

CTUIR lifts mask mandate

BY JILL-MARIE GAVIN
Confederated Umatilla
Journal

MISSION — The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation Board of Trustees voted earlier this week to end the mask mandate on the reservation effective no later than Friday, March 11, at 4 p.m.

The move came Monday, Feb. 28, the same day Oregon Gov. Kate Brown announced Oregon, California and Washington would lift mandates simultaneously at 11:59 p.m. March 11. According to a press release from CTUIR, the vote followed the recommendation of Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center as the public health authority for the tribes. And the mask mandate could end sooner if Yellowhawk gives the OK.

The board of trustees,

however, split on the vote.

Board Vice Chair Aaron Ashley, Secretary Sally Kosey, General Council Chair, members-at-large Toby Patrick, Boots Pond and Lisa Ganuelas voted in favor of rescinding the mask mandate, which has been in effect since Aug. 13, 2021.

Board Treasurer Sandra Sampson and member-at-large Corinne Sams voted against the polled resolution.

Sampson said she voted no based on the unavailability of vaccines for children age 6 months to 4 years.

“I wanted to see it extended to at least May 15 when kids have opportunity to get vaccinated,” she said. “They are our most vulnerable population when it comes to the omicron and delta variants of COVID. All of Eastern Oregon is still less than 49% vaccinated.”

The resolution ending the mask mandate states the board will continue to fund the COVID-19 screeners to monitor for signs and symptoms of illness in the Nixy-aawii Governance Center until April 29, but that date also could be subject to change. When the mandate ends, it will be at the discretion of each entity’s CEO or executive director on whether they choose to continue to require masks for indoor public use.

Interim-Deputy Executive Director Teara Farrow-Ferman provided the Confederated Umatilla Journal with a draft memo from the Office of the Executive that states: “The state will end their mask mandate on March 11, 2022, for indoor and outdoor public settings and schools, however, state and federal requirements, such as those

for health care settings, public transit and other specialized settings, will remain in place for a period of time.”

Masks will remain required for indoor settings on Kayak Public Transportation and within the Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center.

Hines did not have a firm date for when the indoor use mandate would be lifted at the clinic.

Board Chair Kat Brigham, who did not vote on the polled resolution, said in a statement: “I trust the removal of the mask mandate because it is based on good data and Yellowhawk’s consistency with the state. Masks will be removed, but please continue to follow the guidelines that continue to remain in place. If you would like to continue to wear your masks, we support you and your safety measures.”



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Walls take shape Tuesday, March 1, 2022, at the Wildflower Apartments in Pendleton.

Major housing developments inch forward

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

waiting to reap the rewards.

PENDLETON — As the calendar nears spring, several housing projects across Pendleton are gearing up to take the next step in their development.

The largest among them is Westgate Apartments, a 200-unit complex south of Blue Mountain Community College. The project has been through a long gestation period: The city granted the development planning approval and an incentive package back in 2019.

But Westgate Apartments still is proceeding. Community Development Director Tim Simons said he recently met with an engineer with the developer, the Wilsonville-based I&E Construction.

Simons said I&E now has its underground utilities subcontractor on-site and has begun the work of connecting the property to the city’s water, sewer and natural gas systems. The engineer didn’t provide an updated timeline, Simons said, but he anticipated that activity will pick up as the weather dries out during the spring and summer months.

“I think they are waiting until the weather will stabilize enough that their crews won’t be standing around in the rain,” he said.

Pendleton’s housing market remains tight as local officials say demand outstrips the city’s aging housing stock, further pushing up the prices of for-sale homes and rentals. The city has a number of housing projects in various stages of development, but until they’re finished, residents are

One project closer to fruition is the Wildflower Apartments. A partnership between Chrisman Development of Enterprise and Oregon Housing and Community Services, Wildflower is an 80-unit complex near Olney Cemetery that is partly meant to offer affordable housing to Pendleton residents who lost their homes to the Umatilla River floods of 2020.

Simons said the complex will encompass several different buildings and Chrisman already has erected walls on some of the buildings. Based on the pace of development, Simons said Wildflower is on track to begin welcoming tenants this summer.

On the single-family housing front, Simons said Pendleton developer Dusty Pace is in the process of getting city approval for a 15-home development east of St. Anthony Hospital. He added that Pace already has extended Southwest 18th Street in anticipation of the new subdivision.

The project is being dubbed the Katelyn Addition, which had to change its name from the Blakely Addition after Umatilla County deemed it too close to another housing subdivision called Rice-Blakey.

Simons said the city receives inquiries from developers interested in building new housing each week, but many never get past the discussion phase. Simons said local developers like Pace are assertive in proceeding with their housing projects, but out-of-town developers tend to hesitate over Pendleton’s steep topography and rocky soil, leading them to the flatter and sandier environs of Hermiston.

Showing their support for Ukraine



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

A small group of demonstrators gather Wednesday, March 2, 2022, on the sidewalk at Roy Raley Park in Pendleton to show solidarity with Ukraine. The group said they were joining others across the state in a show of support for the country following Russia’s invasion.

Drone company tests medical delivery service

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — A customer at the Pendleton Unmanned Aerial Systems Range is partnering with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and Interpath Laboratory to test out drone-assisted medical test delivery.

In a Feb. 22 press release, Spright, an Arizona UAS company, announced it was going to work with both entities to create a proof-of-concept drone delivery network between Interpath and the Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center on the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Spright held its first test flight between Pendleton and Mission the week before the press release.

Spright and its partners assert that transferring delivery services from vehicles to drones will allow Interpath to deliver and receive lab specimens throughout the day and offer a greener alternative to gas-powered cars.

“Many communities located in remote or rural areas lack timely and convenient access to essen-

tial medical supplies and service,” Spright President Joe Resnik said in a statement. “We look forward to this proof-of-concept, showcasing drone delivery’s ability to solve many of health care’s existing access and efficiency challenges, while also improving patient care and experience.”

In the press release, Interpath President Tom Kennedy added a transition to drones could help his business save money while Yellowhawk CEO Aaron Hines said a

successful drone program could improve health care services for the clinic’s patients.

“If this pilot program is successful and we are able to utilize this service, our patients have the opportunity to benefit from more rapid test results and access follow-up medical procedures and services,” he said. “This project could help us further our mission of providing high-quality, primary health care for the (CTUIR).”

Spright is a subsidiary

of Air Methods, a Colorado aviation company that specializes in emergency patient transportation.



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