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School board moves closer on budget

Proposed budget up \$2.58M but calls for three teaching, six staff positions to be cut

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — A proposed 2022-23 La Grande School District budget that would cut nine positions but not call for any layoffs is a step closer to being adopted.

The district's budget committee voted on Wednesday, June 8, to recommend that the La Grande School Board adopt a 2022-23 general fund budget of \$29.65 million. The proposal calls for three teaching and six staff positions to be cut because of falling enrollment.

Adoption of the budget would not result in any layoffs since reductions would be made through attrition, according to La Grande School District Superintendent George Mendoza. The positions that would be cut are either currently not filled, will be vacated due to retirement and the like, or the employee will be moved to another position within the district.

Cutting the three teaching positions would save almost \$299,000 and trimming the six classified positions would save more than \$236,000. Classified positions include cooks, custodians and maintenance staff.

In addition to the nine position cuts, the proposed budget calls for an assistant principal position to be reduced to a dean of students position, saving nearly \$13,800.

The \$29.65 million general fund budget being considered is up \$2.58 million from the present budget. Much of the increase reflects a higher than anticipated boost in what the state will be paying school districts per student in 2022-23. Mendoza said it had been anticipated the state would be paying school districts \$8,700 per student but instead districts will be receiving \$9,400 per student.

The superintendent said that a big reason for the increase is that enrollment in Oregon's schools has dropped about 30,000 over the past year but the amount of money allotted by the state for school districts in 2022-23 has not changed, meaning the state has more money available per student.

Mendoza said the school district has a significant amount of COVID-19 relief funds for the next two school years, but the district is restricted in what it can spend the relief funds on. After two years, the school district will have little if any COVID-19



Mendoza

LA GRANDE TEACHERS TO RECEIVE SALARY INCREASES

The La Grande School District's teachers are set to receive pay increases each of the next two school years. **Page A2**

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Dick Mason/The Observer

Bridgett Naylor of the Girls Night Out and Friends Sewing Group on Friday, June 3, 2022, examines some of the quilts that will be transported to England for Ukrainian refugees. Most of quilts were completed by the Girls Night Out group.

A loving gesture

Local quilting group reaching out to Ukranian refugees with quilts to help ease pain and loss

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — A group of talented and generous Union County women are reaching out to Ukrainian refugees in England — one stitch at a time.

The women are members of the Girls Night Out and Friends Sewing Group. The group's members have been hard at work over the past two months preparing 27 quilts for shipment to England where they will be donated to Ukrainian refugees, many of whom fled their country with little more than the clothes they were wearing. The quilts are meant to provide physical comfort for the Ukrainians and serve as a heartfelt gesture.



Dick Mason/The Observer

All the quilts completed by Girls Night Out include a heart-shaped patch with Ukraine's colors. This quilt was photographed on Friday, June 3, 2022.

"We want to let them know that a lot of people are thinking of them," said Bridgett Naylor, a Girls Night Out member.

Naylor and the other approximately one dozen members of the sewing and quilting club have taken donated quilts that were



partially completed and given them the finishing work they needed. For example, some of the quilts had only one layer of fabric so a second back layer was sewn on. Each quilt has been customized for Ukrainian

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Hospital set to start \$72.6M expansion project

Expansion will add updated surgical services building

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — A major construction project that will boost its surgical facilities is set to get underway at Grande Ronde Hospital.

The \$72.6 million project will add a 98,000-square-foot sur-

MORE INFORMATION

A facilities expansion project page at grh.org has been set up for people who need additional information.

gical services building at the hospital campus. The main function of the multi-story building will be to house new operating rooms.

"It will allow us to bring all surgical services together," said Mardi Ford, the director of com-

munications and marketing at Grande Ronde Hospital.

Ford said patient check-in, pre-operation, operating, waiting and post-operation recovery rooms, plus space that supports surgical services, will be in one structure.

Ford said the hospital's operating rooms were built in the 1960s and are in need of replacement even though they have been upgraded since then.

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Isabella Crowley/The Observer

Grande Ronde Hospital is planning a major facilities expansion, adding a 98,000-square-foot surgical services building to the hospital's La Grande campus.



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52 LOW
A shower or two



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60/41
Cool with rain

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