

Housing complex for veterans could open next fall

By **DICK MASON**
La Grande Observer

LA GRANDE — A new community is taking shape in La Grande, one which may blaze a trail for others to follow.

Veterans Village Union County will be a community to help veterans who are homeless or have low incomes. Workers are making significant progress in its construction at 1612 Russell Ave. Four of the village's 10 planned, small cottage-style homes are close to being completed.

“We should have (the four homes) finished by March,” said Gust Tsiatsos, the contractor of the project and the owner of GCT Land Management with his wife, Karin.

In addition, the foundations for two more of the small homes have been poured, Gust Tsiatsos said. He said he hopes to have Veterans Village Union County finished by the fall of 2021, at which time veterans can begin moving in. Three of the 10 homes will be handicapped accessible.

Veterans Village is being constructed with the help of a grant from Oregon Housing and Community Services, Oregon's state housing finance agency. OHCS provides financial and program support for projects that create and maintain quality, affordable housing for Oregonians of lower and moderate income.

Veterans Village Union County is one of several small-home housing projects for veterans in Oregon.



Dick Mason/The Observer/La Grande Observer
Bob Haley, of GCT Land Management, examines an electric fireplace Tuesday, Dec. 15, 2020, in one of the homes under construction at Veterans Village Union County in La Grande.

The homes provided at the others are often not as large as those being built at Veterans Village UC, Tsiatsos said. The contractor said in a press release he hopes Veterans Village will be successful to the point it can be used as a model for future projects in the community and the region.

Tsiatsos said the relatively mild

conditions Union County is experiencing late this fall is helping with the construction process.

“On (Dec. 12) we were able to get a concrete foundation put in. It is unusual to be able to do that this time of the year,” Tsiatsos said.

Each unit in the village will have 480 square feet of space, but the design gives the small homes a

bigger look and feel. These include the construction of tall pitched roofs over 9-foot ceilings, Tsiatsos said. Large living room windows and sliding glass doors in the back also work to enhance the feeling of spaciousness.

Veterans Village will have features aimed at creating a sense of engagement and a neighborhood

feeling, said Terri Bradley of GCT Land Management. These include a community center, dog park, benches and common lawns.

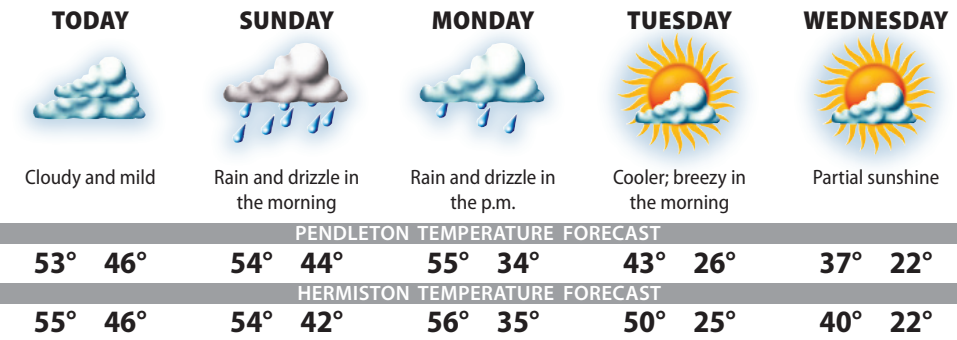
The house that workers at the site are using as a base will become the community center after renovations. The center will serve as a place where veterans can meet with officials from the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Center for Human Development, Community Connection of Northeast Oregon and other organizations offering supportive services to veterans.

“It will provide access to support services, which will give them a chance to grow and flourish,” said Bradley, who added that veterans will be able to stay in the homes as long as they want to.

One of the final phases of the Veterans Village project will include the installation of curbs and sidewalks, and extensive landscaping.

Numerous businesses, agencies and organizations have contributed to or will be participating in Veterans Village Union County, including Ace Hardware, the Center for Human Development, Community Connection of Northeast Oregon, Eastern Oregon University Small Business Development Center and the Oregon Youth Authority's Camp Riverbend Youth Transitional Facility, all based in La Grande, plus the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation near Pendleton and the Oregon Department of Human Services.

Forecast for Pendleton Area



ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	48°	37°
Normals	39°	26°
Records	68° (1917)	-5° (1924)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace
Month to date	0.16"
Normal month to date	0.86"
Year to date	12.35"
Last year to date	12.00"
Normal year to date	12.37"

HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	49°	43°
Normals	39°	27°
Records	63° (1936)	-5° (1984)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace
Month to date	0.11"
Normal month to date	0.89"
Year to date	4.05"
Last year to date	5.05"
Normal year to date	9.39"

WINDS (in mph)

	Today	Sun.
Boardman	WSW 6-12	WSW 7-14
Pendleton	SW 7-14	WSW 6-12

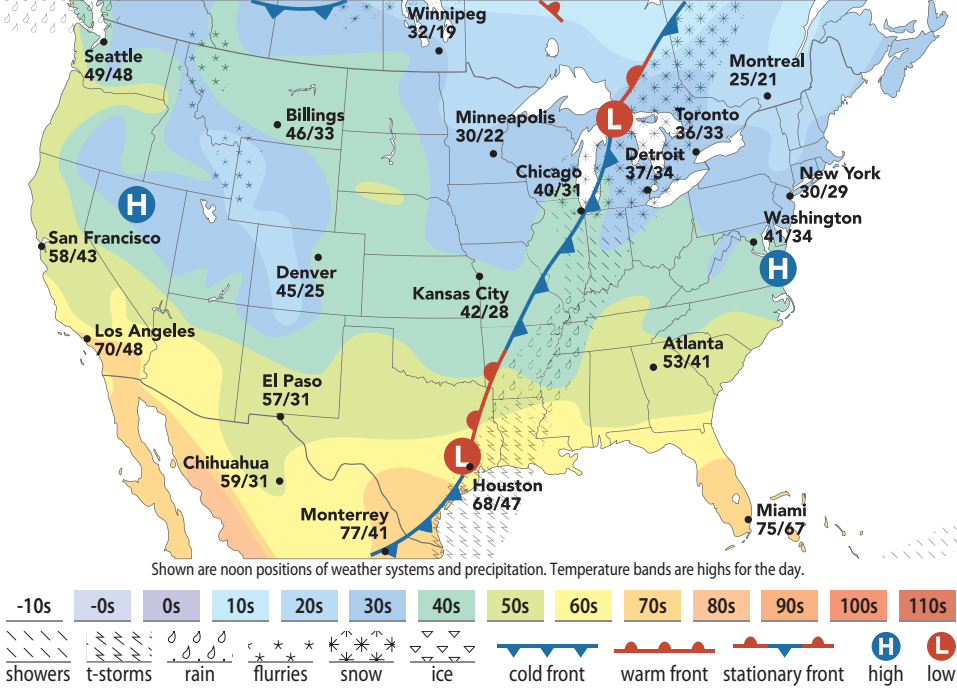
SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	7:32 a.m.
Sunset tonight	4:13 p.m.
Moonrise today	11:33 a.m.
Moonset today	9:54 p.m.

First	Full	Last	New
Dec 21	Dec 29	Jan 6	Jan 12

NATIONAL EXTREMES
Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 78° in Zapata, Texas Low -12° in Crested Butte, Colo.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Off-duty cop foils would-be shoplifter

By **CHRIS COLLINS**
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — An off-duty Oregon State Police detective met a suspected shoplifter in the Bi-Mart parking lot Tuesday, Dec. 15, and foiled the man's attempt to leave the store without paying for \$250 in merchandise.

Baker City Police Department Chief Ray Duman said Sean Belding, a sergeant over OSP's criminal division offices in Baker City, La Grande and Pendleton, confronted Alexander Harold Wise, 18, who Duman describes as a transient, as Wise left the store followed by Bi-Mart employees

at 3:41 p.m.

When Belding attempted to detain Wise, he threatened to stab Belding in the throat, Duman said.

Instead, the off-duty detective grabbed Wise and took him to the ground where he held Wise until Baker City police officers arrived a few minutes later to take the suspect into custody.

An open switchblade knife was found in Wise's pocket, Duman said.

Wise was complaining of pain after the incident, and an ambulance was called to take him to Saint Alphonsus Medical Center in Baker City, Duman said. Wise later was medically cleared and

released to the Baker County Jail.

He is being held on a charge of first-degree robbery for threatening to stab Belding while in possession of a dangerous weapon during the course of taking merchandise from Bi-Mart, Duman said.

Wise also is charged with second-degree theft, second-degree disorderly conduct, harassment and unlawful possession of a switchblade knife. And he is being held on Baker County warrants charging him with second-degree burglary, third-degree theft and two counts of second-degree criminal trespassing.

Nez Perce Tribe acquires historic Hayes Farm

JOSEPH — The Nez Perce Tribe completed the purchase of the historic Hayes Farm on Dec. 9, acquiring 148 acres that holds great cultural and historical significance for the tribe.

The property, which is just west of Joseph and south of the Chief Joseph Days rodeo grounds, includes Wallowa River frontage that may be important in future fisheries management.

“This has been a project in the works for some time, and there were several people involved in making this purchase a reality,” Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee Chairman Shannon Wheeler said. “This purchase is a wonderful step in the reestablishment of a Nez Perce presence in the homeland of our people. We know our ancestors are smiling to see us returning home.”

The property is the second-oldest Century Farm in Wallowa County. Located mostly along the terminal moraine just west of Joseph, it includes what is known as Indian Ridge, and Am'sáaxpa (a place of boulders). The property extends from the western edge of the rodeo grounds nearly a mile south to just west of where Ski Run Road crosses Wallowa River. It includes the house, built in 1884, and barns, cultivated acreage, old growth trees and grassland, as well as riparian river frontage. The property also offers a pristine view of the Wallowa Mountains.

The farm's property includes a Nez Perce village site, and is known as a council site for Chief Joseph. The Nez Perce village and teepees are shown in photos at the Wallowa County Historical Society.

Investigation concludes fatal John Day shooting was self-defense

JOHN DAY — The investigation of a fatal shooting in John Day supported the initial findings that the act was in self-defense.

Grant County District Attorney Jim Carpenter announced in a Wednesday, Dec. 16, press release he will not pursue charges against Lloyd N. Leach, 86, for shooting and killing Patrick L. Duignan, 34, on Sept. 22 at a John Day apartment.

Carpenter said he made the decision after reports, evidence, interviews and witnesses indicated Leach acted in self-defense. The Oregon State Police major crimes team was activated and oversaw the investigation.

“Leach was justified in using physical force upon another person for self-defense from what Leach reasonably believed to be the use or imminent use of unlawful physical force,” Carpenter said in the press release. “Further, given all the circumstances, Leach used a degree of force which Leach reasonably believed to be necessary for the purpose.”

The investigation indicated Duignan was harassing Leach while Leach was attempting to get from his vehicle to his apartment. Leach got into his apartment and locked the door before Duignan burst through the door, Carpenter said.

“Duignan rushed down the hallway of the apartment and physically attacked Leach,” Carpenter said. “During the altercation, Leach fired two shots from a handgun into Duignan.”

Duignan died on scene.

— EO Media Group

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