

Don't forget to vote!



(Photo by Dan Mancuso, Illinois Valley News)

Cave Junction resident Lisa Richardson dropped a ballot in the city of Cave Junction ballot box located at City Hall, 222 Lister Street Tuesday, May 12. Ballots must be in before 8 p.m. Tuesday, May 19 if you want your vote to count.

Bookkeeping battle loses board member

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On April 5, Illinois Valley Fire District (IVFD) Commissioner Gary Price tendered his letter of resignation. A Valley resident since 1994, Price was appointed by the IVFD Board of Commissioners in 2017, after a time of turmoil for the district, and elected to the same position by the voters in May 2019. "I was appointed in hopes of contributing some stability to the board and the business of the district. I wanted to see this accomplished and I believe that it was," said Price. Until his resignation he served as board secretary and vice president as well.

The trouble leading up to his resignation began after a request to review a copy of the bookkeeping files. Price, with 20 years in the Navy and 25 years of business experience involving management and accounting, was surprised when the request was denied. He believed his duties as an elected board member included oversight of district affairs such as fiscal expenditures and accounting. He was told that the information he was asking for was not necessary to his duties.

SEE FIRE ON A-2

JoCo could enter Phase 1 of reopening May 15

CJ Schatza
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The era of COVID-19 is in full swing, and it's been one of the most terrifying and economically devastating periods of time the world has seen in generations. Around two months have passed since Oregon Governor Kate Brown declared a statewide emergency, which was soon followed by a stay at home order issued to slow the spread of the virus. While some studies have shown that the restrictions made an impact on the spread, they have also put immense stress on business owners, employees, and the economy at large, so it's no wonder that Josephine County is actively planning to reopen.

On Thursday, April 30, county officials, including the Board of Josephine County Commissioners, met on video conferencing service Zoom to discuss and review the proposed plan. "This was a bit of an ordeal to pull together," said Josephine County Public

Health Director Michael Weber. "The roughly 17-page document was really compiled primarily over a two-day period of time so before we really jump into the meat of it I want to point out that this is a living document, so we're expecting this to change as we move throughout this incident but at present, this is the version we're looking to push forward up to the state."

The proposal, entitled, "Josephine County COVID-19 Reopening Plan," was prepared in accordance with the governor's Public Health Framework for Reopening Oregon. As Weber said, the plan is being handled as an adaptive management plan/ living document, meaning that as information about the virus is made available, or state or Federal guidelines are issued, the plan will be reviewed and amended as needed. Stated under the plan's overview, "Josephine County is committed to an evidence-based reopening strategy that considers the immediate and long-term health and welfare of our community members. We recognize the sacrifice of community

members, businesses, first responders, and healthcare workers throughout this event; it is imperative that our strategy to reopen is deliberate, thoughtful and inclusive.

"This Reopening Strategy Plan outlines the efforts, actual and planned, of healthcare system partners and Josephine County Public Health to respond to the COVID-19 crisis." The plan is composed of three major sections: 1) Gating Criteria; 2) Core Preparedness; and 3) Phased Reopening Plan. If these standards have been met by Josephine County, which the plan claims is the case, the county will be eligible to enter Phase 1 of reopening Friday, May 15, the earliest possible date, which other rural counties expect to start opening on as well.

Gating criteria consist of three elements: symptoms, cases and hospital capacity. Symptoms of patients are monitored by JoCo Public Health using 911 call data and American Medical Response (AMR) data, by tabulating counts based on call type or encounter type (i.e. difficulty breathing

or influenza-like symptoms). To meet this criterion, COVID-related symptoms would have to be on a downward trajectory over the course of 14 days. According to JoCo Public Health, this is the case for Josephine County.

Similar to symptoms, confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the county have been decreasing over a two-week period. From mid-March to mid-April, 19 cases were reported, including one fatality, and at least 10 of these have since recovered. Since then, there was a two-week period with no new cases, and less than half a dozen new cases have been confirmed from late April until now. Hospital capacity is anticipated to be capable of meeting projected surge demand. Additionally, a robust testing program is in place for healthcare workers and high-risk individuals, utilizing two separate specimen collection sites. This means that all three gating criteria have been met by Josephine County.

SEE COVID ON A-8

County plans reopening, but safety still priority

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(Note: The following is a partial list of guidelines derived from state reopening guidance provided by the Oregon Health Authority. For the full list and more information, visit <https://govstatus.egov.com/OR-OHA-COVID-19>)

As Josephine County moves into Phase 1 (which is slated to begin May 15) of a three-phase reopening plan lifting social distancing regulations put in place to slow the spread of COVID-19, general guidelines for citizens have been provided. You've likely heard some of these before:

- Stay home if you are sick or a member of a vulnerable population (e.g. over age 60 or immunocompromised) and if you become symptomatic in public, immediately self isolate, return home and contact your medical provider
- Practice common courtesy

in the form of washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (or using hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available); coughing or sneezing into your elbow; not touching your face; and keeping at least 6 feet between you and persons not residing in your household

- Have a cloth or paper face covering in your possession when in public and wear it at appropriate times, such as when it is impossible or difficult to maintain social distancing
- Avoid overnight trips and other non-essential travel; travel the minimum distance needed to obtain essential services; and avoid traveling further than 50 miles from home

In terms of public institutions that may be more vulnerable to COVID-19, the county has taken various measures out of an abundance of caution:

- Long term care facilities have been provided with clear guidance

and advice on when to contact Josephine County Public Health for potential or suspected COVID-19 cases and outbreak

- Josephine County is contracting with a locally owned hotel to provide isolation housing for individuals or family units (including those experiencing homelessness) where one or more person with suspected (rule-out) or confirmed COVID-19 being discharged from the hospital may be lodged to create social isolation
- The Josephine County Warming Shelter in Grants Pass, run by United Community Action Network, will continue to comply with recommendations produced by OHA
- Josephine County Transit has implemented a comprehensive bus cleaning schedule which conducts spot cleaning between routes, as well as a complete bus cleaning each evening after operation. Additionally, all drivers and passengers are required to wear a face mask

anytime they are on the bus

- Josephine County fully supports and recognizes the need for an escalation plan to re-implement closures or other restrictions in the event there is a resurgence in cases. The Josephine County Incident Management Team will remain activated to monitor cases and trends in order to respond quickly in the case of a resurgence, with support from other community partners

Phase 1 reopening will impact restaurants, personal services, retail, child care, transit and outdoor recreation. The following are recommendations for the owners of such businesses:

- **Restaurants/Bars/Breweries/Tasting Rooms**
- Ensure tables are spaced at least 6 feet apart. Otherwise, it may operate only as a pickup/to go service
- Limit number of customers on premises at one time, with a maximum restaurant occupancy of 50% of normal capacity as long as

physical distancing requirements can be maintained

- Minimize employee bare-hand contact with food through use of utensils. For Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA)-licensed facilities, no bare-hand contact with food is permitted per their licensing requirements. Reinforce meticulous hand hygiene
- Have employees wear gloves when performing cleaning, sanitizing, or disinfecting activities. Use non-latex gloves and prevent cross-contamination by replacing gloves after touching faces or changing tasks (e.g., food preparation vs. taking out garbage)
- All on-site consumption of food and drinks, including alcoholic beverages, must end by 10 p.m.
- Prohibit customer self-service operations, including buffets, salad bars, soda machines and growler refilling stations

SEE SAFETY ON A-3