

State health agency sought to plant negative stories about nonprofit

Oregon Health Authority director approved plan, which was never acted on

By NICK BUDNICK
Portland Tribune

The government-funded public relations plan to demean a Portland-area healthcare nonprofit sounds like a toned-down mish mash of the TV series "House of Cards" and "Mad Men," but with an Oregon twist.

Among the plan's elements: Find an HIV patient to complain about lack of care at the nonprofit FamilyCare, Inc., and connect them off-the-record with a reporter, perhaps at *Willamette Week*. Get reporters to write about FamilyCare and "look for opportunities to hurt their credibility in the news." Portray the nonprofit as "more concerned with the bottom line and increasing revenues than the health of Oregonians."

And the spin doctors tasked with doing all this? Communications staff at the Oregon Health Authority, the state agency overseeing Medicaid.

The communications plan, released in response to a public records appeal by the *Portland Tribune*, was forwarded between OHA's head of lobbying, BethAnne Darby, OHA Director Lynne Saxton and others in January as a means to influence the 2017 Oregon Legislature.

The plan was prepared as FamilyCare and the state were doing battle in court over whether OHA is giving FamilyCare a fair rate of reimbursement for its care of low-income

Medicaid patients. FamilyCare is one of 16 coordinated care organizations, or CCOs, set up by state reforms to act much like insurance plans or HMOs to provide low-income patients with health care under the Oregon Health Plan. FamilyCare been the most vocal CCO, often accusing state officials of incompetence or seeking to do the nonprofit harm, including in the pending litigation. The company's critics call it excessively combative and its CEO, Jeff Heatherington, prone to hyperbole.

Asked about the plan and related documents, Oregon Health Authority spokesman Robb Cowie wrote in an email that they were intended to "sketch out a range of outreach options and messages we explored to counter FamilyCare's aggressive and often incorrect public statements. They were never formally reviewed or approved, or fully implemented."

In a Feb. 18 email, however, Saxton signaled her approval of the most aggressive draft of the plan released by OHA, saying she'd read it and there were some new developments that "will build on the already good start you have outlined."

To some extent, the plan is simply a measure of how bitter the litigation between FamilyCare and the state has become. And some aspects of the plan are standard stuff, such as correcting any "allegations and distortions" issued by FamilyCare through "prompt, informal communication with key media."

But the parts setting out detailed plans to plant negative stories about FamilyCare while disguising OHA's

role in the coverage count as highly unusual behavior, according to several current and former government communications staff interviewed by the *Portland Tribune*. It puts the state of Oregon and Gov. Kate Brown's administration in a role of trying to demean a contractor that — in theory, at least — OHA is supposed to be cooperating with to help low-income people.

Brown's office did not respond to emails and voicemails requesting comment Thursday and Friday.

Prepared in response to the litigation, the plan was intended to influence and persuade lawmakers to stay out of the legal dispute and not pass any bills supported by FamilyCare to seek modifications of the state rate process, the documents show. OHA succeeded in this regard, and a FamilyCare bill died in committee.

But not everyone thinks trashing FamilyCare was a productive approach. For instance, the state communications plan talks about working with lobbyists from other groups to spread negative stories — while, in contrast, praising Health Share of Oregon, another organization that, like FamilyCare, is part of the Oregon Health Plan and covers the greater Portland region as FamilyCare does.

If the state had come to Health Share with this plan, the CCO would have declined to collaborate in "disparaging" FamilyCare, said Janet Meyer, Chief Executive Officer of Health Share. She said "job one" in health care is taking care of patients, and demeaning those doing it "is not helpful."

Oakland officer picked as next Portland police chief

Associated Press

PORTLAND — A woman with 19 years of experience at the Oakland, California, police department was chosen Monday to serve as Portland's next police chief.

Danielle Outlaw, who has served as deputy chief in Oakland since 2013, was appointed by Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler, *The Oregonian*/OregonLive reported.

Outlaw, 41, will take command of a force that has struggled with a staffing shortage; noncompliance with a federal settlement agreement that requires changes to bureau policies, training and community engagement; ongoing controversies about the police handling of large protests; and a breakdown in trust with community members.



Outlaw

Wheeler said Outlaw shares his goals of improving relationships with Portland's communities of color, increasing diversity on the force and embracing equity.

"I have concrete goals for the Portland Police Bureau, all of them challenging to achieve," Wheeler said in a statement. "I need a partner. I need a leader. More than that, I need someone with a passion for this work who will be in it for the long haul. Danielle Outlaw is that person."

The mayor selected Outlaw from 33 candidates after a national search

that lasted less than three months and was conducted largely behind closed doors with input from a select group of community members.

"My life's passion is policing. I want to make a positive difference in the lives of my fellow officers and the residents of the community," Outlaw said in a prepared statement released by the mayor's office. "Portland is an amazing city. I am humbled by the tremendous opportunity in front of me, and am ready to get to work."

The pick ends current police Chief Mike Marshman's yearlong tenure at the helm. Former Mayor Charles Hales appointed Marshman as chief in June 2016, after former Chief Larry O'Dea retired amid a criminal investigation into his off-duty shooting of a friend during a camping trip in southeastern Oregon.

BRIEFLY

Wildfire forces closure of eclipse viewing territory

DETROIT (AP) — A growing wildfire is forcing authorities to close miles of roads, trails and mountains in north-central Oregon that was expected to be prime eclipse-viewing territory.

The Statesman Journal reports that about 180 square miles in and around the Mount Jefferson area were closed beginning Monday and will remain closed through the Aug. 21 solar eclipse, which is expected to draw tens of thousands to Oregon and perhaps many more. The area being closed is within the region where the moon will fully cover the sun.

Willamette National Forest Supervisor Tracy Beck said in a statement that "the risk is too great, and our highest responsibility must be visitor safety."

A fire in the area grew to 8 square miles Monday and is expected to continue growing.

down and interferes with sizing," crop consultant Tom Peerbolt said of the blueberries. "Fortunately a lot of the commercial folks have installed cooling systems, and they pay for themselves in an event like this."

With temperatures topping 100 in Portland and throughout Western Oregon the first three days of August, some growers ran the misters eight hours a day, Peerbolt said. He said the systems are a large infrastructure expense, but are intended to handle situations of extreme heat.

Climatologist Greg Jones, incoming director of Linfield College's wine education program, said the current heat wave is unusual for its magnitude and length, and may turn out to be Oregon's most extreme since 1981.

Vineyards could see sunburn on the fruit and dried out leaves, he said.

Man clinging to pipe near dam rescued from river

WAPATO, Wash. (AP) — A 25-year-old man who was swept down the Yakima River has been rescued near the diversion dam in Wapato.

The Yakima County Sheriff's Office says an irrigation worker heard Izack Tuinei calling for help Monday morning. Rescuers found him standing on a narrow ledge and clinging to a pipe.

Authorities say he had been there for several hours. He had been swimming earlier near a boat launch upstream.

Rescue teams from several agencies responded. Rescuers lowered a lifejacket to the man and used an inflatable raft to rescue him.

He did not have major injuries.

Farmers, vintners worry about heat damage to crops

WOODBURN (AP) — Farmers and vineyard owners in Oregon are worrying that the extensive heat wave in the state may be doing damage to their crops.

The *Capital Press* reported Monday that excessive heat can blister or sunburn wine grapes, which are still developing and won't be harvested until September. Late season raspberries may develop white dots due to sun scald and blueberries may not reach their ideal size because of a lack of water.

"The plant can't pump enough water, so it shuts

Corrections

A brief in the weekend edition of *East Oregonian* about a Realtor safety class being offered Thursday contained errors. There is a fee for the class, \$79, which is discounted for Realtor members. Members should register online at <http://bit.ly/2fo0aTo>, while non-members can call 800-252-9115 or register online at www.oregonrealtors.org.

The *East Oregonian* works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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AccuWeather.com Forecast

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
HOT	HOT	HOT	HOT	HOT
Hot and smoky with hazy sun	Very hot with hazy sun	Very hot with hazy sun	Very hot with hazy sun	Partly sunny and hot

PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST

100° 64°	101° 65°	101° 68°	100° 68°	98° 64°
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HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST

103° 62°	104° 63°	105° 66°	104° 70°	101° 69°
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ALMANAC

PENDLETON
through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	92°	66°
Normals	89°	59°
Records	110° (1898)	42° (1931)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"
Month to date 0.00"
Normal month to date 0.08"
Year to date 11.30"
Last year to date 7.27"
Normal year to date 8.03"

HERMISTON
through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	93°	63°
Normals	89°	59°
Records	106° (1972)	41° (1939)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"
Month to date 0.00"
Normal month to date 0.05"
Year to date 6.59"
Last year to date 4.94"
Normal year to date 5.97"

SUN AND MOON

	Last	New	First	Full
Sunrise today	5:47 a.m.			
Sunset tonight	8:14 p.m.			
Moonrise today	8:52 p.m.			
Moonset today	6:42 a.m.			

REGIONAL FORECAST

Coastal Oregon: Low clouds followed by some sun today; smoky.	Eastern Washington: Smoky today with hazy sun. Mainly clear tonight.
Eastern and Central Oregon: Hazy sunshine today; hot across the north and near the Cascades.	Cascades: Hazy sun and smoky today with a thunderstorm; hot. Clear tonight.
Western Washington: Smoky today; hazy sun, except low clouds followed by some sun at the coast.	Northern California: Low clouds followed by sunshine at the coast today; partly sunny elsewhere.

REGIONAL CITIES

	Today			Wed.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Astoria	72	55	pc	72	55	pc
Baker City	92	50	pc	93	49	pc
Bend	95	58	pc	95	59	pc
Brookings	65	56	pc	65	55	pc
Burns	90	51	pc	89	52	pc
Enterprise	92	55	pc	92	56	pc
Eugene	94	54	pc	95	55	pc
Heppner	97	64	pc	99	66	pc
Hermiston	103	62	pc	104	63	pc
John Day	94	64	pc	95	64	pc
Klamath Falls	85	53	pc	83	51	pc
La Grande	95	58	pc	96	58	pc
Meacham	94	54	pc	94	56	pc
Medford	98	69	pc	96	68	pc
Newport	64	52	pc	64	52	pc
North Bend	68	56	pc	67	55	pc
Ontario	97	61	pc	97	61	s
Pasco	103	61	pc	104	61	pc
Pendleton	100	64	pc	101	65	pc
Portland	93	64	pc	95	64	pc
Redmond	96	54	pc	97	55	pc
Salem	97	60	pc	97	60	pc
Spokane	95	66	pc	95	66	pc
Ukiah	93	52	pc	94	54	pc
Vancouver	94	62	pc	95	63	pc
Walla Walla	100	70	pc	100	70	pc
Yakima	102	65	pc	103	64	pc

WORLD CITIES

	Today			Wed.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Beijing	92	72	t	85	71	t
Hong Kong	93	85	t	93	84	t
Jerusalem	89	70	s	91	71	s
London	64	55	r	62	53	r
Mexico City	79	54	pc	75	56	pc
Moscow	72	55	c	73	53	c
Paris	71	54	t	70	54	t
Rome	91	72	pc	91	73	pc
Seoul	86	74	pc	91	75	pc
Sydney	65	49	s	69	48	s
Tokyo	90	81	sh	93	78	pc

WINDS

(in mph)	Today	Wednesday
Boardman	WSW 3-6	NNW 3-6
Pendleton	NW 4-8	NNW 4-8

UV INDEX TODAY

1	4	6	6	4	1
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8 a.m. 10 a.m. Noon 2 p.m. 4 p.m. 6 p.m.
0-2, Low 3-5, Moderate 6-7, High; 8-10, Very High; 11+, Extreme
The higher the AccuWeather.com UV Index™ number, the greater the need for eye and skin protection.

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NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY

Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day.

National Summary:

Showers and storms will raise the isolated flooding risk in the South Central and Southeastern states today. Storms will dot the Rockies as a heat wave continues in the Northwest. The Northeast will dry out.

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 109° in Needles, Calif. **Low 28°** in West Yellowstone, Mont.

NATIONAL CITIES

	Today			Wed.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Albuquerque	88	67	s	92	69	s
Atlanta	78	70	t	80	70	t
Atlanta City	79	64	pc	80	61	s
Baltimore	80	59	pc	82	59	s
Billingham	85	56	pc	79	54	pc
Birmingham	79	72	t	81	72	t
Boise	94	66	pc	93	66	s
Boston	72	61	pc	82	64	s
Charleston, SC	85	71	t	82	73	t
Chicago, IL	83	62	s	83	65	pc
Cleveland	78	59	s	83	61	s
Dallas	90	74	pc	92	76	pc
Denver	79	55	pc	78	54	pc
Detroit	83	60	s	85	63	pc
El Paso	94	72	s	95	75	s
Fairbanks	76	54	pc	79	57	pc
Fargo	84	58	pc	80	58	t
Honolulu	88	76	pc	89	76	sh
Houston	90	76	t	92	76	t
Indianapolis	80	59	s	82	61	s
Jacksonville	90	75	t	89	74	t
Kansas City	79	60	pc	79	65	t
Las Vegas	105	81	s	106	82	s
Little Rock	84	69	pc	86	69	c
Los Angeles	87	66	pc	86	66	pc
Louisville	83	61	s	84	68	pc
Memphis	82	70	pc	87	72	pc
Miami	92	81	c	91	79	t
Minneapolis	82	64	s	82	66	pc
Misswaukee	83	65				