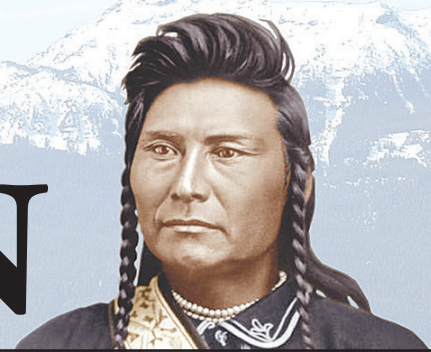


WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN



136th Year, No. 50

WINNER OF THE 2020 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

Wednesday, March 24, 2021

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Wallowa County Voices



**Leisa
Stewart**
Joseph

Seeking lower student-teacher ratio for son

ENTERPRISE — Leisa Stewart and her family moved to a home outside of Joseph about a year-and-a-half ago seeking a low student-teacher ratio for the school their 6-year-old son would attend.

"We came from a rural community but it had a really high student-teacher ratio," she said of their former home in Kimberly, Idaho. "It was like 30-to-one."

Her husband, John, worked at the University of Idaho Kimberly Research and Extension Center.

"It was supposed to be for three years but it turned out to be five," she said.

Currently, John Stewart works from home as an irrigation engineer and an ecologist.

Leisa is a landscape designer. While qualified as a landscape architect, that title requires a license in Oregon she has yet to obtain.

She recently shared her thoughts about living in Wallowa County.

What's your favorite thing about Wallowa County?

I like the low population numbers here. I don't like driving, period, and I don't have to drive that far to the store here.

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected you?

We're in the middle of building a house. We would've been done by now, but there have been problems getting materials because of the pandemic. Also, I've learned about refrigerators, freezers and dishwashers and how it's hard to get parts.

Do you plan to get the vaccine against COVID-19?

I did get the vaccine.

Which vaccine did you get?

Moderna. It went good. The first shot I didn't feel at all. The second one, I had flu-like symptoms for a day or a day-and-a-half, which was expected, and other than that, it went good.

What have you learned from living in Wallowa County?

I learned from COVID and living in the county. Because of COVID, I haven't met too many people yet. I'm a bit of an introvert and I never thought I would be the one to say I'm lonely, but I am. I guess I've learned about myself with COVID and the lower population.

What's your advice for people who are thinking about moving here?

The pace of life is slower, so the last house we built only took about three months. Even if COVID had not come, we still would've been a lot slower. Also, you have to be patient about things.

— Bill Bradshaw,
Wallowa County Chieftain



Ellen Morris Bishop/For the Wallowa County Chieftain

A \$7 million bond measure on the May 18, 2021, ballot in Wallowa would provide funding for a much needed new heating system, electrical system upgrades and other improvements to school facilities. It would be matched by another \$4 million of state funds.

Going to the ballot

Voters will decide on \$7M bond with \$4M ODE match

By ELLEN MORRIS BISHOP
For the Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA — It's been in the planning stage for two years. On May 18, voters in the Wallowa School District will decide whether to fund critically needed new heating, electrical and other updates to its high school, elementary school and gym.

If passed, the \$7 million bond measure would be matched by \$4 million from the Oregon Department of Education.

"The bond is very important to the school," school board Chairman Woody Wolfe said. "Our intent was to make (the school renovations) as affordable as possible. But with the matching grant and the bond, that puts us at what we estimate updating the main systems, especially the heating and cooling



Ellen Morris Bishop/For the Wallowa County Chieftain

Wallowa School maintenance head Jake MacDonald looks at pipes that carry hot water through the school buildings for heating. The pipes are corroding and rusting out internally, and are increasingly unreliable. Most of the heating system pipes are between 77 and 99 years old.

systems that are really essential, will cost. The money really doesn't go very far at the cost of prevailing wages."

The school district is planning to provide tours of the school and the proposed work beginning soon, and will also be posting information on

the district's Facebook page.

The school's heating system relies on a boiler that is close to failure, according to the school's head of maintenance Jake McDonald, and the technical report prepared by Pivot, the consultants that assisted the school board in evalu-

ating needed repairs. This winter, the elementary school went two days without heat, Wallowa Superintendent Tammy Jones said.

Replacement costs for a new school would be \$54 million, Wolfe said.

The board got estimates for everything from a totally new school to a number of smaller projects that included installing an elevator to ease accessibility in the high school, remodeling some classrooms into more learning friendly spaces and upgrading science labs.

"We really felt that the \$7 million bond plus \$4 million matching number was trimming out as much as we could and still address the major concerns relative to the age of the infrastructure," Wolfe said.

To keep expenses as low as possible, Wolfe said, the board limited the proposed work to things it considered absolutely necessary. Those were the accessibility issues, heating and cooling, and electrical. The \$11 million total of the \$7 million bond and \$4 million match-

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Commissioners give \$10K to four groups

Scholarship organizations hurt by pandemic

By BILL BRADSHAW
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — In an effort to help local organizations make up for losses experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners voted Wednesday, March 17, to give \$10,000 each to four groups known for their charitable efforts.

The commissioners agreed to give funds from video lottery proceeds to the Ag Resource Foundation, the Enterprise Elks, the Enterprise Veterans of Foreign Wars and Broncs & Bulls.

Commissioner Todd Nash, himself a rancher, explained the reason the Ag Resource Foundation was included. He said the foundation came out of the Wallowa County Stockgrowers as a



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Enterprise Elks Secretary Randy Morgan stands in the lodge's main hall on Thursday, March 18, 2021. The previous day, the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners voted to award \$10,000 each to four groups — the Elks, the Ag Resource Foundation, the Enterprise Veterans of Foreign Wars and Broncs & Bulls — in light of the hardship their scholarship programs suffered during the COVID-19 pandemic.

501(c)(3) so it could provide ag-related scholarships.

"They tried to put that emphasis on sophomore-plus ag students, but they have given scholar-

ships to non-ag students, they have given scholarships to freshmen," Nash said. "They have given out \$7,000-\$10,000 in scholarships a year for some time. The fundraiser

they have in the winter has raised upwards of \$10,000, but they were unable to have that (this winter)."

Commissioner Susan Roberts discussed the other three groups. The others weren't 501(c)(3) and couldn't apply for the money as such, though she did ask groups to put in applications. She said the county just received another \$30,000 payment for its video lottery fund and if they gave each group \$10,000, the county would still have \$100,000 in that fund.

"When you look at it, the Ag Resources Foundation from the Stockgrowers gives out a lot of scholarships, the Elks do that, the VFW does that and the Broncs & Bulls works with the other two entities to provide more funding for that," Roberts said. "These four entities would, for Wallowa County, probably bring in under tourism that we use to ... fill our transient room tax, so it helps our bottom line. I think we have the funding and I really would like to

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