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'ARBITRARY AND CAPRICIOUS'

Lifeways takes issue with Umatilla County's decision to change community mental health services provider



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

A sign outside Lifeways in Pendleton celebrates the organization's staff on Friday, June 11, 2021. The mental health services provider is protesting Umatilla County's decision to use Heppner-based Community Counseling Solutions for mental health and addiction treatment.

By **BRYCE DOLE**
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Lifeways is not going down without a fight. Officials with the community mental health services provider are criticizing Umatilla County's decision to go with Community Counseling Solutions as its central provider for mental health and addiction services and are urging the county to change its mind.

Lifeways, which has served the county for more than 16 years, claims CCS "is underqualified and under-prepared to take on the significantly more complex, higher volume work in Umatilla County," Chief Executive Officer Tim Hoekstra said in a press release. The company argues Community Counseling won't be able to get

up and running in time to provide adequate care for the county's more than 4,000 patients.

"At the very least, Lifeways hopes its protest draws attention to the gamble the county is taking with its residents' health," Hoekstra said. "Their health deserves a thorough and accurate evaluation process. There is no question that the evaluation process conducted and forming the basis of the award to CCS was neither thorough nor accurate because it missed the obvious conclusion that CCS' lack of readiness is a danger to Umatilla residents."

But CCS Executive Director Kimberly Lindsay said the Heppner-based provider, which serves four Eastern Oregon counties, is fully prepared to take on the new role and will begin preparations as soon as

Lifeways' appeal is finished. Community Counseling is set to begin offering addiction services in the county in September and mental health services in December.

Lindsay said she has yet to decide if CCS will respond to Lifeways' claims.

"We're interested in defending our good name," she said. "We're not going to do anything to discredit anyone. That's not how we operate. But we will do what we need to do to defend our name and our reputation."

Lifeways plans to stick around

Lifeways sent a formal protest letter to the county on June 2, which the East Oregonian obtained and reviewed. The board of commissioners, which

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BLUE MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

President finalists make their pitches

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The competition to become Blue Mountain Community College's next president is down to four.

Three finalists spent the week touring BMCC's Pendleton campus and meeting with students, staff and community members ahead of the board of education's final decision, which is expected to come in July. As the interviews were underway, the college announced a fourth finalist, who will go through the same process in Pendleton on Monday, June 14.

Blue Mountain will select a new president at a critical juncture for the college. BMCC has spent recent years dealing with a sustained decline in student enrollment, several rounds of layoffs and an administrative reorganization.

During the community forum, the only portion of the interviews open to the public, the candidates played up their rural bona-fides as they fielded questions about career training, equity and community involvement.

Mark Browning

A self-described "farm boy from western Montana," Mark Browning said he didn't get involved with higher education until he was 39.

By then he and his family had moved to Idaho and he had embarked on a career in media that culminated in a news director position with a Boise TV station. Browning began attending Idaho State University when he looked to advance his career further, but he said he would have been a perfect candidate for community college.

"We have a real affinity for community colleges," he said. "I may not have been born into them, but I've converted fully."

His second career began with stints with the Idaho State Board of Education and North Idaho College. In 2016, he became the vice president for college relations at the College of Western Idaho, a community college in Nampa.

When the position opened up at Blue

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Browning



Simone



Villa

OR30 wolves kill sheep on Mount Emily outside Meacham

By **KATY NESBITT**
For the East Oregonian

MEACHAM — Wolf numbers in the northern Blue Mountains continue to increase, as does the risk to livestock and the dogs that protect and herd them.

According to a June 2 Oregon Department of Fish

and Wildlife livestock depredation investigation report, a sheep herder on Horseshoe Ridge outside of Meacham reported seeing four wolves near his sheep on a 1,200-acre, timbered private pasture. He soon found one dead and five injured lambs. A herding dog also was wounded and had a 1-inch

tear in the hide and fresh blood in the armpit of the right front leg.

The investigation said the dog was injured at the same time and in the same area as the lambs, but lacked diagnostic evidence to determine the cause. The dog has since recovered.

A second lamb died

before the investigation. The carcasses had multiple teeth punctures approximately a quarter of an inch in diameter on the neck, with associated hemorrhage and tissue trauma from 1 inch to up to 1 3/4 inches deep. Both injured lambs had fresh wounds on their necks and labored breathing.

Fish and Wildlife attributed the attack to what is known as the OR30 wolves.

Wolves have made Mount Emily their home for almost a decade, but, according to Roblyn Brown, Fish and Wildlife state wolf biologist,

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UMATILLA COUNTY

As of 6/10/2021

