

Wildhorse expansion is on track for August completion

By **BEN LONERGAN**
East Oregonian

MISSION — Visitors to the Wildhorse Resort & Casino are one step closer to an expanded entertainment center following the completion of new parking facilities. The new parking lot, which is located on the south end of the building, makes up for spaces absorbed by the entertainment center expansion.

In a press release, Wildhorse Resort & Casino CEO Gary George explained the construction will result in an increase of nearly two hundred additional parking spaces over the previous configuration.

“In the end, we’ll have more parking than before,” he said.

While the parking lot increased in size, there are no ADA accessible parking spaces in the new lot and the only access to the building from the lot is via a flight of stairs. Mary Liberty-Traughber, a spokeswoman for Wildhorse Resort & Casino, said additional ADA spaces were added to the existing lots to make up for those lost in the expansion.

“We had to take out spots within the area that we have fenced off,” said Liberty-Traughber. “The new lot is too far away from the main entrance, so we added more spaces to the existing lots.”

Wildhorse Resort & Casino advised those who



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Signs around a new parking lot at Wildhorse Resort & Casino warn drivers that there is no ADA accessible parking available in the new lot. Drivers in need of ADA accessible parking must park at the entrance to the hotel or the casino in order to access the entertainment center and cineplex.

need ADA access to use the entrances through the hotel or casino.

The enlarged parking facilities come as contractors begin to pour concrete for the foundation of the expansion. Once it is completed next August, the expanded entertainment center will include a new food court, a children’s arcade and a bowling center as well as an expanded child care facility.

Although the vendors have yet to be decided, the new food court will feature three food vendors and a fourth storefront for some form of confectioner. According to Liberty-Traughber, the vendors will consist of a mix between outside businesses and those run by Wildhorse Resort & Casino.

The expansion will dou-

ble the size of the children’s arcade and provide more than 30 games. An expanded children’s entertainment center will take the place of the old arcade and offer hourly day care for those looking for child care while visiting the resort.

“The old arcade will go away and be absorbed into the children’s entertainment center,” said Liberty-Traughber. “The arcade will be entirely new and in a new location about double the size.”

In addition to expansions to existing resources, the new entertainment center will feature a 24-lane bowling center and private party space. The bowling center will include eight “boutique lanes” that are separate and can be reserved for private events.

Bank of Eastern Oregon announces increase in 3rd quarter earnings

EO Media Group

HEPPNER — BEO Bancorp and its subsidiary, Bank of Eastern Oregon, announced third-quarter 2019 consolidated net income of \$1,229,000 or \$1.04 per share, compared with \$1,196,000 or \$1.01 per share for third quarter 2018.

Year-to-date earnings were \$2,973,000, up 5.2% year over year, according to a press release. Total assets were up 20.4% year over year at \$483.3 million.

Net loans of \$401.5 million were up 24% from the same period in 2018, while deposits were at \$432.6 million, up 21.6% year over year.

“The expansion projects announced earlier in the year are translating into significant growth in deposits, loans and assets,” said President and CEO Jeff

Bailey. “The expansion has resulted in additional overhead costs, but these costs are now translating into increased revenue. Earnings for the quarter are up 2.76% year over year. Year-to-date results show a 5.2% increase from 2018.”

Chief Financial Officer Mark Lemmon said, “Our shareholder equity is up 9% year over year, while our book value per share is up 9.3%. Return on average assets for the quarter was 1.03% and return on average equity was 13.28% compared to 1.19% and 14.12% respectively year over year.”

Chief Operations Officer Gary Propher said there has been a tremendous reception from the new communities in Southeast Washington, and the expanded locations in Hermiston, La Grande and Pendleton have also

exceeded expectations.

“We look forward to expanding our market share across our footprint in years to come,” he said.

Bailey said the 2019 wheat harvest was at least average in most of the trade area and better than average in many regions. Cattle producers are reporting good weight gains on their calves as they come off of summer grazing, he said.

“All of these factors bode well for producers, but the volatility of input costs and commodity prices brought about by global and political pressures have swayed the commodity markets and provide an extra level of angst for our producers,” Bailey said.

“On the bright side, decent soil moisture has provided better fall seeding conditions than we have seen for a number of years.”

BRIEFLY

Pacific Power to match customer donations

UMATILLA COUNTY — Pacific Power will match up to \$144,000 in customer donations to the Oregon Energy Fund this November.

The Oregon Energy Fund is a Portland-based nonprofit that allocates money to people who need help paying their utility bills in times of financial strain. This month, Pacific Power customers will find a contribution envelope for the organization in their bill.

Customers can donate as low as a \$1 per month, and donations will go to paying utilities for someone in the same county as the donor.

Pacific Power will match each dollar with two dollars in a “two-for-one.”

“Studies have shown that more than a quarter of Oregonians struggle to pay their bills each year,” said Brian Allbritton, executive director of OEF. “(This program) helps ensure that our neighbors don’t have to sacrifice food, rent, medicine, or child care to make ends meet.”

Last year, Pacific Power donations from customers and employees helped pay for utilities at 589 homes.

A recent press release, issued by Pacific Power, said that customers who need assistance with their utilities should call Pacific Power at 1-888-221-7070 to create a payment plan or be directed to agencies that “may be able to help.”

Pendleton honey takes 3rd in state competition

PENDLETON — Honey from Blue Mountain Apiary of Pendleton took third place at the fall conference of the Oregon State Beekeepers Association.

Ron Martin of Pendleton started the beekeeping business a couple of years ago with his two sons, Elon and Devin Martin. Ron Martin went through the state association’s

class on beekeeping, and this year was Blue Mountain Apiary’s first harvest. He said he and his boys decided to enter their honey in the association’s contest at the conference Oct. 25-27 in Florence.

“We didn’t know what to expect,” Ron Martin said. “I put some honey in a couple of jars and handed it in.”

And the result was third place.

The honey scored low marks, he reported, for foam at the top of the bottles and an uneven fill.

However, he said, the Martin clan won 10 out of 10 points for bottle cleanliness, 20 out of 20 for moisture content and 20 points out of 20 for flavor.

That last one, he said, was what he was aiming for.

With one year of harvest under the bonnet, Martin said third place is pretty sweet.

Reports: U.S. launches review of China-owned video app TikTok

NEW YORK — Multiple published reports say that the U.S. government has launched a national-security review of the China-owned video app TikTok, popular with millions of U.S. teens and young adults.

The reports Friday from Reuters, *The New York Times* and others said that the interagency Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, which reviews acquisitions by foreign firms, has opened an inquiry into TikTok owner ByteDance’s 2017 acquisition of a predecessor app, Musical.ly.

Several senators have recently noted concerns about censorship and data collection on TikTok.

The Treasury Department, which houses CFIUS, said it does not comment on specific cases because the agency by law cannot disclose to the public information filed to it.

— EO Media Group and wire services

More employers offer workers help paying off student loans

By **SARAH SKIDMORE SELL**
AP Personal Finance Writer

WASHINGTON — Americans collectively owe nearly \$1.5 trillion in student loans — more than twice the total a decade ago. It’s a burden that weighs on millions of adults, shaping their life choices and often stunting their financial growth.

Now a small but growing number of employers are stepping in to help. About 8% of employers offer student loan repayment assistance in 2019, according to the Society for Human Resource Management. That’s up from 4% in 2018 and 3% in 2015.

Some experts anticipate more employers will add their own programs to help hire and hold on to a younger generation of workers that is more bogged down with debt than its predecessors and increasingly cites loan repayment assistance as a benefit they need to have.

“The burden of student loan debt has become salient and exhausting,” said Julia Pollak, a labor economist at ZipRecruiter. “It’s crushing ... there is huge demand for student loan assistance.”

In 2016-17, almost 60% of people who graduated with a bachelor’s degree took on debt and the average amount among that group was \$28,500, according to The College Board. For some who seek advanced degrees, the borrowing can grow to \$100,000 or more.

Brittany Hamilton, 27, graduated from college in 2015 with \$32,000 in debt, even though she worked full time while earning her bachelor’s degree. She went to work for Fidelity Investments shortly after graduation; a few months later the company rolled out its student loan repayment assistance program.

Fidelity developed the program after a number of employees — who were well-versed in budgeting and planning for financial goals — told CEO Abigail Johnson that they were having trouble doing the same in their own lives in large part because of student debt.



AP Photo/Orlin Wagner

In this Oct. 24, 2019, file photo, students walk in front of Fraser Hall on the University of Kansas campus in Lawrence, Kan.



Karen King
Pendleton, Oregon

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