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INSIDE



FAIR SEASON IN FULL SWING FOR SUMMER GO!

EOU board postpones appointing interim president

Trustees will gather more input, continue discussions during special session

The Observer

BOARDMAN — The Eastern Oregon University board of trustees declined to move forward with a resolution to name

an interim president during its annual retreat in Boardman.

The board discussed the possibility of naming an interim president during the retreat on Tuesday, Aug. 9. Outgoing President Tom Insko recommended an interim co-presidency consisting of Vice President of Finance Lara Moore and board chair Richard



Insko



Chaves

Chaves. “We need to be thoughtful about the transition, and fortunately, we are financially stable and have a strategic plan that gives us purpose and focus,” Insko said. “We have momentum and are doing great things for our students and community. My recommendation is about ensuring our progress

continues, moving us forward as a university.”

After a lengthy discussion, the board elected not to move in that direction.

“We want to be speedy but not hasty,” vice board chair Cheryl Martin said. “The process for naming an interim president is very important. We would like more input and feedback from the university community before we make a decision.”

The board plans to gather more input from the EOU community about naming an interim president in the coming weeks. They will continue discussions during a special session later in August.

Insko, who announced Aug. 1 that he is leaving his post at the end of September, has been named president and chief executive officer at Collins, a wood

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County fair draws biggest crowd in six years

More than 18,000 attended the Union County Fair

By SHANNON GOLDEN
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The Union County Fair celebrated its 150th anniversary last week, and rounded out this year’s fair with a win, drawing in more than 18,000 attendees throughout the four-day event — the highest total attendance record it’s seen in the last six years.

“We were exceptionally happy with the attendance this year,” said Kathy Gover-Shaw, the fair manager.

This year’s total outpaced 2021’s four-day attendance of 13,893.

This was Gover-Shaw’s second year at the helm of the community event, and she said that Thursday, Aug. 4, and Friday, Aug. 5, were the busiest days.

Gover-Shaw and the fair board’s six-person team plan the yearly fair months ahead of time, in collaboration with community partners like FFA and 4-H. Gover-Shaw credited the fair’s entertainment, FFA and 4-H programs for getting community members out to the fairgrounds this year, as well as the free senior breakfast sponsored by Grocery Outlet and The Observer.

4-H and FFA participation

“Our 4-H and FFA programs are so strong and just everybody wants to come out and support those,” she said. “It’s just wonderful.”

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A bright blue sign tells guests where to park outside of an Airbnb in La Grande on Aug. 9, 2022.

Shannon Golden/The Observer

Pushing pause

La Grande planning commission, council members discuss pause on new short-term rentals in La Grande

By SHANNON GOLDEN
The Observer

LA GRANDE — For those visiting La Grande, renting an Airbnb or vacation rental may sound like the optimal option for a brief stay. For city residents, however, these short-term rentals might be countering efforts to deal with La Grande’s housing shortage.

The La Grande City Council and the city’s planning commission had a joint work session on Monday, Aug. 8, to discuss the possibility of pursuing a temporary moratorium preventing residential property owners from converting full-time dwellings into what the commission calls BnBs — short-

term rentals, Airbnbs, VRBOs and vacation homes.

Recently, the city’s planning division received calls from real estate agents and an investor — who don’t live in the area — looking for residential property to buy and convert to short-term rentals.

City officials have also heard that local real estate agents were encouraging owners to convert rental properties into Airbnbs. This increased interest in new short-term rentals in La Grande’s residential areas prompted the Aug. 8 meeting.

“That’s just kind of raised some red flags for us,” said Michael Boquist, the city’s community development director. “We’re still trying to figure out our

housing needs and how we’re going to address our housing needs.”

Initial concerns

Boquist and members of the planning commission posited during the meeting that the influx of short-term rental applications is in direct conflict with the city’s recently adopted Housing Needs Analysis and Housing Production Strategy.

According to the needs analysis created in 2019, La Grande needs 800 new units within the next 20 years to accommodate a projected growth of 1,392 new residents — approximately 40 new units every year to meet the prediction. These dwellings range from single and multi family homes to townhome and duplexes.

The proposed moratorium would

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Community loses a longtime youth leader

Robin Wortman, leader of Union County Safe Communities Coalition, passes away

By DICK MASON
The Observer

WALLOWA — Northwest Oregon lost a youth leader of vision, who could see in young people what they could not see in themselves.

Robin Wortman, of Wallowa, a former 4-H leader and a former director of the Union County Safe Communities Coalition, passed away Tuesday, Aug. 2, of

natural causes at hospital in White Salmon, Washington, at the age of 59.

“Robin pushed people in the right direction. She was able to get kids to see their potential, to get them to realize they had abilities they did not know they had,” said DeAnne Mansveld, a member of the Union County Safe Communities Coalition’s executive committee.

Wortman directed the

Union County Safe Communities Coalition from 2011 through October 2019. As its director, she helped the organization implement a number of community events, such as October’s Red Ribbon month and an annual multimedia conference for seventh graders to teach them about online safety and the dangers of substance abuse. She was also a member of the UCSCC’s Youth Council and worked with various community organizations

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Contributed Photo

Robin Wortman is shown with a prize fish she landed. Wortman, of Wallowa, a former 4-H leader and a former director of the Union County Safe Communities Coalition, died last week of natural causes at the age of 59.



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	Tonight 57 LOW A moonlit sky		Friday 95/55 Partly sunny; hot
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La Grande, Oregon
Email story ideas to news@lagrandeobserver.com. More contact info on Page A4.