

Umatilla County extends emergency order to July 6

Declaration was set to expire on May 17

By ALEX CASTLE
East Oregonian

UMATILLA COUNTY — The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners

voted Wednesday to extend the county’s COVID-19 emergency declaration to July 6. The declaration, first issued by the county on March 18, was set to expire on May 17. The language in Wednesday’s extension initially would have extended the order for another 60 days to July 17, but it was

ultimately amended to match the end date of Gov. Kate Brown’s statewide order. “I’m reluctant to approve anything that goes against our previous orders of not enacting anything that goes beyond the governor’s guidelines,” said Umatilla County Commissioner George Murdock.

The county’s extension Wednesday allows the board of commissioners to keep in place temporary orders that have almost entirely closed down county buildings to the public along with issuing any additional orders as they see fit. The board of commissioners had been reluctant in March to follow with the

state’s emergency declaration until more cases of COVID-19 were confirmed, and have made it clear since that they won’t enact any additional restrictions or extend those from the state any longer than is required of them. The original statewide emergency order was issued on March 8 and

was set to expire Thursday until Brown extended it for another 60 days last week. The extension gives Brown legal authority to continue the executive orders she’s already issued — such as the stay-home order — or issue more as needed. Brown also has the authority to end the emergency order prior to July 6.



Airplanes sit, tied to the ground, on the tarmac of the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport in Pendleton on April 29, 2020. The airport was the recipient of roughly \$16.9 million in federal stimulus as a result of the CARES Act.

Council approves airport stimulus projects

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Pendleton City Council unanimously approved a plan to spend more than \$13 million at Eastern Oregon Regional Airport on Tuesday, paving the way for the airport to clear its debt and further expand its infrastructure. It had only been a week since airport staff provided a rough list of what the city wanted to spend from a surprise \$16.9 million in federal stimulus money for COVID-

19 relief, and City Manager Robb Corbett admitted that some of the proposed projects still weren’t fully fleshed out. “There’s a lot to do here without a lot of time to do it,” he said. Besides paying off more than \$2 million in longstanding debt, addressing deferred maintenance and buying new airport equipment, Corbett said time was of the essence to begin development on a new \$2.5 million flex hangar. The Pendleton airport ended up benefiting greatly

from the stimulus formula, but it may have been unintentional. Politico reported that since the stimulus formula privileged airports with relatively little debt and more cash-on-hand rather than passenger traffic, the funding favored small airports over larger ones. The FAA responded by capping grant awards to four years worth of operating expenses, but Airport Manager Steve Chrisman said the FAA hasn’t told them that there will be any changes to

Pendleton’s grant. The city is hoping to continue its run of luck in getting federal funding as it applies for a BUILD grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation. The council unanimously approved a \$2 million match for the \$25 million grant, which the city has unsuccessfully applied for twice. If approved by DOT, the city would begin making improvements to the north side of the Interstate 84 Exit 209 interchange to relieve traffic congestion in the area.

BRIEFLY

Pilot Rock man arrested on assault charges

PILOT ROCK — A Pilot Rock man is facing felony assault charges for hitting his 20-year-old grandson with a shovel on May 1. The Pilot Rock Police Department arrested Tommie David Callahan III, 67, on two felony charges, including second-degree assault and unlawful use of a weapon, and lodged him at the Umatilla County Jail in Pendleton.



Callahan

Second-degree assault is a Measure 11 crime that can carry a mandatory minimum sentence of five years and 10 months of incarceration if convicted. According to Pilot Rock Police Chief Bill Caldera, the victim took a video of the incident with his phone that captured the alleged assault. Caldera said Callahan’s charges are expected to go in front of a Umatilla County Grand Jury on Thursday to decide whether the evidence warrants an indictment. Court records show Callahan posted bail for the \$70,000 he was being held on and was released Tuesday. He is next scheduled to appear for a probable cause preliminary hearing on June 2.

Walla Walla couple rescued from snow

UMATILLA COUNTY — Umatilla County Search and Rescue, with the help of a local volunteer and members of Walla Walla County’s Search and Rescue, rescued a young married couple from Walla Walla, Washington, that got stuck in the snow Monday night, according to a press release. The Umatilla County Sheriff’s Office received a call from the couple at around 10:30 p.m. Monday stating they had driven up Government Mountain

Road earlier that evening before getting stuck, the release stated. The male reported he wasn’t dressed for the weather and he’d gotten wet trying to free their vehicle. Sgt. Dwight Johnson and local volunteer, Tom Phelan, were joined on the mission by Walla Walla County’s Dave Fessler and Daniel Ambrose. The four responded on a utility track vehicle, located the couple around 2:18 a.m., and safely transported them back to Walla Walla. “Thanks to all search and rescue volunteers who texted with their availability last night, and special thanks to Tom, Daniel and Dave for responding to the incident and ensuring we had a successful outcome,” Johnson said in a statement.

Fourth of July Parade canceled

PENDLETON — With Gov. Kate Brown extending Oregon’s state of emergency until July 6, the organizers behind Pendleton’s Fourth of July parade have decided to cancel this year’s event. Brown’s new order allows the governor to potentially extend the state’s stay-home order until after Independence Day, and with all the uncertainty, organizer Fred Bradbury said the group behind the Fourth of July parade decided to pull the plug on the 2020 event. Prior to the latest development, Bradbury said organizers had come up with an altered parade plan. Inspired by the 100 American flags that were featured during the grand entry of the Round-Up centennial, organizers wanted to feature a group of flag bearers followed by a motorcade of veterans. But Bradbury said even a modified parade would have trouble containing the crowds that would gather to watch while still maintaining social distancing rules. With the 2020 event canceled, Bradbury said organizers will begin the planning process for July 4, 2021.

— EO Media Group

City finishing up East Theater Lane paving

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Hermiston’s northeast edge is getting more shovel-ready every day as the city finishes a paving project on East Theater Lane.

The previously gravelled section of road between Northeast Eighth Street and Northeast 10th Street will reopen as a fully paved road within a few days, according to a news release, after crews finish striping the road. The road project joins water and sewer projects the city has completed in recent months to attract new housing to that section of town by reducing development costs. Paving the road’s lanes of travel was funded through money the city receives through franchise fees and the state gas tax. The developer of the nearby Cimarron Terrace housing development, which is currently under construction, paid for wider asphalt and sidewalks on the south side of the road. Mayor David Drozmann said in a statement that public investment stimulates private investment to help Hermiston grow in a sustainable way. “Housing development has been a top goal of the city council for many years, and the combination of this road, the new water tower, and the future school is the foundation of a great Hermiston neighborhood,” he said. In addition to benefit-



Photo contributed by City of Hermiston

The city has finished paving East Theater Lane between Northeast Eighth and 10th streets, adjacent to the new phase of Cimarron Terrace (right) and land for a planned new elementary school (left).

ing housing developers, the road project will be helpful when Hermiston School District builds a new elementary school along that stretch of Theater Lane. The new school is in the design phase after voters approved a school bond in November 2019. The road is 25 miles per hour for now, but will be a school zone once the school is completed. The school district partnered with the city and Cimarron Terrace to extend sewer services along Theater Lane while the paving work was going on. That sewer project pairs with a water project the city recently completed in partnership with Umatilla County, including a

new water tower on the corner of Northeast 10th Street and Punkin Center. “By coordinating the School District with Cimarron Terrace, we were able to save both significant costs by allowing them to install necessary sewer in Theater ahead of our paving,” Assistant City Manager Mark Morgan said in a statement. “This now means that we have all urban-level utilities almost a half-mile further out into our Urban Growth Area, which will make housing development substantially more affordable in the future.” To see the status of more projects in the city’s capital improvement plan, visit www.hermistonprojects.com.

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2020 BUTTE CHALLENGE 5K RUN, 5K WALK AND 10K RUN

— DATE POSTPONED TO —
Saturday, June 20th • 8:30am

All races begin & end at Butte Park

DRAWINGS!

FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!

Online registration & race information can be found at
www.ButteChallenge.com
Register online by June 6th to order a custom technical race T-Shirt.

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