceremony at 8:30 a.m.; the Eastern student awards assembly begins at 1:30 p.m.; and a special celebration for online and onsite students is at 6:30 p.m.

In addition, prior to the main commencement on June 11, there will be a hooding ceremony for master’s graduates at Gilbert Plaza at 8:45 a.m.

With the commencement ceremony back in its standard form on the Eastern football field, the university is planning accordingly for a large crowd.

ADA assistance will be provided to transport individuals to and from farther parking lots. All regular campus parking spaces will be free for public usage.

During the ceremony, refreshments will be provided at the stadium’s concession stand.

No photos will be allowed on the field, as a professional photographer will be present to take photos of each graduate — photos are allowed from the stands area.



The Observer, File  
Eastern Oregon University graduate Megan Demirjian poses from the back of a pickup truck moments before exiting to receive her diploma on Saturday, June 12, 2021. The university held a drive-thru commencement due to COVID-19 restrictions.

CAMPBELL

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Campbell’s list of firsts include being the initial woman to complete West Virginia University’s master’s program in wild-life management, the first female forestry aide at the Forest Sciences Lab in Morgantown, West Virginia, and the first woman to serve as a biologist on the George Washington National Forest in Virginia. These are just a handful of Campbell’s list of firsts for being a woman in a certain role, which includes many other positions in West Virginia, Mississippi and Alaska.

Campbell has always used a conciliatory and friendly approach when breaking through glass ceilings or pursuing other objectives, said Melanie Woolever, a colleague of Campbell’s who worked closely with her while she was with the U.S. Forest Service. Woolever said Campbell is an unassuming person who is intensely loyal and has a Southern charm. She is also remarkably tenacious and passionate when pursuing something she believes in.

“She is quiet and soft-spoken but she has a backbone of iron,” Woolever said of Campbell. “She makes things happen when she believes in something.”

Woolever, who lives in Colorado, cited the U.S. Forest Service’s wildlife budget as an example. She said the Forest Services’ wildlife budget received limited funding compared to other divisions in the agency when she and Campbell were with it early in their careers. This changed with the help of Campbell, who took it upon herself to learn everything she could about the Forest Service’s budgeting process. She then used this knowledge to line up funding for wildlife projects over a long period of time.

Avoiding the spotlight

Nothing Campbell does is with an eye on getting into



Wild Sheep magazine/Contributed Photo  
Ellen Campbell conducts imprinting research in 1972 with the wild turkeys she raised and studied while working in the USFS Forest Sciences Lab.

“She makes things happen when she believes in something.”

— Melanie Woolever, U.S. Forest Service, about Ellen Campbell

the spotlight, Woolever said. “She does not want the limelight,” Woolever said. “She is very humble.”

Chuck also feels this way. “She is not one to boast about herself,” he said.

The trophy Campbell received upon winning the Artemis Award weighs about 5 pounds and is made almost exclusively of glass. The award is named after the Greek goddess of nature, wildlife and hunting.

The Artemis Award is among many Campbell has received.

Another heavyweight honor is the Jack Adams Award, which was presented to her by the U.S. Forest Service in 1996 in recognition of her work for the betterment of wildlife. Campbell was then one of 1,100 wildlife professionals in the Forest Service eligible for the award.

She was the first woman to receive the national award. The Artemis and Adams

awards both recognize work Campbell has done with Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep plus other wildlife such as the gopher tortoise and the red-cockaded woodpecker.

Campbell’s efforts as a member of the Oregon Wild Sheep Foundation to protect bighorn sheep includes taking steps to prevent them from interacting with domestic sheep.

This is important because bighorn sheep are susceptible to a type of pneumonia that domestic sheep carry bacterium for.

Campbell said many things intrigue her about Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, including their ability to live in rugged terrain.

“I just admire their tenacity and their ability to live and thrive,” she said.

Campbell has witnessed with awe bighorn rams running against each other to show dominance. “It is amazing that

they do not get concussions,” she said.

Keeping a secret

Campbell received the Artemis Award this winter at the Wild Sheep Foundation’s annual meeting in Las Vegas, Nevada. She said she had not wanted to attend because she tries to avoid large crowds due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

She decided to go only after being persuaded to by her husband, Dale, also a former Forest Service employee.

Ellen Campbell never suspected that the reason he insisted they attend the convention was because she was set to receive the award.

“He is great at keeping a secret. He knew for two months and I had no idea,” said Campbell, who credits her husband with providing remarkable support.

Four months have passed since she received the Artemis Award, but she said she still feels emotional when she thinks about it.

“I still cannot believe it,” Campbell said. “I was so surprised that they recognized me.”

OPIOIDS

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inmates now go to the Oregon Marijuana Fund, which drew up to \$270 million in grant funding for treatment centers — the plan originally scheduled the funds to arrive across Oregon by the start of 2022, but delays have pushed that time frame back to this coming summer and early fall.

While opinions on the measure vary and the new concept is still in its infancy, the delay in funding for new treatment centers amid the increasing crisis puts the burden for services on existing health care facilities like the CHD.

Changing tides

As local law enforcement have also observed, the Center for Human Development is being confronted with a rise in overdoses caused by synthetic opioids such as fentanyl. And the recent uptick has included a significant shift from individuals accidentally consuming fentanyl to actively seeking it out.

“This shift makes harm reduction and lifesaving interventions like Naloxone absolutely critical so we can keep people alive until they get to their successful recovery attempt,” the health center’s staff member statement read. At CHD, services available



Davis Carbaugh/The Observer, File  
Stars with initials of Union County Adult Treatment Court graduates are displayed at the Union County Courthouse, La Grande, on Tuesday, May 10, 2022. The Union County Adult Treatment Court Alumni Association hosted an illumination walk at Max Square in downtown La Grande on May 14, raising awareness of recovery efforts and successes in the county.

include integrated behavioral health through counseling, addiction recovery services, psychiatry, case management and more. In the wake of the past year’s uptick in substance abuse, the health center has increased its outreach efforts to those who have previously dealt with substance abuse, added additional substance use assessment slots, prioritized med-

ical detox and utilized 12-step fellowship programs for more patients.

Substance Use Disorders teams are also in place in Union County, in order to increase services available for emergencies, ICUs and medical surgery floors with patients recovering from overdoses. The services also focus on transitioning those patients from

medical trauma into outpatient or residential treatment.

A bigger concern

Mental health remains at the forefront of substance abuse disorders. CHD recently started a grief and loss group, which is open to those who have experienced loss of any kind. The group has particular relevance for those dealing with substance abuse or those who have seen family members and friends lose their lives to substance abuse.

While Measure 110 shifted the scope of court-ordered treatment requirements, programs within the Union County Court system still exist to assist those dealing with substance abuse.

Kylie Ingerson, the Union County Treatment Court Coordinator, spearheads the county’s grant-funded treatment court program — the system maps out a comprehensive 18-month program to help addicts get back on their feet.

The program was established in Union County in 2001 and has seen 191 graduates. According to Ingerson’s data from the treatment court, roughly 70% of the graduates have not returned to the criminal justice system. Graduation requires a set amount of sobriety days, paying off court treatment fees, outpatient treatment, community support meetings,

holding a steady job and more.

“It’s a pretty intense outpatient process. It’s not just your normal probation,” Ingerson said. “Once they graduate, a lot of them have already turned their life around so significantly.”

However, as the state’s approach to substance abuse shifts, the number of individuals receiving court-ordered treatment is dropping.

“We’re seeing less people,” Ingerson said. “At this point we’ve put it into their hands where they have to make the choice to get help, instead of us pushing them to get help.”

Like many local entities, community outreach and raising awareness remain at the forefront moving forward. The Union County Adult Treatment Court hosted an illumination walk earlier this month, honoring the recent lives lost and promoting awareness in Union County.

For CHD, local partnerships with law enforcement, schools, treatment courts, elected officials and more in the community play a key role in spreading awareness and promoting available resources.

“Addiction impacts all of us,” according to CHD’s statement. “Whether we realize it or not we may know someone struggling with addiction and we can take really simple steps to save a life.”