

CTUIR set to receive payment from landmark opioid settlement

East Oregonian

MISSION — A payment of \$590 million is going to Indian Tribes affected by the opioid crisis. Some of that is going to the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation near Pendleton.

The drug manufacturer Johnson & Johnson and the opioid distributors AmerisourceBergan, McKesson and Cardinal Health have outlined a payment scheduled under the terms of a proposed settlement filed earlier this month, according to a press release Tuesday, Feb. 15, from CTUIR.

“The news of the settlement is a big step in forward movement on increased resources for our communities that are effected by the Opioid epidemic,” Yellowhawk CEO Aaron Hines said in the press release. “Having a voice in the conversation is important for our tribal communities. We continue to have hope we can get our community the help and resources that are needed.”

The plaintiffs’ Tribal Leadership Committee reported the Native American population has suffered some of the worst consequences of the opioid epidemic of any population in the United States. For this reason, tribal governments have had to spend considerable funds to cover the costs of the crisis, including increased costs for health care, social services, child welfare, law enforcement and other tribal government services.

“We are not solving the opioid crisis with this settlement, but we are getting critical resources to tribal communities to help address the crisis,” said Steve Skikos the attorney representing the CTUIR in this case.

One study cited in the settlement found Native Americans have had the highest per capita rate of opioid overdose of any population group in 2015. The CTUIR filed suit against 14 distributors and manufacturers in 2018.

One of the broader goals in filing suit was to ensure tribes are at the table to represent its own interests, according to the press release. In the tobacco settlements of the 1990s, tribes were not parties to those cases. As a result, the tobacco settlement did not have any direct payment for tribes. States instead counted tribal populations into the state’s numbers, which bolstered their settlements. Now, tribes are parties at the settlement table and securing direct payments to provide tribally driven services for our community.

“We are deeply concerned by the effect the opioid epidemic is having on our community,” Board of Trustees Chair Kat Brigham said in the release. “We have seen the impact in our programs. Yellowhawk Behavioral Health, Children & Family Services, our law enforcement and our foster-care systems are all deeply affected by those struggling with addiction. The board of trustees has had a goal for many years to end this crisis and we are determined to do so. We will use this funding opportunity to start to heal our families.”

All federally recognized tribes in the U.S. will be able to participate in the settlements, even if they did not participate in the initial litigation. Tribes and tribal organizations receiving payments will be required to use the money to deal with the impacts of the opioid epidemic in their communities.

Opioids are a class of drugs that include the illegal drug heroin, synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, and pain relievers available legally by prescription, such as oxycodone and morphine. The misuse of and addiction to opioids can lead to overdose and deaths. Heroin and fentanyl overdoses are driving the recent and rapid increase in opioid-related deaths throughout the U.S., including Indian Country.

Voters decide on school bond in May

By ERICK PETERSON
East Oregonian

BOARDMAN — Schools in Boardman, Heppner and Irrigon need an upgrade, according to Dirk Dirksen, the superintendent of the Morrow County School District. And the district is due for a bond to pay for the improvements.

“The last bond was 21 years ago,” he said Monday, Feb. 14, at a meeting of the district’s board of directors. “The buildings, as far as the upkeep and things like that, has been excellent, but we have a lot of older buildings. They are feeling their age.”

The board supported the proposal and voted to place a general obligation bond measure on the May 17 ballot.

A statement from the district stated the bond measure, if passed, would raise \$138 million. This money would be supplemented with a matching \$4 million grant from the Oregon School Capital Improvement Matching Program, for a total of \$142 million.

The bond would mature in 20 years or less, according to the district, which estimated the bond rate at \$2.67 per \$1,000 of assessed property value, although the actual levy rate may differ. If the measure passes, a taxpayer who owns a house assessed at



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File

Students work on constructing and finishing step stools during a Nuts Bolts and Thingamajigs camp in July 2019 at Riverside High School in Boardman. The Morrow County School District Board of Directors on Monday, Feb. 14, 2022, voted to place a general obligation bond measure on the May 17 ballot to raise \$138 million to improve the district’s schools.

\$200,000 would pay approximately \$534 per year.

Dating back several decades, Dirksen said, the schools do not meet modern standards. The superintendent said security needs have changed. The current expectation is for offices to be placed at the entrance of a school, where administrators can keep an eye on people as they enter. A remodel of buildings would include relocating offices, he said.

Further renovations would create separate spaces for junior high and high school students. Junior high and high school students would have their own locker

rooms and gymnasiums.

Other modernizing, which would be made possible through the bond, would update and fix electrical, HVAC and plumbing systems, he said.

“We have showers that don’t work, and we have bathrooms that need to be refreshed,” Dirksen said. Other shortcomings, which he pointed out, include limited electrical outlets. It is not uncommon, he said, for a classroom in his district to have only two electrical outlets. Some parts of some buildings do not have proper ventilation or heating, he said.

He said another focus

would be adding classrooms to existing schools, especially out in Boardman, where he expects the greatest population growth. Adding new classrooms will keep the district from having to add modular buildings to their schools, he said.

There would be no new schools as a result of the bond, Dirksen said. The improvements made possible through this bond would revamp current buildings, doing all of the things mentioned, plus improving parking and making the buildings more accessible for disabled students.

The district has plans to distribute flyers, create an explanatory video and share information on the district website and social media.

Dirksen said he is excited about the possibilities for improving his schools, especially since he is retiring soon. This is his last school year.

“This is my 41st year, and my entire career has been in Morrow County,” he said.

He taught for 15 years and was an administrator at Riverside Jr./Sr. High School in Boardman before becoming the superintendent. He said, after years of work for the district, he would like to see his schools move forward in a positive way. This bond, he said, creates good things for future generations.

Morrow County school exclusion day is April 20

East Oregonian

SALEM — The Morrow County School District is among a handful of Oregon districts to push back the annual school exclusion day.

The Oregon Health Authority in a press release reported the deadline for parents to provide vaccine records of students is Wednesday, Feb. 16, except for seven counties, including Morrow County.

“We’re trying to get to 100% on this,” Dirk Dirksen, Morrow County School District superintendent, said. By setting back the day, he

said, he feels families have more time to get necessary vaccinations.

OHA allowed local public health authorities to set alternate dates this year by which parents must provide vaccine records for their children or be excluded from school. Due to the challenges the COVID-19 omicron variant has presented for local public health departments, schools and families, exclusion day will be March 30 for schools in Douglas County and April 20 for schools in Clackamas, Clatsop, Jefferson, Morrow, Multnomah and Yamhill counties. County health depart-

ments are asking families to update the record at school or day care when the child gets their shots.

Under state law, all children in public and private schools, preschools, Head Start and certified child care facilities must have up-to-date documentation on their required immunizations or have an exemption.

The COVID-19 vaccine is not currently required for children.

Children must have immunizations for the following diseases, or an exemption, to be in compliance with state school immunization laws:

diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis B, hepatitis A, varicella and Hib.

If a child’s school and childcare vaccination records are not up to date on their county’s exclusion day date, the child will be sent home.

Parents seeking immunizations for their children should contact their health care provider or local health department or call 211Info — just dial 211 or go to 211info.org.

Many pharmacists can immunize children age 7 and older; contact your neighborhood pharmacy for details.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Hermiston residents asked to complete broadband surveys

HERMISTON — The clock is ticking on completing broadband internet access surveys for Hermiston.

Starting in January, residents were able to weigh in on their internet service and use. Residents with active email addresses listed with the city received invitations to participate in the survey on Jan. 26. The survey runs for six weeks and closes at the end of February.

For residents who did not receive an invitation via email to participate, they can find links from the city of Hermiston website that directs users to the surveys — one for individuals and one for businesses. Byron Smith, Hermiston city manager, said the survey could encourage the direction of Hermiston’s future.

A press release from the city explained the surveys resulted from a partnership between the city of Hermiston and Strategic Networks Group to “explore options for connecting high-capacity digital infrastructure throughout city facilities.”

“The infrastructure could

be leveraged to also connect residents, businesses and institutions, while assisting internet service providers in extending services to currently underserved areas,” the press release states. “Through this effort, the city is exploring ways to encourage healthy competition from internet service providers, leading to improved service and lower costs for residents and businesses.”

Once the survey is complete, Smith said its results will be available on the city of Hermiston website.

The survey and additional information is online at bit.ly/3JxPY3e.

— EO Media Group



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Pictured above (l to r): Stacy Hunter, Associate Commercial Relationship Manager; Juliann Dodd, SVP/Commercial Banking Team Leader; Steve Campbell, VP/ Senior Commercial Relationship Manager

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2/18-2/24
Cineplex Show Times
Theater seating will adhere to social distancing protocols
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Uncharted (PG13)
4:00p 6:40p 9:20p
extra 1:20p show 2/18-2/20

Dog (PG13)
4:30p 7:00p 9:30p
extra 2:00p show 2/18-2/20

Death on the Nile (PG13)
4:40p 7:40p
extra 1:40p show 2/18-2/20

Marry Me (PG13)
3:40p 6:20p 9:00p
extra 1:00p show 2/18-2/20

Blacklight (PG13)
3:50p 6:30p 9:10p
extra 1:10p show 2/18-2/20

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