

Emergency declaration ends, but COVID still a threat

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For nearly five months, Josephine County has been under a state of emergency as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This came to an end July 22, when the Board of Josephine County Commissioners voted to terminate the designation at a weekly business session (WBS).

JoCo Emergency Manager Sarah Rubrecht was available to explain exactly what this means.

“We implemented the emergency declaration to allow us to shift roles of county staff to address the immediate needs of the event,” Rubrecht remarked, reading a prepared statement authored by Public Health Director Michael Weber. “Additionally, it allowed us to use existing contracts for medical care in different ways. As we no longer need to do these things, the declaration does not serve an operational purpose for us locally, and as such, should be terminated.”

The emergency declaration’s termination does not mean that COVID-19 is not still a factor, as cases continue to rise and masks are mandated in all public places. Public health officials still recommend people continue to follow social distancing and hygiene guidelines put in place to safeguard the health of your friends, family and neighbors.

Rubrecht pointed out, “Although we are proposing to terminate the declaration of emergency, that does not mean that we are out of an emergency situation in our county. It just means that we don’t need the administrative function of a declaration at this time.” She added that the county can still reenact an emergency declaration if such a measure needs to be taken.

Earlier in the meeting, a grant agreement with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for runway rehabilitation at the Illinois Valley Airport, as well as relocation of the north connector taxiway and holding apron was considered.

Josephine County Airports Director Larry Graves was present at the session to explain the

grant. He said that the grant offers over \$3.6 million in funding.

Graves elaborated, “This one happens to be the largest – dollar-wise – grant that we have ever received from the FAA. And it’s nice to be able to improve the facilities at the Illinois Valley and the Illinois Valley Airport with that money.” He added that all necessary steps on the federal government’s part had been completed pertaining to the grant, so pending the board’s approval, the grant would get the green light. Graves urged the commissioners to approve it, because it is important that the project is completed before winter weather becomes a factor.

The week prior, the board voted to appoint Daniel J. Mancuso to the Illinois Valley Airport Advisory Board (IVAAB) for a four-year term, set to expire July 15, 2024. Commissioner Dan DeYoung, the board’s liaison to the IVAAB, said, “I’d like to welcome Mr. Mancuso to that IV Airport board... I think he’s going to be a really good fit, because he is from the Valley out there... So, glad Dan’s on board.”

Also included as part of the board’s administrative actions was renewal of an agreement with the city of Cave Junction for a contract deputy. According to DeYoung, the agreement will extend for one year pending board approval. “The sheriff will provide 40 hours a week of patrol coverage in the city of Cave Junction,” he added. “The city of Cave Junction will in turn pay the sheriff’s office \$168,484 for the period of one year.” This arrangement, DeYoung said, started in 1993 and has been renewed every year without fail.

DeYoung commented, “It’s really worked out well for the city of Cave Junction, and as patrol’s been stepping up, Commissioner Fowler, myself, and Commissioner Morgan, we go out to Cave Junction quite a bit, and it’s amazing how many police cars you see coming and going from out there.”

Both administrative actions were approved by the commissioners.

Under the board’s consent calendar, an intergovernmental lease for the Cave Junction

Sheriff’s Office substation was considered. “The sheriff’s office rents out about 1,850 square feet of office space in the Cave Junction City Hall building,” DeYoung explained. “The office space is used by the deputies when they are assigned to the Illinois Valley area. The lease agreement has been in place since July of 2014 and has been renewed each year. This agreement is to extend the lease to June 30, 2021. The lease amount for this agreement to be paid is \$4,320 for that fiscal year.”

Another intergovernmental agreement was considered in the form of the Southern Oregon Seismic Bridge Retrofit with the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). JoCo Public Works Director Rob Brandes chimed in via Zoom to explain said agreement. He updated the commissioners on the timeline of the retrofitting project; specifically, that ODOT is now looking at getting the project underway in late 2021 rather than early 2021.

“They’re going to be doing a technique they call micropiling, and these are effectively smaller – like 6-12 inch – steel casings that they grout in place,” Brandes added. “That’s going to make it a bit slower process and they were just concerned that the timing was going to be a bit rushed.” He concluded that these bridge retrofitting projects being delayed for Interstate 5 would not affect current timelines for other public works projects slated for the Grants Pass area.

The entire consent calendar was moved forward by the board, with not a single vote against this course of action.

During requests and comments from citizens, Grants Pass resident Sharon Martin bashed Oregon Governor Kate Brown. Referring to her as “Comrade Brown,” Martin implied that the governor does not care about her constituents. “I strongly suggest that you call her on lawlessness,” Martin implored the commissioners. “It seems to me that people that appease lawlessness, ignoring it, get into big trouble.” Tearfully, she went on, “I love my God. I love my family, my country, my state.

And I’ll be damned if I will stand by and let that wicked, unhinged woman wreck my state.” Her comments suggest that Mrs. Martin is not a Kate Brown supporter.

Commissioner DeYoung is not one either. He responded to Martin by saying, “She’s (Brown) going to give a press conference – another one – and I’m going to suggest to her that her press conference doesn’t mean much to me unless she does it from in front of the Federal building tonight between 10 and 12.” He was referring to the location of an ongoing confrontation between protesters and federal forces, which has captured the attention of the entire nation. “I’ve been there,” DeYoung added. “I’ve testified in that federal building... It’s a beautiful section of Portland, but now it’s a war zone.”

Commissioner Fowler got in on the criticism of Brown as well, saying, “The governor has done some overreach of her powers and a lot of counties are considering what could be said, done, or, if there’s a court process that would work to change that... I just wish that the state would follow through on their statement, that it’s going to be based on facts and science. Because right now it’s based on politics.”

Fowler continued, “This stomping on our constitutional freedoms and cherry-picking what you think is good; like, oh, it’s okay to peacefully protest, which turned into violent protests, which turned into spreading the virus around the state as those people moved around from city to city to try and incite people to violence, at least to protest. And, when that happened, you said, ‘Oh, that’s their First Amendment right to express themselves.’ And I’m like, ‘Well, that same First Amendment says I have the freedom to assembly.’ So you’re cherry-picking what you like in the first paragraph, and not taking the whole.”

View the July 22 WBS by visiting the county’s official YouTube channel. Email bcc@josephinecounty.gov to submit written comments you’d like the commissioners to read aloud at a future session.

Illinois Valley Airport receives promised \$3M runway grant

Josephine County Airports received a long-anticipated grant offer of \$3,006,000 from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Monday for the rehabilitation of the 5,000-foot-long runway 18-36 at the Illinois Valley Airport south of Cave Junction.

On Wednesday the Josephine County Commissioners voted to accept this grant, which will pay 100% of all costs associated with this

project. Normally the county would have to supply a 10% match, in this case \$300,600, but due to the 2020 CARES Act financial assistance provided to the Federal Aviation Administration for small airport relief due to the COVID shutdown, Josephine County’s match requirement has been eliminated for this project only.

Knife River Materials LLC was the winner

of the competitive project bids opened March 31, 2020. Precision Approach Engineering (PAE) of Corvallis, Oregon will be supplying all services during construction to manage the regulatory tasks, quality control and other requirements that must be met per the FAA, ODA, ODOT, DEQ, USACE, and other agencies.

Construction is anticipated to begin in late August and should be completed within

90 days of start. Josephine County Airports has worked with its consultant PAE and the FAA to design a project that will allow use of the airport with reduced runway lengths throughout most of the construction project. This has been done in order to accommodate the flight school, flying club and aircraft maintenance and repair businesses that operate on the field.

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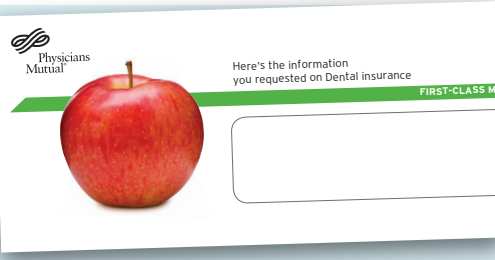
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