

State: County can't defy stay-at-home order

By CAMERON PROBERT
Tri-City Herald

PASCO, Wash. — The Franklin County commissioners can't legally allow businesses to open their doors, according to the Washington state governor's office.

Businesses that are opened in Franklin County could be cited and fined, attorney Kathryn Leathers, the governor's General Counsel, wrote in a letter to the county on Wednesday.

And she said businesses cannot rely on the Franklin County commissioner's resolution to defend themselves. The decision does not apply to businesses in Pasco, Kahlotus or Connell.

"The action taken by the board of commissioners intentionally and knowingly violates an order issued by the governor pursuant to his emergency powers ... and it therefore violates state law," said the letter to the commissioners that demands they retract or rescind the resolution.

Franklin County has called a special meeting for Thursday morning to talk about the issue in a closed-door session with the county attorney.

On Wednesday afternoon, Commissioner Brad



Contributed photo

Franklin County Commissioners voted Tuesday to defy Washington Gov. Jay Inslee's stay-at-home order and reopen their county one month after Inslee announced the shutdown in light of the coronavirus pandemic.

Peck admitted voting for the resolution was a mistake because it wasn't properly vetted. He said he will ask the rest of the board to rescind the resolution.

The letter from the state came a day after the three Franklin County commissioners voted unanimously to "end recognition" of Gov.



Didier

Koch

Peck

Jay Inslee's stay-at-home order issued to slow the spread of the new coronavirus that causes COVID-19.

At the time, the commissioners defended the proclamation by saying that Ins-

ing the governor's authority to create and extend an executive order.

He said the order can either be extended by the state Legislature through concurrent resolution or, if not in session, by the leadership of the Senate and House of Representatives in writing until it can be extended through a resolution.

He admitted Wednesday that he didn't know that the Legislature had extended the order.

Commissioner Clint Didier's handwritten emergency proclamation was met with praise and anger from various sources, but it only took a few hours for the Inslee's office to push back.

David Postman, Inslee's chief of staff, told reporters later it could legally jeopardize businesses and risk people's health.

While local governments can be more restrictive than state law, they can't be less restrictive, Postman said.

Franklin County Prosecutor Shawn Sant is reviewing the legality of the proclamation.

Leathers criticized the decision, saying it simply creates more confusion, since they can't protect people from being charged with violating state law.

While local police have

been hesitant about enforcing the stay-at-home order, the governor has laid out a three-step process for enforcing the order, which starts with education, Leathers said.

However, if businesses don't comply, they could face criminal or civil charges.

Commissioner Peck responded to questions from the Herald through County Administrator Keith Johnson saying that a special meeting is scheduled for Thursday morning to talk about potential legal issues in executive session.

The email from Johnson said the board may take action after talking with its attorney.

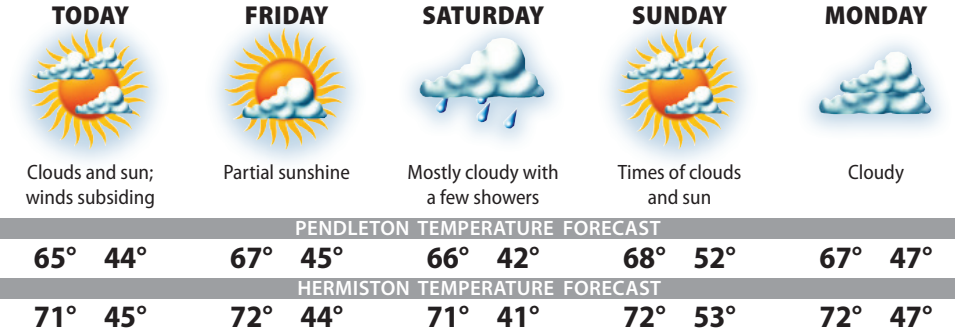
The three commissioners make up half of the Benton Franklin Health District's governing board.

Benton County commissioners have not weighed in on whether they will try to follow suit.

In a statement to the Tri-City Herald, Peck said the resolution was not "properly vetted and passed through consideration of the myriad impacts it might produce."

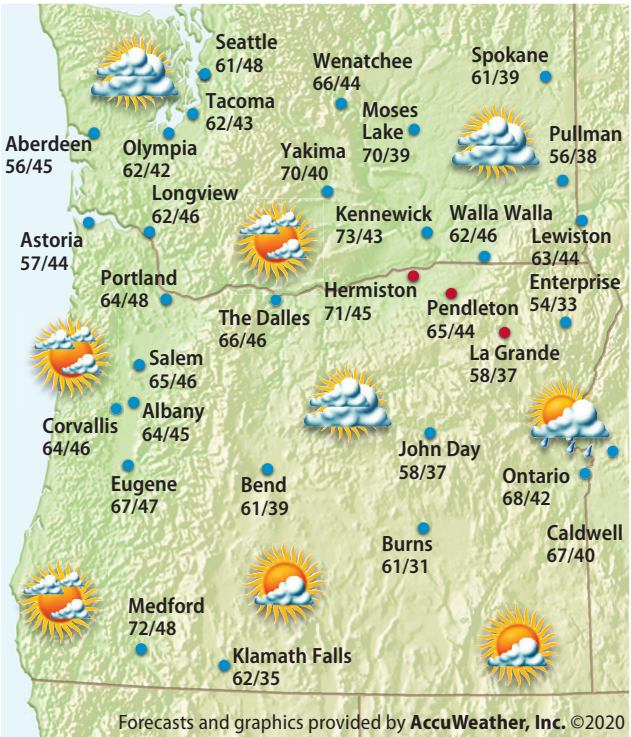
"Leading from the front on issues comes with risk," Peck said. "Leading from the back is not leadership at all. Consequently, leaders — all leaders — make mistakes."

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



ALMANAC

PENDLETON

through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.

HIGH

LOW

Yesterday

59°

41°

Normals

64°

40°

Records

95° (1934)

29° (2006)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.

0.04"

Month to date

0.07"

Normal month to date

0.86"

Year to date

5.02"

Last year to date

7.76"

Normal year to date

4.86"

HERMISTON

through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.

HIGH

LOW

Yesterday

59°

47°

Normals

66°

40°

Records

94° (1934)

25° (1951)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.

0.03"

Month to date

0.03"

Normal month to date

0.60"

Year to date

0.51"

Last year to date

3.88"

Normal year to date

3.74"

WINDS (in mph)

Today

Fri.

Boardman

WSW 10-20

WSW 6-12

Pendleton

WSW 12-25

W 6-12

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today

5:55 a.m.

Sunset tonight

7:52 p.m.

Moonrise today

6:34 a.m.

Moonset today

8:39 p.m.

First

Full

Last

New

Apr 30

May 7

May 14

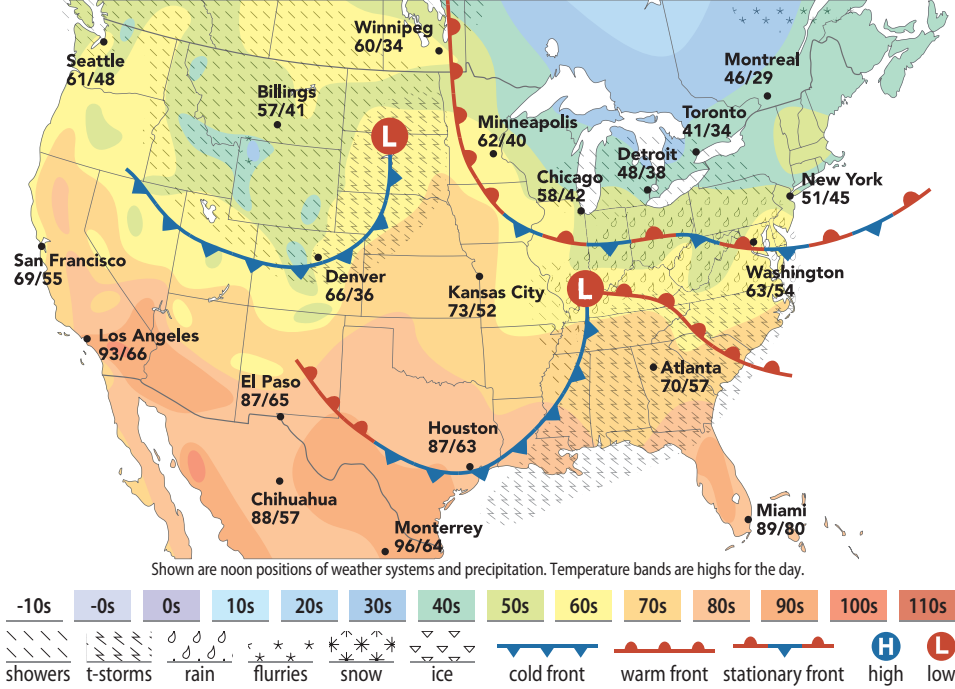
May 22

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)

High 102° in Falfurrias, Texas Low 3° in Spinich Lake, Mich.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Walla Walla's Balloon Stampede takeoff postponed until the fall

By VICKI HILLHOUSE
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

WALLA WALLA, Wash. — Walla Walla's hot air balloon festival is drifting further down the 2020 calendar.

Organizers of the Walla Walla Balloon Stampede announced Tuesday evening via social media they will again postpone the festival.

The delay is caused for the second time by the coronavirus pandemic.

First scheduled for Mother's Day weekend this year, the event was moved to June when restrictions of large gatherings were put in place. As Washington and other states continue with restrictions, the June timeline doesn't appear feasible either, organizers said.

Sponsors "are all in agreement that, as much as we would like to be flying over the skies of Walla Walla in June, the right thing to do is postpone the Stampede," the announcement said.

Instead, organizers hope

for takeoff in the fall.

Talks about a specific date will resume in a couple of months, the announcement said.

Once a fixture of Mother's Day weekend, the event was moved several years ago to October as organizers chased what they believed would be more stable weather.

Despite a good test period when the change was made permanent in 2015 and a good year for flights in 2018, poor flying conditions grounded balloons at Howard-Tietan Park the other years. Organizers planned this year to return to May for the 46th annual event.

"We really wanted to bring it back in the spring," said Scott Peters, CEO of presenting sponsor Columbia Rural Electric Association. It just "doesn't seem prudent right now," Peters continued.

"We'll do our best to make it happen in the fall because we want our communities to have a celebration when this is all over."

If timing later this year

doesn't work, Peters said it won't mark the end of the ballooning event.

"We're committed to keeping it going and bringing it back," he said.

Organizers include Laurie Spencer, a commercial pilot who co-coordinated the event with her late husband, Scott Spencer, and sponsors Columbia REA, PIFCU, Gordy's Plastics, Port of Walla Walla, AmeriGas and Townsquare Media.

"We want to see how the opening up of towns, cities and states are going as the next weeks pass and so we will be talking again in a couple of months to discuss moving the Balloon Stampede back to the fall for this year only," the announcement said.

The event draws 30 to 35 balloonists to Howard-Tietan Park for the five-day festival that includes a morning of tethered flights for children, featured event Nite Glow that illuminates the night skies with the coordinated glow of tethered balloons, and morning takeoffs.

BRIEFLY

Mandatory coronavirus testing to start at Tyson

WALLULA, Wash. — With more than 100 Tyson Fresh Meats employees infected with COVID-19, Walla Walla County health officials say they are now requiring the Wallula employer to allow them to test all employees for the coronavirus.

"This will give us a good picture of disease prevalence and will help to screen out asymptomatic cases or those who are just beginning to show symptoms," said Walla Walla County Department of Community Health Meghan DeBolt in an announcement Tuesday.

Testing of the 1,400 employees is expected to start within the next week. Afterward, every employee will be



DeBolt

required to isolate at home until test results come back, DeBolt said.

"This may require the plant to close for a day or two, depending on when the testing can take place and how long it takes to get results back," she said in a news release.

The testing is the latest step after the company was ordered to implement virus-mitigation measures.

Those measures — including providing masks to employees, installing hand sanitizer stations and more — were to have been completed by Monday.

Tyson's outbreak spans employees of at least four counties. The vast majority of those with coronavirus — 91 — live in Benton and Franklin counties. Of the infected employees, eight are residents of Walla Walla County and two live in Umatilla County, according to the most recent reports.

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