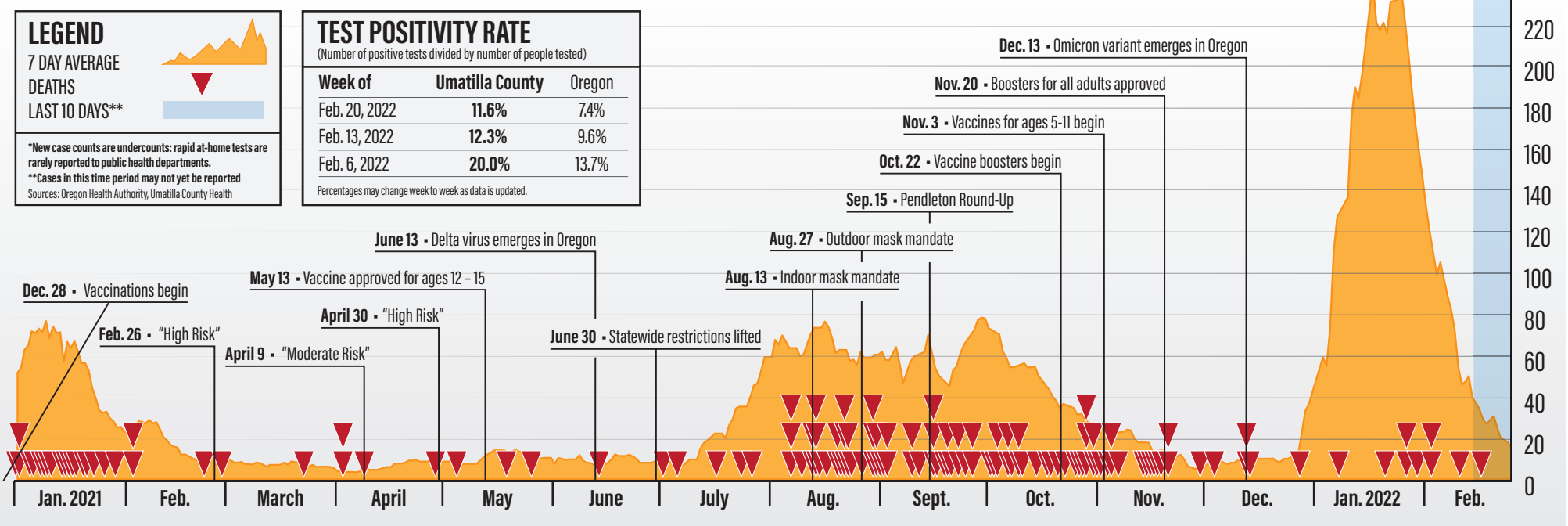


UMATILLA COUNTY COVID-19 TREND - AS OF FEB. 25, 2022

Umatilla County cases: 22,176* | Umatilla County deaths: 201 | Oregon cases: 691,337* | Oregon deaths: 6,578



Both the state of Oregon and Umatilla County are experiencing a steep downward trend in the counts of new cases of COVID-19 since cases peaked in mid-January. Hospitalizations also are trending downward since peaking in late January. However, Oregon saw an uptick in the number of COVID-19 deaths reported this week compared to last week.

Pendleton OKs city's 5th dispensary

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Across several meetings in 2015, residents and elected officials used Pendleton City Council to debate whether the city should allow legal marijuana sales. There were points during the debate that the council seemed poised to ban the practice outright.

Nearly seven years and a couple of successful ballot measures later, the Pendleton Planning Commission approved a conditional use permit for the city's fifth cannabis dispensary with only modest opposition.

The application came from Bimalpreet Bath, a Walla Walla resident who owns a small chain of headshops. With the help of Wave Design Group, a Kennewick design firm, Bath intends to build a 5,000-square-foot dispensary at 31 S.W. Nye Ave., east of the Hampton Inn.

Macy Griffiths, an architect for Wave Design, explained the building plans and answered the commis-

sion's questions about the building's parking lot, dumpster placement and drainage system.

But those weren't the primary concerns of the two people who spoke against the project at the meeting.

Jim Swearingen said he lived near the proposed dispensary. He added the site was too close to school bus stops and would attract unlicensed residents to the area. He proposed the city adopt a cap to limit the number of new dispensaries that could open in Pendleton.

"I'm 100% opposed to this," he said.

Anthony Bowman said he drives in the area frequently and was concerned the increase in traffic would cause more accidents, a trend that could be exacerbated by dispensary customers illegally consuming marijuana before leaving the premises.

Given time to rebut the dispensary's opponents claims, Griffiths said the facility would be well outside the 1,000-foot buffer zones for schools and the design of the property should

offer a clean flow of traffic.

"We've covered all our bases as far as the site goes," she said.

Commissioner Ryan DeGroffit said he was sympathetic to Swearingen's complaint about the dispensary's proximity to school bus stops. But he didn't know of a good way to add it into the rules because school bus stops frequently change based on where children live.

In response to Swearingen's proposal about a cannabis retailer cap, Hull said the city's rules might provide a natural limit to future growth. The city requires all dispensaries to be in commercial zones and prohibits their location within 1,000 feet of schools, parks and other marijuana businesses. Given all the restrictions and the existence of four other dispensaries, there are only a few other patches of land where they could establish themselves.

The commission ultimately unanimously approved Bath's application. While Bath and his associates are free to proceed with the projects, opponents could appeal the commission's decision to the city council.

Gravel pickup Monday

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The city of Pendleton begins picking up gravel Monday, Feb. 28.

The work starts in the North Hill on Northwest Despain Avenue and above, according to a press release from Public Works Director Bob Patterson, and works from the east (Pendleton Center for the Arts) to the west (the high school).

After completing this area, sweeping will move to the streets below Despain.

"City will provide additional public notices as we move from one area of town to the next," according to Patterson.

As work progresses, crews will set out yellow signs with red lettering for the work areas.

"These signs indicate sweeping is being done in the area and,

if possible, to park your vehicles off-street to allow the gravel to be picked up," the press release stated. "If you have to stay parked on the street and the sweeper has passed through your area, park in a swept area in preparation for our regular sweeping schedule."

In some areas, the sweeper may make several passes to sweep up all the rock. Once full, the sweep empties the load at city shops, then returns to continue the task.

Patterson explained the city rents a mechanical sweeper to complete the pickup. It takes four to six weeks to complete a full pass of Pendleton where gravel has been applied. For regular sweeping of the streets, the city uses its own vacuum sweeper, which does not work as well for gravel. It typically takes between eight to 12 weeks to vacuum sweep all the streets, then repeat.

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