

OUR VIEW

Projects are important to county

Umatilla County received some good news recently when Gov. Kate Brown's proposed budget included funding for two local projects, an indoor rodeo arena with agriculture and veterinary classrooms for Blue Mountain Community College and money to renovate the Umatilla County Jail.

Ironically, both projects already received approval from the Oregon Legislature in 2018. However, funding for both projects was tied to Oregon Lottery revenues. The COVID-19 pandemic forced most video poker machines across to state to close, and that crushed the lottery fund stream.

Area lawmakers, though, were successful in persuading the governor to add both projects back into her proposed budget. In the governor's budget, \$13.7 million is earmarked for the FARM II agriculture building for the college and \$1.8 million for the jail renovation.

Both projects are important, with, arguably, the jail renovation taking center stage because planned renovations include infrastructure for individuals dealing with mental health issues.

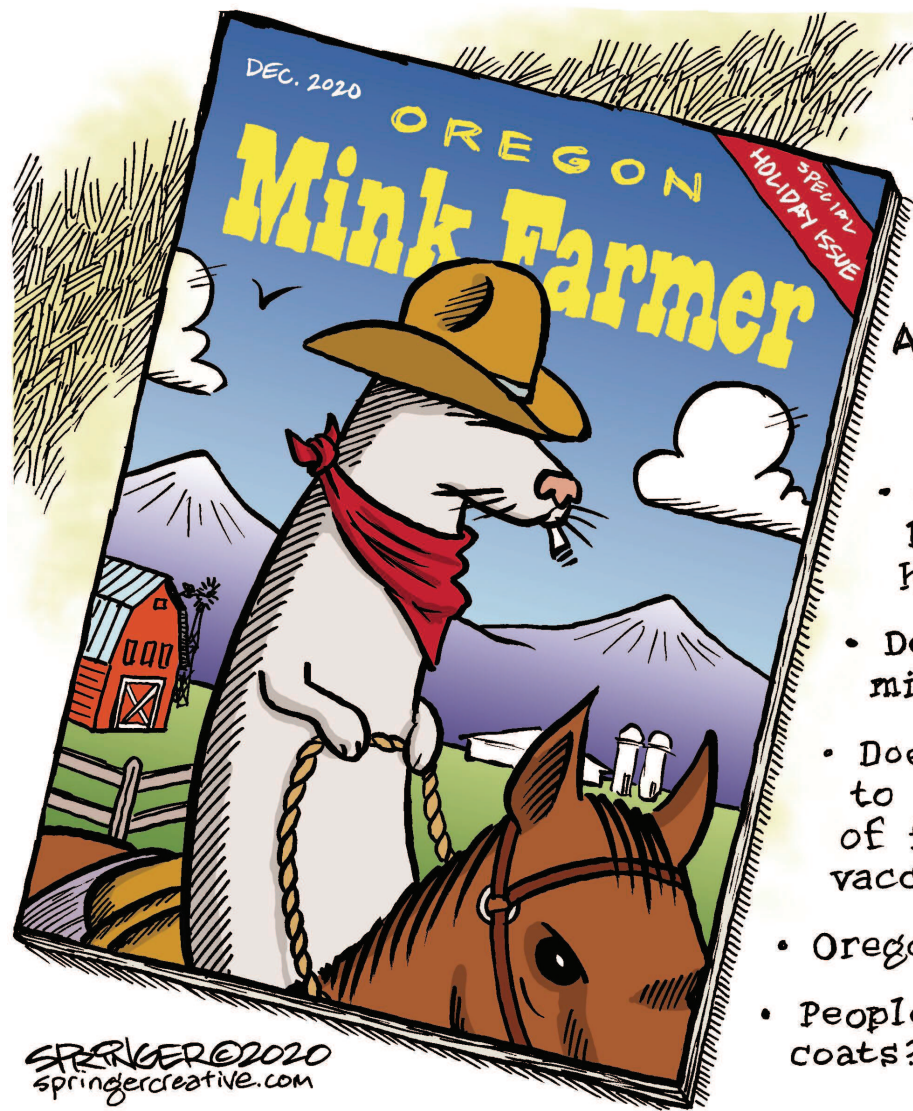
The number of people lodged in jails across the state with serious mental health issues has continued to grow for the past decade. Once seen as another arm of the judicial system, local jails have evolved into multi-use centers where often law enforcement personnel are tasked with treating people who face a bewildering array of mental health challenges. There so far has been no answer as to how to turn off the faucet regarding the number of people with serious mental health issues reaching county jails, but a renovation project — such as the one proposed for the local jail — to help an individual with mental health needs is crucial.

The college project is important as well to diversify the campus and attract more students over the long term.

The projects are now in the budget but there is no guarantee either will survive through another legislative session, though the chances are good both will. That's because, according to state Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, there is already talk among lawmakers to prioritize projects that already received approval from the Legislature.

Elected lawmakers like Hansell and Rep. Greg Smith, R-Heppner, did a good job ensuring both projects did not just fade away, but their work isn't finished.

They need to continue to push for both projects because both are important to the local area. The easy part may have been greasing the skids for the governor to put the projects in her proposed budget. The hard part will be safeguarding both projects through the next legislative session. We hope our lawmakers will continue to focus on these key projects that will help Umatilla County.



SUBSCRIBE TO
"OREGON
MINK
FARMER"
AND FIND OUT ANSWERS
TO QUESTIONS LIKE:

- Can Covid pass between minks and humans?
- Does Covid mutate in mink populations?
- Does that pose a risk to the effectiveness of forthcoming Covid vaccines?
- Oregon has mink farms?
- People still buy mink coats?

Let's find reasons to give thanks



DICK
HUGHES

OTHER VIEWS

This is the year of "for better or worse."

And despite the human ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic, Oregon has much to be thankful for.

We found that essential workers come in all types, from the nurses, doctors and technicians directly caring for COVID-19 patients, to the housekeepers and custodians diligently sanitizing hospital rooms, to the clerks keeping grocery stores humming and the truckers keeping supplies arriving.

And many more. Never again should society take any job for granted or consider it humbler than one's own.

We learned that schools are essential not only for education but also for life-building social interactions among students and child care for working parents.

We missed the traditional moments of graduation season, but found joy in drive-thru ceremonies and other such as-best-we-can substitutes.

We discovered that schools can hold online art exhibitions, displaying photos of chalk art created on driveways and sidewalks around town.

We unwrapped our creativity. Distilleries learned to produce hand sanitizer that chambers of commerce distributed for free. Dude-ranch experiences and fire-station tours went virtual. Older youths offered free online tutoring for younger and less tech-savvy kids.

Government agencies developed ways to remotely conduct some building inspections. Streetside dining became a reality, at least temporarily, as cities closed car lanes so restaurants could set up tables on sidewalks and in parking areas. From car dealers to farmers markets, businesses of all types upped their online presence and pivoted to curbside pickup and home delivery.

We showed Willamette Valley lawmakers what it was like to live in the rest of Oregon, where long travel distances often make it impractical to meet in person with state officials in Salem or testify at the Oregon Legislature. With the Oregon Capitol and most government offices closed to the public, everyone has had to meet by phone or videoconference.

We learned much about public health and expanded our vocabulary. We eventually realized that "social distancing" was not our communal goal, because humans need connections to thrive, but "physical distancing" could keep the coronavirus at bay while allowing opposite-sides-of-the-driveway conversations with neighbors.

We witnessed the adaptability of the Oregon National Guard. This year saw the guard being deployed overseas, fighting wildfires in Oregon, delivering personal protective equipment and answering phones for the Oregon Employment Department.

We set aside political differences as Oregonians fought those wildfires, rescued neighbors and sought to protect one another's homes and businesses.

We shared a common sorrow at the social, economic and educational losses from the pandemic. We grieved the loss of loved ones to COVID-19, to depres-

sion and suicide, and to conditions that went unnoticed or untreated.

We lost businesses and income, or knew others who did. We found that online learning and distance education work for some students and teachers, but not for others, as the pandemic laid bare the inequities in urban and rural Oregon.

Most of all, we rediscovered community.

Bus drivers delivered meals to home-bound Oregonians. Schools converted their now-vacant buildings into rest stops for truckers. Musicians banded together for online concerts, and people found ways to support these same musicians, concert workers and others out of work due to event cancellations.

Residents sewed face masks and gave them away. Cities, counties and the state launched loan programs for businesses. Residents stepped up to support their favorite restaurants via takeout and delivery, often adding extra tips in recognition of the staff's lost workdays. Auto dealers purchased gift cards from local restaurants to thank customers for taking a test drive.

Police officers and sheriff's deputies connected with children by reading stories to them on video. We worshipped in different ways, adapting to small-group settings — when they were allowed — and to online religious services.

Compelling research shows that expressing gratitude can boost mental and physical health. In this year of great sorrow and profound trauma, let us also find reasons to give thanks.

Dick Hughes has been covering the Oregon political scene since 1976.

YOUR VIEWS

Homeless sleepers should clean up after themselves

How sad to think we now have to provide sleeping space for homeless people in our parks. I walk in the city park with the cattle by the freeway.

I have seen the homeless guy who begs on the corner at the cannabis store sleeping there a number of times. The hole he has carved out at the south end is always littered knee deep in trash and beer cans. His pooping station is just east of there a few yards. The city grounds crew mows there, but seldom picks up the garbage left.

Today, actually about half of it was gone, so that is an improvement. I can understand the sleeping. I guess, but I don't understand the constant littering. Some of it remains for weeks at a time.

Regarding parks, I have a great idea that I have shared with Robb Corbett. I think Pendleton needs a bark park. I understand the need for leash laws, but most dogs love to run and chase the ball. I am suggesting a series of fenced

areas, possibly 30-by-100, in appropriate city parks. Dogs and owners can shut the gate and dogs can run like crazy for a fair amount of time. They can't fight with other dogs, they don't bother walkers or picnickers, and the dogs love it.

In fact, I am suggesting the formation of the first chapter of DLM (Dogs Lives Matter). Dogs have rights too. I will suggest one additional idea — the area should be designated the Scott Fairley Memorial Bark Park as an honor to one great guy who is gone too soon. I know Robb liked my idea, but it never hurts to call City Hall or your favorite councilperson and tell them how much you like the idea, and that it should be made a priority.

David Burns
Pendleton

Where is our liberty?

It has come to my attention that we now have two kings and one queen on the West Coast. Our queen has

deprived us freedom of religion, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. She can not decide on which science to follow. She has acted without legislative approval on many of her mandates.

I have a notion that all those who believe in liberty should declare all the property they own or rent an autonomous zone. One could also have a sanctuary zone. If it is good enough for Antifa, it should be good enough for all.

One last thought: Maybe Joshua Walker should check his ancestry to see if he has any family history during the Civil War who may have fought on the Confederate side and died in any of those horrific battles. Look to see if any are buried on those fields. Then he should go and desecrate the tombs.

I have been to Gettysburg. I had family that fought on both sides, some members from the same family, splintering them. After the war, they reunited.

Ignoring history will repeat it.

Roesch Kishpaugh
Pendleton

EDITORIALS

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

LETTERS

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published.

SEND LETTERS TO:

editor@eastoregonian.com,
or via mail to Andrew Cutler,
211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801