

ODOT work in Joseph to accommodate tourist season

Sidewalks downtown won't be done until September

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH — Scheduling of the planned sidewalk work in Joseph by the Oregon Department of Transportation got an official nod from the City Council during its meeting Thursday, April 7.

The plans to refurbish sidewalks and ramps to con-

form with federal Americans with Disabilities Act standards have drawn concern from the Joseph Chamber of Commerce and merchants who were concerned the work would disrupt the downtown tourist season.

After an informational meeting on the project by ODOT with local residents Monday, April 4, the city collected written concerns and addressed them at last week's meeting.

Pro-Tem Administrator Brock Eckstein said April 11 that the new plan is for work to be done on sidewalks and

ramps on the south end of town during the height of the tourist season. Then, about mid-September, ODOT will transition to working downtown.

ODOT also agreed to let the city do its own landscaping work.

"They also said rather than ODOT trying to meet the landscaping needs, (ODOT will) give money to the city to do it how we see fit rather than have a third-party contractor do it," Eckstein said.

He said ODOT will determine the amount in the next

week or two, but estimated it will be \$200,000-\$250,000.

In another matter, the council passed a resolution to authorize a loan agreement with the State Revolving Fund for a loan for \$4,352,000 to finance work on the city's wastewater treatment facility.

In October 2020, the city was fined \$2,250 by the state Department of Environmental Quality for violations connected with its wastewater treatment plant. Then-city Administrator Larry Braden said at the time the fine was mainly because the city, in

its effort to come up with a new facilities plan, ran into issues with property acquisition and was unable to find another 20-acre parcel of land for a settling pond as required by the DEQ.

"While we did get a violation, it wasn't because of negligence or anything," Eckstein said.

He said the SRF loan will complete work to resolve wastewater treatment issues. He said he believes there's light at the end of the tunnel to get the work on the sewer plant done.

"Now that the funding's

been approved, we can put it out for bids and construction start this fall," he said.

In another matter, property owner Andy McKee had made a request for a minor partition of property at 201 E. 2nd St., where the Wallowa Mountains Office Building is located.

Eckstein said the matter was tabled until the May 5 meeting because more information is needed before the council can act.

He said McKee hopes to sell the property, but the sale is contingent on being able to partition it.

Regional COVID hospitalization count zeroes out for first time in nine months

By **RONALD BOND**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — After hovering close to it for several weeks, a mark was reached in Region 9 hospitals that had not been seen in several months.

Zero.

As in no COVID-19 hospitalizations in the six counties that make up Region 9, including Wallowa County.

The Oregon Health Authority's graph that shows daily hospitalizations across the state on Friday, April 8, showed none in the combined region of Morrow, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, Baker and Malheur counties. It is the first time there hasn't been a hospitalization tabbed by the OHA in the region since July 8, 2021, just before the start of the delta spike.

The number has floated near zero for at least two weeks, dropping as low as one on four occasions and fluttering between one and four since March 15. The day before, on March 14, was the last time there were five or more in the region.

Case counts, both regionally and statewide, had been



Wallowa County Chieftain, File
Wallowa Memorial Hospital is shown in a file photo. Oregon Health Authority reported April 8, 2022, having no COVID-19 patients in hospitals in Region 9, of which Wallowa County is part of. It was the first time the region had none in nine months, per OHA data.

on the decrease in recent weeks, as have hospitalizations, though there has been a slight uptick in cases in the last week. The Friday, April 8 update showed there were 95 statewide COVID hospitalizations, a far cry from the peak of close to 1,200 during the delta spike last summer.

Regionally, there were two major jumps in that nine-month period. During the delta spike, the peak was 43 on Oct. 7, one of four consecutive days the number of cases reached at least 40. The number dropped to

as low as three on Dec. 19, then jumped again when the omicron variant arrived. There another four-day stretch of at least 40 cases, with the peak being 45 on Feb. 4 — the highest total of the pandemic.

Statewide, the pandemic has resulted in 706,687 cases of COVID-19, and 7,296 deaths, as of Friday, April 8. In Wallowa County, there have been 1,251 cases and 16 deaths. The last reported case was on March 25. Just 19 cases were reported in March.

Burch honored by Rotary Club

By **EVELYN SWART**
Rotary Club of
Wallowa County

ENTERPRISE — Long overdue accolades for an unsung community member and member of the Rotary Club of Wallowa County were given to Dick Burch on Wednesday, April 6, by the club.

As a resident of Wallowa County for 20 years and a member of Rotary for as many years, Burch contributed more hours of service than even he can count. He received a plaque of gratitude for his work in the Wallowa County community and a Paul Harris award for "service above self" in Rotary.

Burch is a former member of the Joseph City Council, served as a docent at the Joseph Center for Arts and Culture, and until recently served on the lands committee of the Wallowa Land Trust. He is also a member of the Eagle Cap Excursion Train board. He is a certified first-aid instructor for both the Red Cross and the Health and Safety Institute. In addition to teaching first-aid classes, he provides first-aid services at Oregon's Alpenfest, the Watershed Festival, the Lostine River Run and the Eagle Cap Excursion Train.

As president of the Rotary Club in 2008-09, Burch initiated Project Heartbeat. He continues to place and service Automated External Defibril-



Contributed Photo
Dick Burch, left, is awarded the Paul Harris "service above self" award by Ralph Swinehart during the April 6, 2022, meet of the Rotary Club of Wallowa County.

lators throughout the county, as well to give training wherever they are placed. Project Heartbeat places the AEDs strategically where they can be quickly available to resuscitate someone who is not breathing and has no pulse. Because AEDs must be used within 5 minutes of the victim's pulse stopping, it is vitally important that they be placed in locations quickly accessible to the public.

There are currently 109 AEDs in Wallowa County; Burch services and replaces the batteries every five years. The most recent AED placement was at M. Crow in Lostine. There are AEDs in the Grange buildings, churches, Safeway, Joseph Center, the state park at Wallowa Lake, the Wallowa Lake Lodge, the marina, the Methodist Church Camp and the top of

the tram. The schools have multiple AEDs, including in the buses; there is one in the courthouse and one with the sheriff's department. Others are placed in lodging establishments and various businesses.

Burch works with the Imnaha Responders, a group of Imnaha neighbors to whom he gave first-aid training and who are ready to help their neighbors when there is a need. Because of the distance from the hospital in Enterprise to Imnaha, the responders can give first aid assistance for emergencies prior to the time an ambulance arrives. The Imnaha community needs more responders and is holding a recruiting meeting on May 1 at 2 p.m. at the Imnaha Church to enlist more of their neighbors in the effort.

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IN BRIEF

'Destination Creation' workshop offered

ENTERPRISE — The popular "Destination Creation" workshop for business owners is being offered by the Northeast Oregon Economic Development District from April 19 to May 24. Registration deadline is April 18.

The class will be held online Tuesdays from 5:30-7:30 p.m.

This series provides the framework for how to think about a business and how to position a business to

become a destination that customers will frequent now and into the future.

The concepts will be presented in recorded videos by small-business mentor and professional speaker Jon Schallert.

NEOEDD Executive Director Lisa Dawson, a certified facilitator of the program, will bring decades of experience working with businesses to the discussions about the concepts.

Learning materials including webinars may be accessed via computer or mobile device for up to six months following the class via the Destination University portal.

The regular fee for the course is \$399. However,

NEOEDD is offering a special option for businesses in Wallowa, Baker and Union counties. Sign up and pay \$199 now and receive \$199 back after attending the entire series (with no more than one excused absence) and submitting a plan for implementing new actions to improve your business.

If the registration fee is out of reach, scholarships are available for business owners who have a low-to-moderate income.

Contact Dawson via email at lisadawson@neoedd.org or call 541-426-3598 for scholarship information.

To register, visit <https://tinyurl.com/destinationcreation> or email Dawson.

— Chieftain staff

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In addition, our annual Open House and Spring Clean-up will be April 21-22 at the Recycle Center on Fish Hatchery Road.

We'll have prizes and a Kid's Coloring Contest!

We need volunteers to clean-up around the Recycling Center and staff the information/prizes booth. Donations for the Yard Sale can be dropped off to Volunteers at the Recycle Center between 10 am-5 pm, April 21-22 or 9 a.m. Saturday before the Yard Sale. We hope you can join us!

For more info: wallowacountyrecycling@gmail.com