

Blizzard



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

High winds blow snow across Farmers Lane near Hurricane Creek Road just south of Enterprise early Monday, Jan. 3, 2022. The wind event had some schools and government offices closed as power was disrupted and snowdrifts covered roads.

County signs on to opioid settlement

Action came in emergency session Dec. 30

By BILL BRADSHAW
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Wallowa County took steps Thursday, Dec. 30, that will possibly result in getting a portion of Oregon's \$329 million share of the National Opioid Settlement Agreement, as the county commissioners authorized signing onto the settlement.

During an emergency meeting to address the matter before the year ended, county counsel Paige Sully said the reason for the emergency was to not hinder going forward with the state-wide and federal settlement.

"The reason that we needed to do this on less than standard notice is because all of the entities that are going to sign this agreement have to have it signed by the second (of January)," Sully told the commissioners.

The national settlement is to resolve all opioids litigation brought by states and local political subdivisions against the three largest pharmaceutical distributors: McKesson, Cardinal Health and AmerisourceBergen, and manufacturer Janssen Pharmaceuticals Inc. and its parent company Johnson & Johnson. The settlements will provide substantial funds to states and their subdivisions for abatement of the opioids epidemic across the country and will impose transformative changes in the way the settling defendants conduct their business.

Sully emphasized that although Wallowa County is not a litigant in the settlement, the county could be a beneficiary of funds the state receives. Litigating entities — be they cities or counties — must have populations of at least 10,000. Wallowa County's population is a bit more than 7,300.

"The agreement is such that 45% of the settlement funds shall be allocated to the state of Oregon and 55% of the settlement funds shall be allocated to the Oregon



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain, File

County Commissioners, from left, John Hillock, Todd Nash and Susan Roberts are shown during a meeting in early December 2021. Wallowa County took steps Thursday, Dec. 30, 2021, that will possibly result in getting a portion of Oregon's \$329 million share of the National Opioid Settlement Agreement.

participating subdivisions. The state will deposit its funds in a prevention, treatment and recovery fund that will be used for abatement uses," Sully told the commissioners. "We will not take a direct distribution. We will, however, have the opportunity to benefit from funds from the state. There's also a provision that subdivisions can act in concert."

For example, she said, the neighboring counties that will be direct recipients could band together with Wallowa County to set up some type of regional program.

"I haven't seen the final paperwork, but frankly, it doesn't make any difference because we're not litigating," she said. "This will cost us nothing; we're not going to be paying any of the attorneys' fees."

She said another reason for the rush to approve it is to not hamper the state-wide efforts to reach the settlement.

"It will work a hardship on the litigating entities if we do not agree to sign the settlement agreement," she said. "It's my recommendation that you authorize me to do so when it comes through

so that they can complete this settlement and move forward on collecting those funds."

The commissioners voted to approve such authorization. But they had a couple of questions.

Commissioner John Hillock wondered about how any money the county should receive under the settlement could be used, such as for mental health or parole and probation.

"It will depend on what their grant application looks like," Sully said. "But only if it's related to abatement services or related to treatment."

Births

A son, Asa Phillip Nebel, was born December 9, 2021 in Enterprise to Chase and Lauren Nebel of Enterprise. Grandparents are Jan & Brien Guthridge, and Melody & Curt Nebel.

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IN BRIEF

Joseph City Council meeting postponed

JOSEPH — The usual monthly Joseph City Council meeting scheduled for Thursday, Jan. 6, has been postponed until Jan. 20, according to a press release.

The release stated the postponement was "due to several unforeseen circumstances."

Class on mountain dulcimer planned

JOSEPH — Heidi Muller will teach a class on playing the mountain dulcimer each Sunday from Jan. 9 through Feb. 13 at the Joseph Center for Arts and Culture.

The class runs from 2-3 p.m. and costs \$150, according to a press release.

The mountain dulcimer is a sweet-sounding, three-stringed instrument with roots in the Appala-

chian mountains. It's easy to learn, even for people with no musical experience, the release stated. Muller will teach all the basics and students can typically play one or two simple songs in the first lesson. Music will include traditional tunes and familiar songs, as students progress from one-finger melodies to using chords. There will be a three-student minimum to run the class.

Face masks and proof of COVID vaccination are required. No exceptions.

Rental dulcimers are available. For rentals or questions about the class, email Muller at heidi.muller.music@gmail.com.

Muller, from Joseph, is a nationally-known mountain dulcimer instructor and performer as well as a songwriter and guitarist. She has taught dulcimer for over 30 years and been an instructor at dozens of dulcimer festivals across the country. She hosts Dulcimer Week in the Wallowas every July, and has produced numerous CDs and tune books. For more information, please visit www.heidimuller.com.

To register, visit <https://tinyurl.com/dulcimerclass>.

— Chieftain staff

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