

EASTERN OREGON ADS CONTENT WITH OSAA'S DECISION TO PUSH BACK START DATES

GOVERNOR TRYING TO RESURRECT PROJECTS KILLED BY COVID-19

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List grows longer for Legislature's special session

By PETER WONG
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — The to-do list is growing for the Oregon Legislature as lawmakers consider a third special session this year, barely a month before the 2021 regular session gets underway on Jan. 11, 2021.

While most attention has focused on another extension of the moratorium on residential evic-

tions set to expire on Dec. 31 (for Multnomah County, Jan. 8, 2021), lawmakers are looking at drafts of other proposed legislation.

Legislative leaders and Gov. Kate Brown have said they are open to a session. But they have not yet agreed on what should be considered, when the session would take place and whether they should invoke the "catastrophic disaster" provision to do so. That provision has never been used

since voters approved it in 2012. It would allow lawmakers to convene without having to come to the Oregon Capitol in Salem — but it also imposes other requirements.

Also, December special sessions are rare, although then-Gov. John Kitzhaber convened a one-day session in 2012 for a tax break to enable sportswear giant Nike to keep its world headquarters outside Beaverton. (A 1963 special session ran from Nov. 11 through

Dec. 2, although lawmakers took a nine-day break after the death of President John F. Kennedy.)

The list was made available by the office of House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, whose spokesman said that drafts also were being made available to senators.

The Stable Homes for Oregon Families coalition has pressed for a special session to extend the moratorium, which would be part of a broader proposal to couple it

with a new state fund to compensate landlords for part of their lost income. Tenants would still have to pay rent owed by the new date of July 1, 2021, and certify they are unable to pay as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and the economic downturn.

House and Senate Democrats disagree about the proposal put forth by the House Committee

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Breaking tradition

Annual Christmas corn dog stand in Pendleton canceled due to COVID-19

By BRYCE DOLE
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Every holiday season, they came to Pendleton in droves from near and far, seeking one thing — corn dogs.

Every holiday season since he was 10 years old, Bernard Lind was there, serving the people and preserving a longstanding, deep-fried tradition his father started 49 years prior.

This season would have been the 50th anniversary of the Christmas corn dog stand run by Lind and his wife, Julieanne. But due to the coronavirus pandemic, that streak has come to an end.

"I'm having a hard time looking at the calendar this year and thinking about what would have been," Bernard Lind said. "I know what it means to people. I know that they have missed a lot of things this year, just like we have. And it's hard. It really is."

The recent spike in COVID-19 cases and deaths, and the large crowds that the stand typically attracts around the holidays, make it too risky to keep the tradition going this year, Bernard Lind said.

"My husband and I are in such a state of shock," Julieanne Lind said. "We've gone 27 years together in this business, and we hit a brick wall. It all stopped. We still tell our customers, 'It's going to be all right. It's not forever.' And if we die, you'll never see us again. We have to protect you, and we have to protect ourselves. We have to be



Julieanne, left, and Bernard Lind opened their fried food concession stand in the parking lot of Aaron's in Pendleton in 2017.

smart in this."

The pandemic has taken its toll on the Linds. They own the family concessions business together, and when events were postponed indefinitely in February, they lost their sole source of income, Bernard Lind said.

They have relied on unemployment relief and funds from grant programs like the CARES Act to get by. But it hasn't been nearly enough.

For the couple, who have served hungry locals for decades, "the refrigerator wasn't really full," Ber-

nard Lind said of their hardest days.

In late July, help finally came in the form of insurance and unemployment relief. But the pandemic had already worn them down, financially and emotionally.

Days once spent traveling to fairs and events across the Northwest and chatting and smiling with customers are now spent in a lonely isolation, the Linds said. The anxiety and stress is relentless, and because of it, Bernard Lind is now experiencing heart problems and chest pain, for which he recently received X-rays and tests.

"I'm so sad right now that I can't be there for (the customers)," Julieanne Lind said. "But I can't let that sadness ruin their future of seeing me again. It will be better. I want them to remember the memories."

Memories are what the Linds cling to for a sense of hope in these hard times. There are countless stories, but they come from a humble beginning.

Nearly 50 years ago, Bernard Lind's father, Francis Lind, started

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UMATILLA COUNTY

Chambers warn of possible protest

Protest aims to overwhelm OSHA with complaints against businesses

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

UMATILLA COUNTY — Eastern Oregon chambers of commerce are warning local businesses of a protest effort that could target them.

In a joint letter, the Hermiston, Pendleton, Umatilla, Boardman, Irrigon and Heppner chambers shared a message they had received from the Oregon State Chamber of Commerce, citing a post on the Open Oregon Facebook page asking people to flood the Oregon Occupational Health and Safety Administration with complaints against businesses in order to overwhelm the agency.

"We realize that local businesses are at their breaking point and wanted to make you aware of this effort," the message from the state chamber said. "OR-OSHA anticipates hundreds/thousands of new anonymous complaints against businesses across Oregon, and these complaints could result in compliance letters being sent to your members by OR-OSHA."

In their own joint message on Wednesday, Dec. 9, the local chambers of commerce asked their members to reach out if they appeared

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Chatbot offers answers without judgment

BMCC goes to artificial intelligence to enhance communication

By KATHY ANEY
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Pendleton, meet Timboto.

Blue Mountain Community College recently launched an artificial intelligence-powered chatbot to

improve communication with students and the community. Conversations happen online or via text message.

"Timboto is a robot version of our beloved mascot," said Daniel Anderson, BMCC's dean of instruction for arts and sciences.

The chatbot is the cerebral side of the school's mascot, a wolf named Timber who was known pre-COVID for his high fives and hugs. His brainy alter ego, Timboto, helpfully responds

to computer queries at any time of the night or day.

Such bots are emerging in academia and in many other venues. They are powered by a knowledge base of questions and answers, and an algorithm that detects nuances in the written dialogue. The chatbots learn as they go.

Anderson said he learned about the technology in an academic context during a presentation by Georgia State University. GSU, which com-

prises both a university and a community college, uses a chatbot to improve communications and credits the technology for increasing enrollment and the graduation rate at the community college.

Anderson floated the idea on his own campus in Pendleton. The bot, he said, would be available to students outside of normal business hours whenever they felt

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COVID-19 NUMBERS IN UMATILLA COUNTY

2 WEEK TOTALS FOR WEEK ENDING 12/12/20

