

Local projects make multi-million dollar spending bill

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
AND **BRYCE DOLE**
East Oregonian

SALEM — The Oregon Legislature again is playing the role of early Santa Claus as the 2021 session winds up, with plenty of projects in Eastern Oregon on the path to receive big dolle outs.

The Joint Committee on Ways and Means is considering House Bill 5006 — the “Christmas Tree Bill” that is the collection of local projects and programs that buoy individual lawmakers. The bill is especially large this year because of \$240 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act funds.

In Umatilla, a \$1.8 million appropriation will help fund the Minority Entrepreneurial Development & Business Center. The Port of Morrow is getting \$4.3 million for a training facility. And the spending bill includes \$1.75 million for a long-anticipated renovation of the Umatilla County Jail.

Umatilla City Manager David Stockdale said the city is planning to create the approximately 21,000-square-foot center by adding on to and remodeling the former post office building on Sixth Street next to city hall. He called it a “one stop shop” for business in Umatilla.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File

A sign on Dec. 4, 2020, along Southwest 18th Street in Pendleton advertises the future site of Blue Mountain Community College's Facility for Agricultural Resource Management. The 2021 Legislature's spending bill for local capital projects includes \$3 million for FARM II.

“We should provide all the tools people need to grow their business,” he said.

The city’s community development department will be housed in the building, giving people a place to access building permits, business permits and more.

The first floor of the two-story building will contain more than 2,500 square feet of “business incubator” space where entrepreneurs can start their own business.

The second story will have more permanent commercial tenants to help drive foot traf-

fic to the newer businesses downstairs. The building will include space for trainings, community events and private events, with a commercial kitchen.

Stockdale said the city has been working with the federal Economic Development Administration, and it looks like it will be able to get a \$3 million grant from there, in addition to the \$1.8 million from the state, an additional \$2.5 million the city has saved up and possibly some additional economic development funding from Umatilla County.

“I think it’s pretty remarkable to get an \$8 million project done without borrowing a penny to do it,” Stockdale said.

If all goes well with getting the EDA funding, he expects construction to start in early 2022 and wrap up in summer of 2023.

Port of Morrow Manager Ryan Neal said the \$4.3 million for the Cultural Alliance and Training Center at SAGE will “provide a community space to assist our regional education and industry partners with additional programs and events,”

including workforce initiatives, continuing education, regional conferences and youth programs.

Jail funding returns

Local officials have been pushing for state funding for years to renovate the Umatilla County Jail to accommodate people suffering addiction or mental health crises. County Commissioner George Murdock called the allocation an exciting development.

“We’re going to be able to have all the facilities that we need to handle the population that we’re now seeing on a daily basis at the jail,” he said.

The new facilities will allow jail staff to separate people struggling with mental health or addiction from people who have been arrested for violent crimes, which Murdock sees as a major benefit.

“We still are not perceiving it as our long-term solution for mental health,” Murdock said. “But it’s the only alternative we have at the moment as a place to house mental health patients.”

For Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, getting the project the funding it needed after years of lobbying was rewarding.

“It’s a good reminder to stick with it,” he said. “We thought we had it, but then the pandemic came, over which

we had absolutely no control. We were able to resubmit it, but the need was always there. It’s another example of a team effort.”

Other projects

The city of Echo is getting a bit more than \$7 million for water and wastewater improvements. City Administrator David Slaght said seeking the funding was the first time he had lobbied for anything, so he didn’t expect much, and he and the city council were thrilled with the results.

“We’re super excited,” he said. “I’m still numb that it’s even happening.”

And the Facility for Agricultural Resource Management project at Blue Mountain Community College, Pendleton, is getting a \$3 million grant. The entire cost of the multi-use facility at the Pendleton campus is about \$13 million. The structure would allow the college’s rodeo team to practice in the winter, provide teaching space and another space for community events. Connie Green, the college’s interim president, said this is a “long-term commitment to do something that benefits all, not just one.”

East Oregonian news editor Phil Wright contributed to this article.

Morrow County to hold COVID-19 vaccine lottery

County residents who have been vaccinated as of June 26 are entered to win prize money

By **BRYCE DOLE**
East Oregonian

HEPPNER — Five vaccinated Morrow County residents have the opportunity to win up to \$20,000 through a lottery intended to improve the county’s vaccine rates.

The county has set aside \$70,000 in state funding for a drawing between June 28 and July 6, according to Morrow County Commissioner Melissa Lindsay. Two vaccinated residents will be awarded \$20,000 in the lottery, and three others will receive \$10,000.

“Some of our citizens are not wanting to get the vaccine, and that’s their choice,” Lindsay said. “Seeing the nation and the state come out with the lottery to award those that do want to step up and get the vaccine seemed like a way to use those dollars without overstepping the choice.”

Morrow County residents who have received at least their first dose of the vaccine as of Saturday, June 26, are automatically entered into the lottery, Lindsay said. The funding comes out of the more than \$164,000 the county received in May from the state’s \$25 million effort to improve vaccination rates through programs like incentives.

The county will be using the rest of that funding to recruit a nurse to run programs and tackle equity issues in public health, such as reaching the county’s Hispanic and Latino community with COVID-19 testing and vaccinations. The county also will use the funding for marketing COVID-19 vaccines through Spanish radio programs.

The county’s lottery comes in addition to the \$10,000 the state will award to a vaccinated resident in each of Oregon’s 36 counties. One lucky Oregonian will receive

\$1 million in the lottery. The drawing will occur June 28, with the winners announced in July.

Vaccine incentives are happening statewide in response to Oregon’s dwindling vaccination rate. In Morrow County, only 4,235 residents have been vaccinated against COVID-19, the fourth-lowest rate among Oregon counties, according to state data.

Lindsay said the lottery was specifically intended to improve the county’s vaccine rate, and to protect the community as the virus mutates into new variants.

“The vaccine is our best way out if variants keep coming forward,” she said. “The best way to protect ourselves and protect out families is the vaccine. And if having a pool of money come back to our economy helps people get over the fence, that’s great.”

County residents still can get vaccinated through the Morrow County Health Department, Morrow County Health District, Columbia River Health and Murray’s Drug. Residents who have been vaccinated at a state or federal facility are encouraged to contact any public health office in Oregon to make sure they are registered.

Umatilla National Forest sets use restrictions

By **SHEILA HAGAR**
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

PENDLETON — With increased fire danger and dry weather conditions comes increased rules in the Umatilla National Forest.

Officials have instituted the first phase of public use restrictions for the 1.4 million acres that stretch across the Blue Mountains in Northeast Oregon to Southeast Washington. Starting just after midnight on Friday, June 25, visitors to the national forest must heed the following:

- Chainsaws can be operated only between 8 p.m. and 1 p.m. and a one-hour fire watch is required after

saw use stops. Operators are required to have an axe, shovel and fire extinguisher with them.

- Smoking is allowed only in enclosed vehicles, buildings or cleared areas.

- No off-road or off-trail vehicle travel is allowed; travel is prohibited on roads with standing grass or other flammable material. These include no vehicle travel allowed on Forest Service roads where access has been impeded or blocked by dirt, logs, boulders or man-made barricades.

The public also is encouraged to practice safe campfire principles when recreating in dispersed and

developed campsites.

Forest officials recommend the following campfire safety precautions:

- Campfires should be in fire pits surrounded by dirt, rock or commercial rings and in areas not conducive to rapid fire spread. All flammable material must be cleared within a 3-foot radius from the edge of the pit and free of overhanging material. Use existing pits wherever possible.

- Campfires must be attended at all times and completely extinguished before leaving.

- People making campfires should carry a tool that can serve as a shovel and one

gallon of water, to completely extinguish their campfire.

Officials said public awareness of the increasing fire danger and cooperation with Forest Service rules and staff is essential to a safe fire season.

Closures might be in effect on state and private land protected by Oregon Department of Forestry in Northeastern and Central Oregon, and on such land protected by the Washington Department of Natural Resources.

For more complete information, contact the Umatilla National Forest hotline at 877-958-9663, or visit www.fs.usda.gov/umatilla.

HERMISTON

Council to discuss system development charges

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — The Hermiston City Council will consider a resolution during its Monday, June 28, meeting that would raise system development charges each year.

System development charges are one-time fees paid on new construction that go toward the city’s

costs for supporting new growth, such as the cost to extend water and sewer lines. According to the staff report in the council’s agenda packet, the city implemented water and sewer system development charges in 1998 and added charges for parks in 2006, but the city has not updated the fees since first implementing them.

Under the proposal the

council will consider, the city would incrementally raise system development charges during the next four years to catch up with inflation, and then starting in 2026 the fees would increase 3% each year. Current system development charges for a single family home are \$907, according to the report, and would be at \$1,768 in 2026.

Also on the agenda for June 28 are approval of an

updated franchise agreement with Cascade Natural Gas and a proposal to name a new road at the South Hermiston Industrial Park Cook Street, after Ivan and Vernon Cook, who own most of the property there.

The meeting starts at 7 p.m. at the Hermiston Community Center and will be livestreamed on the City of Hermiston YouTube channel.

LOGIN AND REGISTER!

takeyourshot.oregon.gov

If you received your vaccination in another state or at a federal location, register today to be entered into Oregon's \$1 Million Vaccination Lottery!

IRRIGON MARINA PARK
ALL CONCERTS START AT 7:00PM

Monday, June 28th
Estilo Diferente
(Latino Band)

Monday, July 12th • **JD Kindle**
(Country/Jazz)

Monday, July 26th • **Cruise Control**
(Classic Rock)

Monday, August 9th • **Cale Moon**
(Country)

Free Outdoor Music Festival

Funded by Morrow County Unified Recreation District
Sponsored by North Morrow Community Foundation
For information call: Donna @ 541-922-3197

Celebration of a Life of Service

Please join us to celebrate the life of

Tom Tangney

Wed., June 30th
1:00 PM
Pendleton Convention Center

~ All are Welcome ~

In lieu of flowers, please consider an act of service to your community or a donation to the Pendleton Military Tribute at www.pendletontribute.com

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