

# Union County considers options for law enforcement building

By DICK MASON  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The drive for a new public safety building in Union County is shifting into neutral.

Union County Sheriff Cody Bowen, the leader of an effort to get a new public safety building constructed to reduce overcrowding and address building maintenance issues in the current structure, said he wants to reevaluate and see if other options should be considered. “I am pulling back,” Bowen said.

The sheriff earlier proposed hiring a design firm to develop a conceptual plan for a new public safety building. The Union County Board of Commissioners gave Bowen the green light last August for moving forward with that plan.

Bowen’s proposal encompassed a public safety center that would house the Union County Sheriff’s Office, La Grande Police Department, Union County Jail, Union County Parole and Probation and a center where people experiencing mental health issues could be helped.

This plan now is at least temporarily off the table. Bowen said he believes it is not a good time to pursue constructing a new building because of the fragile status



Union County’s law enforcement building, La Grande, shown on Tuesday, April 26, 2022, houses the La Grande Police Department, the Union County Sheriff’s Office and the Union County Jail.

of the economy, which is being rocked by inflation.

Instead, Bowen, in his second year as sheriff, wants to take a closer look at the public safety building and see if steps could be taken to address issues like overcrowding and deteriorating conditions by renovating

or making additions to the structure.

The sheriff wants to determine exactly what options are available for the one-story public safety building, which was constructed in 1979. For example, he wants to know for certain whether the building could withstand the addition of a second story. To find out, Bowen is proposing that an architecture and design firm, Mackenzie, which has offices in Portland and Seattle, be brought in to evaluate the condition of the current public safety building. “We would be hoping to get some concrete answers,”

Bowen said. Mackenzie’s staff would also look at how space could be used more efficiently and provide cost estimates after doing a 10-week examination of the building. Mackenzie’s evaluation of the building would cost just under \$40,000, according to a

proposal it has prepared.

“This would be a crucial step to keep the ball rolling in a way that would not be as expensive,” Bowen said. The sheriff may come before the board of commissioners later and request funding for the study by Mackenzie.

Paul Anderes, a member of the Union County Board of Commissioners, supports Bowen’s plan. “This will be a great way to separate facts from opinion,” he said.

Anderes said the poor condition of Union County’s law enforcement building has been a concern of his for some time. “It has been a priority for me since our last sheriff was in. It is a significant issue,” he said.

Union County Commissioner Matt Scarfo also likes Bowen’s proposal, noting that it would provide an information base about the building that would be welcome. “The more information we have the better,” Scarfo said.

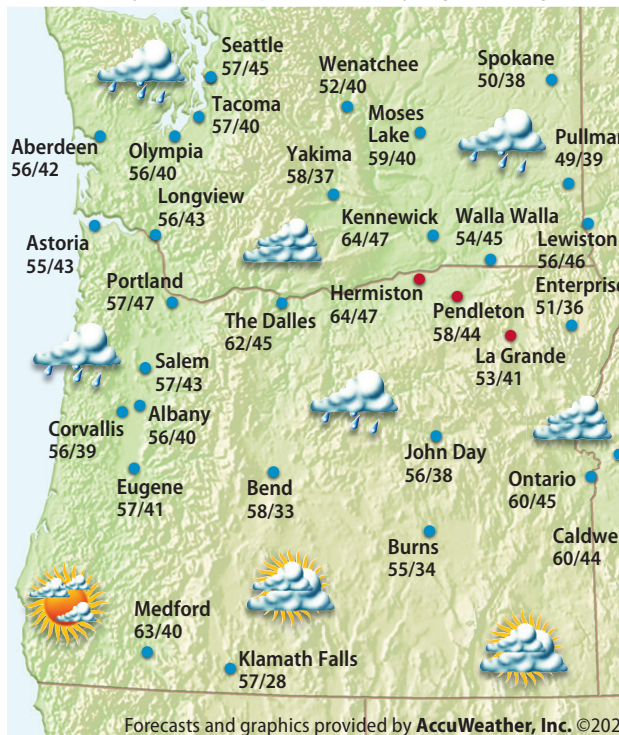
Bowen said that renovating and adding to the current building based on recommendations by Mackenzie would be anything but a temporary Band-Aid approach. “We would want to see if it could suffice for the next 50 years,” Bowen said.

## Forecast for Pendleton Area

TODAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
58° 44°	61° 43°	54° 41°	64° 41°	73° 49°
64° 47°	68° 48°	58° 46°	71° 42°	77° 50°

## OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today’s weather. Temperatures are today’s highs and tonight’s lows.



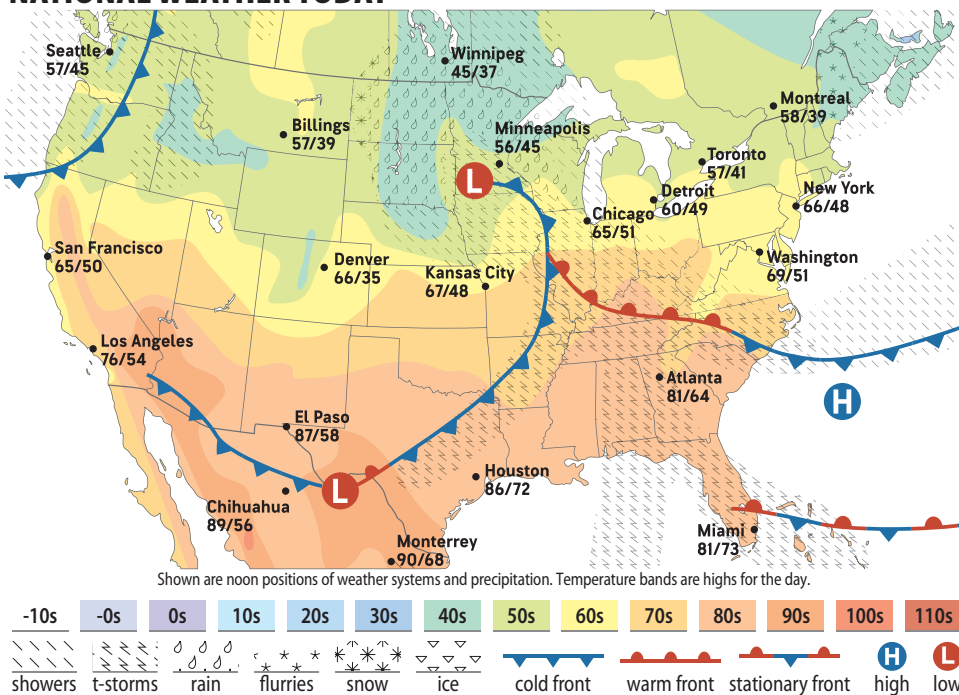
## ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	59°	41°
Normals	67°	42°
Records	91° (1926)	25° (1907)
PRECIPITATION	24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace
Month to date	1.27"	
Normal month to date	1.23"	
Year to date	4.87"	
Last year to date	3.55"	
Normal year to date	5.30"	
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	64°	44°
Normals	71°	41°
Records	87° (2021)	27° (1952)
PRECIPITATION	24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace
Month to date	1.44"	
Normal month to date	0.76"	
Year to date	3.39"	
Last year to date	1.81"	
Normal year to date	3.53"	
WINDS (in mph)		
Today	NNW 6-12	SSW 4-8
Sun.	WSW 6-12	SW 4-8
SUN AND MOON		
Sunrise today	5:45 a.m.	
Sunset tonight	8:01 p.m.	
Moonrise today	5:49 a.m.	
Moonset today	8:11 p.m.	
New	First	Full
Apr 30	May 8	May 15
		May 22

## NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday’s National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)  
High 100° in Vernon, Texas Low 16° in Bridgeport, Calif.

## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



# Baker School District signs sister school deal with the Isle of Jersey

Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — The Baker School District’s Oregon International School program has formalized its sister-school relationship with the Hautlieu School of St. Saviour on the Isle of Jersey in the English Channel.

Officials from both schools and the government of Jersey signed a memorandum of understanding on Tuesday, April 26, in the Baker School District office.

Ten Baker High School students are slated to travel to Jersey in September, along with a staff member, while 10 students from the Hautlieu School are studying in Baker City. “This is an exciting oppor-

tunity for our students to experience a different culture and educational setting,” Scott Wickenden, deputy minister for children and education for the Government of Jersey, said in a press release. “We look forward to welcoming the students from Oregon when they arrive in September.”

Baker School District Superintendent Mark Witty, who is retiring June 30 but will work one-third time as the International School’s director, said, “We look forward to all the relationships (supporting) an education of excellence for the future generation, with wide-reaching benefits we are excited to watch unfold.”

Thomas Joseph is the International School’s principal and only full-time employee.

The Baker School District started the Oregon International School more than four years ago, but the pandemic delayed its progress.

Earlier this year the Baker School Board agreed to spend about \$865,000 to buy and refurbish two historic homes in Baker City that will serve as housing for international students studying at Baker High School.

The plan is to have about 22 to 25 foreign students at BHS starting this fall.

The program, which district officials project will raise more revenue than it spends, will also include scholarships designed to make it easier for Baker High School students to study and travel abroad.

# Trail-with-rails project plans update

Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA — The Joseph Branch Trail Consortium, the nonprofit group that hopes to establish a trail-with-rails alongside the existing railroad tracks that run between Elgin and Joseph, will hold its annual member gathering Saturday, May 7, in Wallowa, according to a press release.

The gathering will run from 4-6 p.m. at the Nez Perce Wallowa Homeland Project and will include project updates, a short hike along the trail route in Wallowa and complimentary food and beverages.

There also will be an announcement of the winners in the group’s spring drawing. Drawing prizes include two seats on

a five-day rafting trip on the Snake River, two nights lodging at the Wallowa Lake Lodge, dinner and drinks for two at the Gold Room in Joseph and an echo fly fishing rod.

A limited number of drawing tickets are available until May 7 via the website JosephBranchTrail.org.

The consortium hopes to establish a 63-mile route along the tracks from Elgin to Joseph, but objections by landowners in Wallowa County have led to the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners denying conditional use permits for the project where it runs through the county.

Wallowa County Commission Chairwoman Susan Roberts, who is co-chairwoman of the Wallowa Union Railroad

Authority, said Feb. 21 she believes the project is unlikely to go through.

“It’s doubtful it’ll ever go through because people were vehemently opposed to it,” Roberts said. “Wallowa County Planning (Department) at this time is not involved because it’s not in our county.”

But Gregg Kleiner, project coordinator for the consortium, said in an email April 26 that he believes there is strong hope for the success of the project.

“Momentum is building, our membership is growing and we’re attracting major funding and support,” Kleiner said.

All are welcome to join the gathering, but an RSVP is requested by sending an email to info@joseph-branchtrail.org.

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