

Gov. Brown outlines a framework for reopening

By **DICK HUGHES**
Oregon Capital Bureau

Reopening Oregon businesses will occur “gradually, carefully and incrementally,” Gov. Kate Brown said Tuesday, but she refused to say when that might happen.

“It will not be easy. It will take longer than we want,” she said.

Brown and health officials held a press conference to announce her framework “for restarting business and public life in our state — how we’re going to approach reopening Oregon” from the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We have to be cautious or it will backfire,” Brown said. “We know that a vaccine or an effective treatment may yet be months away. And if we move too quickly, we will see a spike in cases that could lead to an overwhelmed hospital system and unnecessary deaths.”

Geography may be one consideration for when businesses can reopen. Some rural areas have had few confirmed cases, and none have been reported in Baker, Gilliam, Harney, Lake and Wheeler counties.

Contacted later, a member of Brown’s recently formed Medical Advisory Committee said the governor was emphasizing the right approach.

“This is not going to be over soon,” said Dr. Bob Dannenhoffer, the Douglas County health officer. “So anybody who thinks that, like by May 1, everything will be back to normal, they really are not looking carefully at the data. The data would suggest that until we get a good and effective vaccine — and we don’t



Beth Nakamura/The Oregonian
Gov. Kate Brown issued a framework Tuesday for how she plans to reopen Oregon amid coronavirus risks.

know when that’s going to be — life in the U.S. and life in the world is going to be radically altered.”

Dannenhoffer said physical distancing and staying home when sick would be key preventive measures for at least a year, and Oregon has been doing what it should. Oregon has one of the lowest per capita rates of coronavirus infection, he said, “Certainly better than all the states around us.”

Brown said businesspeople and health professionals would be brought together to discuss how to gradually reopen restaurants, retailers, child care and personal services such as hair and nail salons. “For example, this might include additional guidelines for reconfiguring the delivery of services with additional physical barriers like plexiglass dividers, or requirements for wearing PPE,” she said.

She promised “a science-driven process” based on several conditions: slowing the growth

of COVID-19 cases, having more personal protective equipment, increasing test capacity, establishing a robust system for tracking who has been exposed to the coronavirus, and ensuring effective isolation and quarantine for people who test positive, including nursing home residents and homeless people.

The state’s latest modeling projections are that COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations would remain steady through mid-May, but would shoot up if regulations were eased.

Neither Brown nor Dr. Dean Sidelinger, the state health officer, would specify a date for potentially relaxing business restrictions and social distancing requirements.

Much has yet to be determined. Brown said epidemiologists and her Medical Advisory Committee were working on the appropriate metrics for evaluating the state’s progress.

The state does not know how much personal protective equipment is needed, including having sufficient gear for physicians and dentists to resume elective surgeries and other procedures, or potentially to protect employees in personal-service jobs.

More testing capability also is needed, enabling at least 15,000 Oregonians a week to be tested, according to Sidelinger. Even then, not all Oregonians will be tested for COVID-19. And contact tracing of Oregonians will require a vast number of additional workers, including more epidemiologists.

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The Astorian

The May 10 start of the Astoria Sunday Market, which draws hundreds of vendors and thousands of people each year, is being delayed indefinitely by the coronavirus pandemic.

Market: Gathering restrictions in place

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The four to seven markets Packer Orchards sells at each week in normal peak season represent the biggest portion of the company’s sales, said co-owner Rochelle Packer. The company has been at the Astoria Sunday Market for 15 years.

“It means the world to us,” she said of going to markets. “We’re able to rehire some of our employees now that we have a little bit more of a wider range of area to sell our products. Our store here in Hood River is also closed.”

Market vendors around the region are on the edge of their seats waiting to see which spring markets will have a presence, Packer said.

Brown said the state needs more robust coronavirus testing and enough available hospital beds before she will consider lifting the restrictions placed on gatherings.

Mudge said she worked with the Clatsop County Public Health Department to create an event that would meet social distancing guidelines and the ban on gatherings. Each vendor

at the pop-up market will have an employee designated as a social distancing officer, and the market will have sanitation stations.

Kingfisher Farms will prepackage its produce to limit touching.

Mudge doesn’t foresee the pop-up market having enough demand to grow much beyond five or six vendors, although the park-

ing lot could accommodate up to 30 based on social distancing rules.

She had big plans for the 20th anniversary of the market that she said were dashed by the coronavirus.

“But we may end up having an authentic anniversary in that the first year’s didn’t start until July,” Mudge said with a chuckle. “And it had only 30 booths.”

McKenzie: Grew up in Astoria

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shelter to maintain good hygiene.

The county has quarantined three homeless people who displayed symptoms of the coronavirus at local hotels and tested them for the disease. All three tests came back negative, McNickle said.

For those who knew McKenzie and his girlfriend, Gail Griffey, 72, who died on the streets of Astoria in December, McKenzie’s death is a sad conclusion to a story no one could figure out how to rewrite.

The couple lost their housing in 2018 and had been visibly homeless downtown ever since. Griffey’s death was a shock and led many advocates and social service providers to question what more they could have done to get her and McKenzie back into housing.

The couple resisted efforts to help them, often cheerfully throwing questions of concern back at the people offering them assistance.

“Charlie was a proud person,” said Kenny Hansen, the homeless liaison officer for the Astoria Police Department. “He was an independent person. (He) was a person who wanted to make his own way in the world, with-

out help, really. He wasn’t someone who always had a hand out. He wanted to do things for himself, in his own way.”

Hansen had gotten to know Griffey and McKenzie over the years. He does not know what more anyone could have done to help them. McKenzie had picked up a variety of odd jobs and worked sometimes at Vintage Hardware downtown.

“It’s frustrating sometimes when people don’t want to accept the services. But at the same time you need to respect their decision, as well,” Hansen said. “It’s their life. It’s their decision.”

McKenzie grew up in Astoria but does not appear to have any family left on the North Coast. A local person is hoping to provide for funeral arrangements, Astoria Police Chief Geoff Spalding said.

Friends remember McKenzie as a kind man who struggled with alcohol.

“He was always in denial,” said David Neikes, who was part of the same high school graduating class as McKenzie. But, he added, “he’s a sweet boy, had a good heart.”

He was musically inclined. When Griffey was alive, the couple fre-

quently ate meals at the Astoria Warming Center, a seasonal emergency shelter based out of First United Methodist Church. McKenzie would often sit down at an old upright piano in the basement and play songs and sing. He’d tell stories about being a studio musician in Hollywood.

“I never heard him say a cross word about anybody,” said Paul Tuter, the co-owner of Vintage Hardware.

Tuter met McKenzie when the store was still located on the bottom floor of the Astor Building. McKenzie and Griffey lived in an apartment above. After the store moved locations and McKenzie became homeless, he would work occasionally for Tuter, helping out when needed.

“He just became part of the family,” Tuter said.

Griffey’s death hurt. Tuter saw the toll it took on McKenzie. In the months after his partner died, McKenzie “went downhill really hard,” Tuter said.

Warming center volunteers noted that McKenzie hardly ate anything anymore. After Griffey died, McKenzie started to spend nearly every night at the shelter. He told Tuter he was getting too old for a life on the streets.

Tuter broached the idea of checking in with Clatsop Community Action to search for housing, but in many ways, Tuter said, “I don’t think he had the ability to follow through with that and he’d lose his sorrow in alcohol.”

Annie Martin, the president of the warming center’s board of directors, believes one reason McKenzie didn’t seek out assistance was because he always looked for the good. He’d reason to himself, to Martin and to others who asked, “Oh, I have it better than a lot of other people.”

“And they needed those things more than he did,” Martin said. His mantra was “Everybody counts.”

A warming center volunteer commented on Facebook that she would miss his music and his “hilariously awful” jokes. She recalled one time when he watched her break down boxes early in the morning at the shelter.

“Hey,” he quipped, “you’re wrecking the affordable housing!”

“It’s always difficult when we lose somebody on the streets,” Hansen said. “For me, it’s tough because I’ve become friends with a lot of the homeless and bonded with them. It’s losing a friend is what it is.”



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Helping Hands has a shelter in Uniontown.

Nonprofits: 1,663 cases of the virus in Oregon

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Terri Steenbergen, the executive director of The Harbor, said the agency appreciates the county’s dedication to supporting victims of domestic abuse.

“Things are changing so rapidly at the moment, including the way that we are able to interact with clients and provide our ser-

vices, so it really allows us to really focus on supporting survivors,” she said.

The Oregon Health Authority reported 1,663 cases and 58 deaths from the coronavirus statewide as of Wednesday morning.

The health authority tracked 291 test results in Clatsop County as of Wednesday, including six positive cases.

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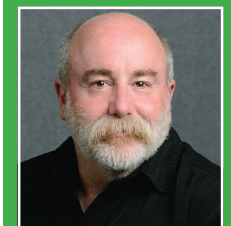


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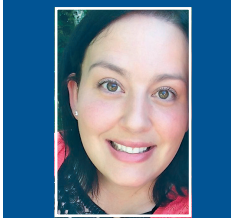


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