

OUR VIEW

Reopening county should be done carefully

Tuesday delivered sharp contrasts for residents of the county as local elected leaders handed over a plan to the governor to lift COVID-19 restrictions even as eight new local cases were announced.

The eight new cases push the total number for Umatilla County to 45 and is a poignant — though unpleasant — reminder that while we all want to get back to normal as soon as possible, we may not be quite there yet.

The Umatilla County commissioners made the right move by submitting its plan to reopen the county. To move forward, a good, viable plan will be necessary. The new cases, though, indicate the virus isn't fading away.

That isn't the kind of news anyone wants to hear — especially as small businesses continue to struggle under the governor's restrictions — but it's the truth, and it means that all of us should refocus on the measures required to stop the spread.

The reality is that until the county can demonstrate it has flattened the curve, a green light from the governor isn't likely.



Shoppers wearing masks depart Safeway in Pendleton in early April. The Umatilla County commissioners submitted a plan to reopen the county on Tuesday afternoon.

So that means all of us must strive to continue to exercise social distancing. We need to wear masks. We need to ignore the normal urge to push ahead and drop the precautions that are proven to stop the spread. The gover-

nor's "Stay Home Stay Safe" mandate is growing less popular every day. That's a sentiment we can all understand.

But if we reopen too early and cases spike — which, based on the new cases, is a possibility — all

the work and sacrifices we made over the past few weeks will be for nothing.

If there remains doubt regarding the best methods to overcome the virus through personal actions, residents should check out the CDC or Oregon Health Authority websites.

Impatience with the governor's restrictions is understandable. And justified. We've all been cooped up for a while now and the urge to return to a semblance of normality is growing by the day.

Elected leaders and residents of the county face a troubling dichotomy. Businesses are in trouble because of the restrictions, but at the same time cases of the virus continue to grow.

Yet, we need to remember that, collectively, we are a robust, optimistic group. As Eastern Oregonians, we face and overcome challenges daily. We are not fearful people. And we are people who can, and do, strive to do the right thing always.

We want the county to reopen as soon as possible. But we want it done in a careful, methodical manner where the risk from more exposure to the COVID-19 virus can be minimized.



YOUR VIEWS

One meeting does not constitute contact for stakeholders

I am the resident at the corner of Airport and Ott roads. I am taking an exception to the comment by Commissioner Bill Elfering in the *East Oregonian* ("Disputed land," Saturday, April 25).

Mr. Elfering stated that all concerned residents were contacted to discuss the Airport/Ott road construction. I did attend the general meeting held at EOTEC but did not have any further contact from anyone. I don't consider that meeting a contact.

On April 17, the head of the project crew from Tapani Inc. contacted me and asked if anyone had shown me where the road revision was to take place.

This was the first time I was contacted. According to his diagram, I will be for sure losing three very mature producing apple trees and a large old producing grape vine.

There will be an attempt to relocate two very mature lilac bushes from the beginning of my driveway. There is also a possibility that I may lose two more mature apple trees if they cannot withstand the excavation around them. In addition, lawn sprinklers will either be moved or capped.

I knew from the general meeting my property would probably be impacted by the revision, but not to the extent that it will be. It is very frustrating to learn of this decision without earlier knowledge. That is why I disagree with Mr. Elfering's comment.

Geraldine Jordan
Hermiston

IN MY SHOES

Community editor bids farewell

I killed my neighbor. Well, that's what her husband claimed — more about that later.

As you are aware, EO Media Group reduced its workforce last month by 18% because of COVID-19. The *East Oregonian* and *Hermiston Herald* newsrooms took a major hit — there were twice as many people when I started with the company. I have nothing but respect for those that remain who are tasked with the important job of providing accurate information during this pandemic.

My position as the community editor was one of the casualties. A week shy of my 14-year anniversary, I didn't get a chance to say a proper goodbye.

Ironically, after working 24-plus years in human services, I changed careers because of a workforce reduction. I found the learning curve included different writing styles. With clinical writing, the narrative was typically written in chronological order. However, in journalism I learned that I needed to immediately grab people's attention, urging them to continue reading (I assume you're still wondering about my neighbor's demise).

A number of people were instrumental in my success over the years. Terry Murry, the community editor when I started, was an awesome mentor. She patiently explained on more than one occasion that nonessential clauses needed to be set off with commas. Commas were pretty much nonessential in my clinical writing, which often weren't even full sentences.

In addition to a shared passion for community news, Terry and I also share the same initials. Terry thought she was losing her mind when she realized this.

While initially coordinating Your EO News, Terry asked that reporters include their initials when they added content in case she had questions. The week it was being introduced, I entered information and put "TM" next to the entry.

A couple of days later, Terry called and said, "I think I need a vacation." She was reviewing YEON and saw the ini-

tials TM, yet didn't recall ever seeing the information, much less putting it in. We had a good laugh after I said, "Ummm, my initials also are TM."

I've also worked under several capable editors and deputy managing editors, all who assisted me in honing my skills. However, it was Daniel Wattenburger who also helped fund my Pepsi addiction through our ongoing Mariners-Yankees bets.

My first couple of years in the newsroom, I had the privilege of sitting next to senior reporter Kathy Aney. In addition to being a talented writer (and awesome photographer), she's one of the most positive people I've ever been around. And she always laughed at my jokes.

And then there was E.J. Harris. A quirky curmudgeon during early morning assignments, we spent a lot of time tag-teaming on stories during my first few years with the company — him taking photos and me writing copy.

If administrative assistants are the glue in offices, then records editor Renée Struthers is the ink in the EO newsroom. While readers rarely see her byline, she's a utility player that does a little bit of everything. I greatly appreciated her calm demeanor and listening ear.

As for my neighbor I didn't really kill her. It's the most memorable error I ever made while working for EO Media Group.

While covering for Renée, I inadvertently put my neighbor's name, Sandra L. Flower, on the death notice headline for Sandra L. Fowler. Luckily, Sandra and her husband, Les, had a good sense of humor about it. The funny thing is, when I initially read the death notice my first thought was, "Dang, Sandra looked really good for her age." And she still does — from what I can tell from a distance.

Tammy Malgesini, the former *East Oregonian* community editor, enjoys spending time with her husband and two German shepherds, as well as entertaining herself with random musings.



TAMMY
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COMMENT