

SCHOOLS

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Staff needed in urban, rural areas

Portland Public Schools, the state's largest district by enrollment, currently has 226 open teaching and classified school staff positions. Among them are openings for four school psychologists, 12 counselors and 29 special education teachers.

"We will fill any vacancies at the beginning of the school year with substitutes and other contingencies, if necessary," said Sydney Kelly of the district's media relations department.

Beverton Public Schools, the state's third largest district by enrollment, also needs staff. It is looking for more counselors, special education teachers, music, math and science teachers, according to Susan Rodriguez, chief human resources officer.

Rural districts need staff as well.

The Umatilla School District has long sought special education teachers.

"They're so hard to find so we are always on the lookout," Superintendent Heidi Sipe said.

In Hermiston, a push last school year to get substitute teachers and classified staff licensed to work full-



Rachel Alexander/Salem Reporter

As students prepare to return to classrooms for the 2022-23 school year, districts are offering bonuses and pay raises to attract and retain much needed teachers and school staff.

time in classrooms has left the district with shortages of substitutes and classified staff, like paraprofessionals who work with students with disabilities and as teaching assistants.

Superintendent Tricia Mooney said emergency teacher and substitute teacher licenses will continue to be helpful but she said they're a "Band-Aid."

"We need to be thinking further down the road, too, about how we're going to grow our own teachers," Mooney said.

Last year, teacher burnout led to a greater strain on staffing.

"We did have teachers resign mid-year, and we haven't really had that in the past," Mooney said. "The fallout of that we're going to feel for several years to come."

Her district is working with Western Governors

University, a private online four-year college in Utah, to offer tuition reimbursement for non-certified staff who complete a teacher degree program and teach in Hermiston schools.

Bonuses, raises offered

The Parkrose School District in Portland will offer all returning teachers from last year a \$1,000 bonus in November, Superintendent Michael Lopes Serrao said.

Tillamook used federal COVID-relief dollars last school year to provide teachers with one-time \$3,500 appreciation stipends. It gave classified staff 10% raises last year and will add another 7.5% this year. Full-time teachers who return this year will receive another \$1,000 bonus.

In Beaverton, teachers who return this year will get a \$1,000 bonus. Dual language teachers will be

eligible for an additional \$2,000 in bonuses as will psychologists and speech therapists. Licensed staff with Spanish proficiency can get an extra \$1,200 annually.

To combat bus driver shortages, Beaverton schools will pay \$30 an hour for drivers, the highest rate in Washington County.

In North Bend, which is south of Florence, teachers who work at schools outside city limits could get stipends for gas, according to Superintendent Kevin Bogatin.

"We are hoping to provide some relief that will also help in staff recruitment," he said.

Sipe in Umatilla said last year her teachers and classified staff wanted money invested in staff, rather than bonuses, so she used COVID-relief money to pay for more full-time substitute teachers and mental health professionals. The substitutes gave each teacher in the district a couple days of extra support, she said. Sipe also used the money to give each teacher one paid hour per month to collaborate with and mentor one another.

This year, the district will use federal dollars to double tuition reimbursements for school staff to become teachers in Uma-

tilla. The district has up to \$20,000 to offer employees for the 2022-23 school year, Sipe said.

Statewide group seeks long-term solutions

Since December of 2021, Sen. Michael Dembrow, D-Portland, has convened a working group that's been studying Oregon's teacher shortages and potential solutions. The group includes teachers; representatives from the Oregon Department of Education; the state's largest teachers union, the Oregon School Boards Association; the Coalition of Oregon School Administrators; and several colleges and universities around the state.

The group is collecting data on teacher attrition. It last met in July to discuss findings, and Dembrow said a big one is an especially high turnover in administrators.

"Teachers need to be supported, and that support needs to be stable," he said.

Short term, besides hiring and retention bonuses, an idea the group has pushed is to have Oregon join a national compact on educator licensing, allowing teachers from out of state to work in Oregon without having to get relicensed.

Long term, Dembrow

said the group needs to address working conditions in schools and make the job appeal to a new cohort of teachers.

"I'm reminded of what really important work teachers do and how deeply satisfying that work can be under the right conditions. If we can make those conditions right, we can attract more young and mid-career people into the profession," Dembrow said.

Many of the newer teachers the working group has talked with are saying they need dedicated time and resources to receive mentorship and training.

"What's clear is, if you're not giving new teachers — whether they're coming straight out of education programs or if they are sort of commissioned to deal with an emergency — the support they need in their first years, they won't stay. It's becoming even clearer," he said.

The group will reconvene in September to discuss policy options that can be proposed during the next legislative session in 2023.

"We owe it to teachers to not come up with flashy proposals that look good and sound good to our constituents but to ask ourselves: Do they have staying power? Are they well thought out?" Dembrow said.

B2H

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each session, the organization or individual appealing the segment of the proposed site plan will speak along with those there to provide clarification. All sessions will be open to the public but only those who are petitioners or litigants will be allowed to speak.

In many cases those speaking in support of elements being challenged will be representatives of Idaho Power, a major funder of the proposed B2H project, which would run from Boardman to the Hemingway transmission line substation near Melba, Idaho.



Kreider

Sven Berg, an Idaho Power public information officer, said he respects the concerns people have but stressed that throughout the process of attempting to get the B2H transmission line to become a reality, Idaho Power has strived to work with those who have worries and those who could be impacted.

"We also want to find common ground with landowners and stakeholders. In all but a few cases, we have been able to do this," he said. "We have tried to find pathways



EO Media Group, File

A crew works on a transmission line tower outside Boardman in this undated photo. The Oregon Energy Facility Siting Council will meet at Eastern Oregon University's Gilbert Center for three days starting Monday, Aug. 29, to hear oral appeals for 30 contested portions of its proposed site plan for the controversial Boardman to Hemingway transmission line project.

to address concerns, while balancing this with the need to provide clean and affordable energy to our customers."

Berg supports the opportunity the meeting of the Energy Facility Siting Council in La Grande will provide to those who are on opposite sides of the B2H fence.

"We trust the process and want to give those who oppose and support the project a chance to be heard," he said.

The transmission line would cost between \$1 billion and \$1.2 billion. Towers along the trans-

mission line would be as high as 180 feet tall. In comparison, standard towers are between 75 and 90 feet tall. The proposed line would run through the Grande Ronde Valley.

Idaho Power is leading the effort to gain approval for the 300-mile, 500-kilovolt B2H line with the help of its partner, PacifiCorp.

Elements of the proposed site plan that will be challenged include the decibel level of the sound that would come from the B2H power lines. Kreider said the site plan states that the sound level would exceed the Oregon Noise

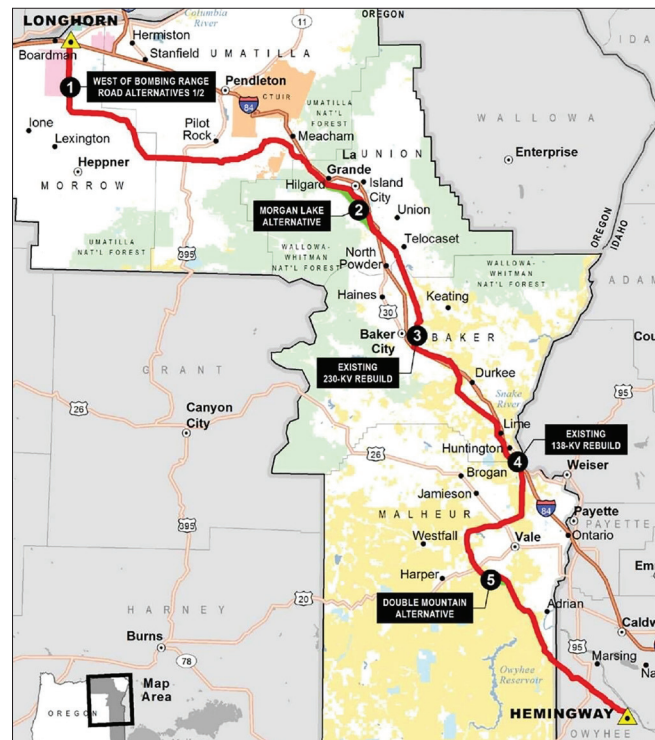
Control level standards by 10 decibels. Kreider said she does not believe a variance should be granted for this within the site plan.

Berg said Idaho Power representatives at the hearing may indicate the utility could provide homeowners near B2H power lines windows that would better block out the sound.

At each hearing the Energy Facility Siting Council will take a straw poll among its members to determine how they feel about the issue. The council will vote at a later meeting on its official

BOARDMAN TO HEMINGWAY TRANSMISSION LINE

The proposed route for a 500-kilovolt transmission line, shown in red, would run from Boardman to the Hemingway transmission line substation near Melba, Idaho, and crossing through Northeastern Oregon. It has been the cause of much opposition. Public hearings for appeals to the Energy Facility Siting Council will be held in La Grande Aug. 29-31, 2022.



Oregon Department of Energy/Contributed Graphic

response to each element that was appealed. Kreider said it is unclear how the council's response to the appeals will influence its decision on whether to support or reject the B2H site plan. This decision will be made sometime after leaving La Grande.

Should the council vote to support the site plan, Kreider said the Stop B2H Coalition may then appeal the decision to the Oregon Supreme Court.

Ultimate approval of the site plan is not a guarantee that B2H would become a reality, since other steps would have to be taken. For example, the public utilities commissions of both Oregon and Idaho would have to vote to authorize construction of the B2H line, Berg said.

Berg said that Idaho Power's goal is to break ground for B2H in 2023 and have lines for the project electrified by 2026.

ARCHERY

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will result in confusion among hunters, and potentially discourage some longtime hunters from continuing their hobby.

Reedy argues that if ODFW wants to bolster bull numbers, the agency should either temporarily ban hunters from killing bulls, or change the bag limit to branch-antlered bulls only.

The bag limit for many units in Northeastern Oregon for this year's elk archery hunt is one bull elk. The traditional bag limit for archery hunting — any elk — remains in some units.

Reedy said he's also concerned that the changes will contribute to animosity between archery and rifle hunters. "We're all hunters," Reedy said.

More tags than applicants in many of the units

Although the shift from general to con-

trolled hunts means some hunters who are accustomed to being able to hunt every year might not draw a tag through the lottery, ODFW has set tag allocations for most units at levels similar to the number of people who actually hunted during recent general seasons.

However, in some popular units the number of controlled hunt tags is well below the number of hunters in recent years.

For this year's archery deer season — the bag limit is one buck with a visible antler — the number of tags in most units is well above the number of first-choice applications for 2021, the first year with controlled archery hunts.

- Examples include:
- Imnaha unit — 308 tags in 2022, 77 first-choice applicants in 2021
 - Sled Springs unit — 193 and 87
 - Keating unit — 275 and 99
 - Starkey unit — 770 and 107
 - Catherine Creek unit — 495 and 101

FESTIVAL

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festival, but life has a way of bringing things about.

"I wanted to develop some sort of entertainment for Union County," she said. "I've always loved music."

Hampton met Randy Woody — of Randy Woody and the Southbound Band — in Texas. The Tennessee-based artist wanted to play more shows out West and Hampton helped book him gigs. She got Woody a number of smaller, but higher paying shows. Eventually, Woody asked Hampton if she would be his manager.

In 2021, Hampton asked the country singer if he would come to Oregon and play at her boyfriend's 50th birthday party. Woody was excited to do so and even offered to play for free, asking only that the price of the flight be covered.

So Hampton crafted a plan. She reached out to her boyfriend's friends to see if anyone would be interested in donating to help pay for the flight. The donations poured in and then

EASTERN OREGON COUNTRY MUSIC FESTIVAL

What: Live music, Blue Mountain Ranch Rodeo, a semi-truck contest and a light show

When: Aug. 26-27

Where: Union County Fairgrounds, La Grande

More: Visit www.eocountrymusicfest.com for full details, including performers, schedule and tickets.

kept coming. Hampton raised around \$14,000 — way more than the amount needed for the airfare.

She wanted to do something more with the money — and the Eastern Oregon Country Music Festival was born.

The inaugural event was held last year at the Eastern Oregon Livestock Show Grounds in Union. In spite of poor weather, Hampton said the first year was a big success and an estimated 200 people attended.

After the first festival, Hampton received a lot of interest from other people looking to get involved the following year. This helped the festival grow into a more all-encompassing event, and Hampton is working to ensure it continues to evolve in the coming years.

In addition to a new venue — the Union County

Fairgrounds, La Grande — this year the festival also includes the Blue Mountain Ranch Rodeo, a semi-truck contest and a light show. Hampton hopes that the variety of events at the festival will help her reach a larger audience.

"We've been able to incorporate three different events into one," she said.

The 2022 festival will be twice the length of the inaugural event — two days filled with country music performances and fun for the whole family. Hampton applied for grant funding, which stipulated the event was at least two days long. This requirement is part of the reason for the move to the Union County Fairgrounds. According to Hampton, the EOLS committee did not want to host a multi-day event or the rodeo at the fairgrounds.

So far, Hampton said that

she has sold more than 290 tickets and 135 VIP passes. Tickets can also be purchased at the door.

As if creating a brand-new music festival for the people of Union County was not enough, Hampton also wants to give back to the community. The proceeds from the event will be donated to Veterans Back 40 Adventure — a nonprofit organization led by veterans that aims to provide support and camaraderie to other veterans through outdoor activities, mainly off-road motorcycle riding.

In the future, Hampton wants to donate to additional nonprofits, particularly one that helps children. She would also like to get school districts involved, so that they can raise money at the festival.

It was important to Hampton that the festival was family friendly. Many of the events — like the rodeo and semi-truck contest — are happening earlier in the day. Musical performances start at 6 p.m. — early enough for families with children to enjoy — and continue late into the night on Aug. 26 and 27.