

MARIJUANA: Voter turnout will likely be higher during presidential election

Continued from 1A

voted against legalizing recreational marijuana. Kirwan said turnout will likely be higher during a presidential election and when there is a local marijuana issue on the ballot.

Mayor David Drotzmann questioned why the city even needed a vote when the council had already voted last year to prohibit any land use that doesn't comply with federal law. But city manager Byron Smith said staff felt that as more states legalize marijuana use the federal government could decide to legalize the drug, which would open the door

for dispensaries.

"This is a second layer of protection," he said.

The council voted unanimously for staff to start drafting a ban on marijuana-related businesses. Later in the process, after the city has taken input through public hearings, the council will vote whether to approve the ordinance themselves or put it before the voters. If the voters are allowed to decide in November 2016, no dispensaries will be able to set up shop before the vote.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

GOLDEN: Capps will work to improve Oregon's abysmal high school graduation rate

Continued from 1A

son's concert in Eugene.

He praised Golden for stabilizing a position that was shaken by the sudden departure of her predecessor, Rudy Crew, who left amidst accusations of excessive travel.

"She has the ability to command a room in a non-threatening way," he said.

The Legislature created the chief education officer job four years ago at then-Gov. John Kitzhaber's request to streamline the education system from preschool through college and improve student achievement.

As her successor, Capps will be tasked with continuing the focus on improving education from "cradle to career," including Oregon's abysmal high school graduation rate.

While his tenure was still hours old, state Republicans sent out a press release referring to Capps as "a former teachers' union leader and longtime lobbyist and bureaucrat."

"Oregon's education system is in trouble. For too long, the same entrenched interests and individuals have embraced the status quo and failed to help Oregon students reach their potential," House Republican Leader Mike McLane, R-Powell Butte, said in a

statement.

Conversely, Brown's statement praised Capps, who also previously served as Golden's chief of staff.

"Lindsey has been an integral part of developing our education strategy moving forward and will play a key role in implementing investments made in the 2015 session that support excellent teaching and learning and improve high school and college graduation rates," Brown said.

While the governor's permanent appointment for the position is not yet known, Mulvihill said Golden's longterm successor should expand students' experiences beyond standardized testing and better integrate activities like art and outdoor school.

This is the second major shakeup at a top-level statewide education position.

Former state deputy superintendent Rob Saxton resigned in April to take a job as the superintendent Northwest Regional Education Service District. Brown appointed Higher Education Coordinating Commission administrator Salam Noor to replace him.

Information from the Associated Press was used in this report.

Contact Antonio Sierra at asierra@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0836.

FORESTS: Canyon Creek fire is 29 percent contained

Continued from 1A

cific projects to watershed health, such as planting new trees, and repairing infrastructure including bridges and culverts.

Forest Supervisor Steve Beverlin said the planning is done in conjunction with Grant County and local property owners. The BAER team has already started discussing what projects will look like along Canyon Creek to minimize the fire's impact.

"It outlines the actions we're going to do, and where, and when, and who's going to do them," Beverlin said.

The Forest Service expects to have the Canyon Creek BAER finished within 30 days of when the blaze is fully contained. As of Monday, the Canyon Creek Complex is 73,210 acres and 29 percent contained.

Once foresters are able to access the fire area, Beverlin said they expect to find little vegetation left on the steep hillsides to soak up spring rain snowmelt. Without that natural cover, water flows down into the creek as if it's coming off concrete, washing dirt and ash into the stream and creating flooding concerns around homes.

Water quality is an important issue, since the creek is prime habitat for bull trout and steelhead, Beverlin said.

"We'll have to do a lot of upland soil stabilization work," he said. "It's our job to slow down and intercept the precipitation we get so it doesn't all come running down at once."

In addition, Beverlin said there should be some opportunities to salvage burned logs. Exactly how much will depend on the fire's final footprint.

The forest does not allow salvage logging in the wilderness areas or within 300 feet of streams. The BAER team must also discuss with the local mill in John Day, Malheur Lumber, about their capacity for new logs, Beverlin said.

"We are exploring opportunities for salvage, and there appears to be some," he said. "We're just trying to determine the appropriate places, and the appropriate amount."

Some species of animals are able to carve out habitat from burned up tree snags, Beverlin added. In particular, the Malheur National Forest has one of the most diverse groups of woodpecker species anywhere in the country, which feed on insects found in the decomposing wood.

Beverlin said the forest would like to get started with rehabilitation before the first major snow of winter, and so far they are ahead of the game. Grant County has already identified Doug Ferguson as a liaison for the group, and conversations are underway with the Blue Mountain Forest Partners collaborative group.

"I think we're being proactive," Beverlin said. "We really need to get on rehabilitation in a timely manner."

Contact George Plaven at gplaven@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0825.

EARLY: Project came in \$300-\$400K under budget

Continued from 1A

Lincoln Primary School, was excited that all the furniture and white boards were closer to the ground, making it easier for younger children to navigate the classroom.

Shellie Wyss, a veteran kindergarten teacher who previously worked for the Pilot Rock School District, observed the playground was also built for smaller children, meaning teachers don't have to restrict playground equipment that's above age level.

While there's many disparate elements to the learning center, they're all held together by the commons, which also serves as the school's cafeteria.

In addition to being a central hub for all of the learning center's tenants, the commons also provide access to the gymnasium and the library.

Learning Center Principal Lori Hale said the gym will be used for physical education as well as a venue for community events.

Although the library/media center contains the same sense of newness the rest of the learning center exudes, it also subtly nods to the early learning center's past, containing original light fixtures and windows from old Hawthorne building.

With multiple rooms throughout the facility without distinct purposes, Hale is left with a problem other school administrators would love to have — extra space.

The learning center has two spare kindergarten rooms, one of which has been designated the "Little Bucks Room," named after the learning's center's new mascot.

The Little Bucks Room has been designated for "dramatic play," which involves imagination or



Staff photo by Jonathan Bach

Daniel Garcia, of A Sharp Painter, LLC, sits on the phone in one of the Pendleton Early Learning Center's main halls Monday. Teachers and remodelers mixed in the building as they prepared for the center to open next week.



Staff photo by Jonathan Bach

Kindergarten teacher Shellie Wyss enters dates into her calendar in her new classroom. School personnel continued to move into the new Pendleton Early Learning Center on Monday.

acting.

The learning center is also unprecedented in its internal decor.

Large windows let in large amounts of natural light and bright colors are splashed across the walls, sometimes containing inspirational quotes from luminaries like Benjamin Franklin, Mr. Rogers and Dr. Seuss.

Johnson said the welcoming decorations will not only help young children

make the transition to formal education, it also welcomes in parents, who play a vital role in early childhood education.

"We're not their first teachers," she said of students. "The parents are their first teachers."

The renovated schools not only makes it easier for teachers, but for the district's central office as well.

Fishel said the school was designed to drive down maintenance and operation

"We're not (students) first teachers. The parents are their first teachers."

— Rachele Johnson, kindergarten teacher

costs, including a zero maintenance, long-lasting façade, floors that don't require waxing and energy efficient lighting and air conditioning.

Although the early learning center is almost done, the whole Hawthorne renovation project won't see completion until later in the bond process, when contractors will demolish the old district offices and create a grassy park area for the community.

Fishel said the project came in \$300,000 to \$400,000 under budget, which the district can use for other capital projects.

Contact Antonio Sierra at asierra@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0836.

RESPONSE: 12 new fires spotted on Malheur National Forest

Continued from 1A

resources battling the blaze, to the point where one firefighter succumbed to heat exhaustion. Over the next three days, the complex would swell to tens of thousands of acres and consume 39 homes in its path.

On Monday, the Malheur National Forest released a play-by-play retelling of its response between Wednesday, Aug. 12 and Friday, Aug. 14 in an effort to describe how exactly the fires bucked containment and grew into such a powerful, destructive force.

Forest Supervisor Steve Beverlin said the community had many questions about what happened during those first several days, and the Forest Service wanted to offer a sequence of the events leading up to when the fire exploded out of control.

"People just wonder how does it go from here to there," Beverlin said. "We think it's important for local folks in the community to understand the initial attack we did."

The Canyon Creek Complex started as two smaller fires burning in dramatically different terrain: the Mason Springs fire, east of Highway 395, in relatively flat ground and the Berry Creek fire in a steep, rocky portion of the Strawberry Mountain Wilderness.

Both fires started Aug. 12 following a three-day

lightning storm that swept over much of Eastern Oregon. A total of 12 new fires were spotted on the Malheur National Forest from south of Seneca to north and east of the Indian Rock area.

The Forest Service deployed one heavy air tanker, three single-engine air tankers, two helicopters, smokejumpers and rappellers, three fire engines, a 20-person hand crew, one bulldozer and two water tenders to fight the Berry Creek and Mason Springs fires. Beverlin signed off on an order granting special permission to use chain-saws for fire suppression in the wilderness area.

By Wednesday afternoon, crews had surrounded the Mason Springs fire with dozer and retardant line and felt confident enough to reassign one of their helicopters to Berry Creek, where fire activity was becoming increasingly aggressive. One firefighter had to be taken to the hospital with heat exhaustion, but has since recovered and rejoined the line, Beverlin said.

The Berry Creek fire grew to 50 acres by Thursday, Aug. 13, and burning actively to the west. Two more structure protection engines, one dozer and a five-person hand crew arrived from the Oregon Department of Forestry to get a better handle on the blaze.

Meanwhile, the 10-acre Mason Springs fire also

jumped its containment line Thursday after high winds ignited a spot fire about 400 feet away. It was at that time when a Type 3 management team assumed control of both fires, with the most difficult conditions yet to come.

"I believe we did everything we could with the resources we had available to put those two fires out," Beverlin said. "Sometimes Mother Nature has other plans, and that's what happened."

By Friday, Aug. 14 the Mason Springs had grown dramatically to 500 acres and crossed the highway toward Canyon Creek. Wind gusts picked up to 30 mph, spreading flames as quickly as sheriff's deputies could scramble to issue evacuation notices.

With both fires burning actively, the main focus became protecting homes. Fire departments from Canyon City, John Day, Dayville, Mount Vernon, Prairie City, Monument and Long Creek all responded, while the incident commander on the Mason Springs fire worked to determine which structures needed immediate protection.

Mount Vernon firefighters were assigned to guard homes up Corral Gulch and the J-Bar-L Ranch. Another spot fire erupted at Eagle Peak, further adding to the juggling act of assigning resources.

Between noon and 6

p.m., the fires had become too much and 39 homes burned to the ground.

"It's difficult," Beverlin said. "We live here, too. When things like that happen to our neighbors and our community, it's a loss that everybody feels."

Later that evening, local resources were sent home and a Type 1 management team — the most trained and highest staffed team available — was assigned to Canyon Creek. Firefighting resources remain stretched thin across the Northwest as a number of large blazes continue to burn in Oregon and Washington.

Dave Hannibal, John Day base manager for Grayback Forestry, a wild-fire and emergency services contractor, said it wouldn't have mattered how many firefighters they had available given the extremely difficult conditions.

"If we'd had 1,000 extra firefighters, we'd have only been more likely to have some serious injuries, or worse," Hannibal said. "The fire still would have claimed what it did. Our hearts go out to all who lost their homes in this fire."

Beverlin said the Forest Service will work on a plan to rehabilitate the landscape burned by the Canyon Creek Complex, and he is thankful for all the support from volunteers and the Red Cross.

Contact George Plaven at gplaven@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0825.



"Summer Days & Country Ways"

August 19-23, 2015

FAIR: www.morrowcountyoregon.com/fair



RODEO: www.morrowcountyoregon.com/fair/rodeo

Thank you Morrow County for a great 2015 fair!

To our all of our sponsors and to all the volunteers who put in countless hours to help put on a great fair for all!

Thank you Nancy Gorham, Angie Hanson, Rhonda Hamby, Rod Taylor, Pat Tolar, Zack Lantis and Barry Munkers and Ashley Jones, and to Macy Gibbs and all the 4-H Ambassadors for your hard work and help!



www.facebook.com/oregontrailprorodeo



www.facebook.com/morrowcountyfairheppneroregon