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Umatilla County last in COVID-19 vaccinations

County has vaccinated approximately 960 people per 10,000 residents, ranked lowest in Oregon

By **BRYCE DOLE**
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Umatilla County has dropped to the lowest-ranked county in Oregon for COVID-19 vaccinations per capita, according to data from the Oregon Health Authority.



Shafer



Fiumara



Dorran



Murdock

In all, the county has vaccinated approximately 960 people per 10,000 residents, ranked last in the state, according to state data as of Tuesday, March 2.

“This is just atrocious and this needs to be addressed immediately, in my opinion,” Umatilla County

Commissioner John Shafer said during a Wednesday, March 3, board of commissioners meeting.

For two weeks, the county was caught second to last in the state in vaccinations per capita, but this week, the county fell to dead last for the first time since vaccine efforts

began in December 2020.

In response to the dismal ranking, officials in the meeting approved a letter to be sent to Gov. Kate Brown's office “on behalf of the Citizens of Umatilla County based upon discrimination and inequities in vaccine allocations,” the letter says.

The official's letter argues that despite the state's promises to vaccinate highly vulnerable and infected communities, the state continues to send meager shipments to counties that have been hardest hit by the pandemic.

In total, 7,792 Umatilla County

residents have been vaccinated against COVID-19, with 4,661 of those being second doses.

“We are one of the most diverse counties in Oregon, and yet we are not being given any consideration in terms of the vaccine being provided to the county,” Umatilla County Commissioner George Murdock said. “In addition, as everyone knows, we've had a high rate of infection, and we have a disproportionate number of residents who are both impacted by coronavirus and who on a daily basis are working

See Last, Page A9

Property line lawsuit moves forward

Waine family filed lawsuit against Umatilla County in March 2020

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — A lawsuit by Airport Road residents Chris and Monique Waine against Umatilla County and the city of Hermiston continues to move forward after a judge denied the defendants' motion for summary judgment.

The Waines have been in an ongoing dispute with the county over property lines on their home at the corner of Airport and Ott roads outside Hermiston, after the county began planning an overhaul of Airport Road to better accommodate traffic for the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center. The Waines lost a hearing for a temporary injunction against the project in 2020 and it was later completed, adding new pavement and an extra lane.

The case is complicated, touching on more than a century's worth of surveys, monuments, property descriptions and other records created since the county first established the road in 1907.

“There is a lot of crossover of law, a lot of different layers and a lot of grey areas in the law,” Chris Waine said.

Essentially, the Waines believe that the true Airport Road right of way is about 11 feet north and 5 feet east of where the county says it is, and therefore the road project encroached on their property without compensating them. The county argues that multiple surveys show the strip of land in question

See Lawsuit, Page A9



East Oregonian, File

Range Manager Darryl Abling explains the capabilities of the mission control room at the Pendleton UAS Range Mission Control and Innovation Center in Pendleton on Oct. 20, 2017.

Seeking exemptions

Pendleton looks to cut off public records access from city's drone range

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

SALEM — It could soon get a lot harder to access public records from the Pendleton Unmanned Aerial Systems Range.

State Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athens, has introduced a bill that would exempt the city of Pendleton from disclosing records produced by the test range if making them public “would cause a competitive disadvantage to the test range or its users.” The exemption covers a broad range of records, “including but not limited to pricing, intellectual property and customer records.”

At a Feb. 11 Senate Committee on Labor and Business hearing, Pendleton City Manager Robb Corbett called passage of the bill “crucial” before introducing Steve Chrisman, the city's airport manager and economic development director.

In his written and oral testimony, Chrisman gave legislators a brief overview of the UAS range and its history.

Six years after it was established, Chrisman said the UAS range now supports about 75 jobs, conducts thousands of drone tests per year, and produces millions of dollars worth of economic activity.

Given the \$20 million the public has invested in the test range at the city, state and federal levels, Chrisman said it was in all Oregonians' best interest that the UAS range succeed. And if Oregon wanted to see Pendleton succeed, city officials maintain,



East Oregonian, File

Engineers from the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory talk about the scientific payload of the ArticShark unmanned aerial vehicle to a group of Pendleton dignitaries in March 2017 at the Pendleton UAS Range.

then they needed to let the range keep some records under wraps.

As an example, Chrisman pointed to Pendleton's successful recruitment of Airbus to the UAS Range. He said the city knew Airbus wanted to test its Project Vahana air taxi concept in Pendleton a year and a half before Airbus went public with an announcement in 2017, but Airbus instructed staff to stay quiet or it would test its drone elsewhere. Airbus ceased testing in Pendleton in 2019.

“This need for confidentiality is standard

in the industry, and the first thing prospective range users ask is for the City to sign a nondisclosure agreement (NDA),” he wrote in his testimony. “Without some assurance of protection of their identity, activities, and proprietary information, then companies just simply will not come to Oregon with this cutting-edge technology.”

Chrisman added that the other UAS test ranges in Oregon were either privately or tribally owned, meaning Pendleton was the

See Exemptions, Page A9



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