HYGIENE

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Witty said concern has been heightened by the recent case of coronavirus reported Monday in an employee at Wildhorse Resort and Casino in Pendleton.

Witty said certified teachers throughout the region attended an Oregon Education Association training at Wildhorse over the weekend. Student athletes from the region, including BHS students and staff, also ate at Wildhorse.

Witty said upon receiving that information and knowing that the Wildhorse employee had tested "presumptive positive" with coronavirus, the superintendent contacted the Baker County Health Department regarding the potential risk. He said he was informed that no action was needed by the school district based on the employee's work site.

Taylor said she had learned that the employee was the back-door security guard at Wildhorse.

The Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center of The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation issued a press release today stating that "the nature of the employee's function at the casino was such that patrons and most employees would have had minimal direct contact and thus minimal risk of exposure to coronavirus from this employee."

In conferring with Oregon Health Authority representatives, Witty said he had been advised not to restrict activities of students planning to travel outside the district for competition this weekend or of those participating in the state basketball tournament at BHS.

Buell Gonzales Jr., the District's athletic director, noted that the BHS Mock Trial team will be heading to Portland for the state tournament Friday and Saturday. The Baker boys basketball team will travel to Klamath Falls to compete Saturday against Henley High School in a 4A state basketball playoff. And Baker Middle School wrestlers will travel to a tournament at Riverside Junior/Senior High School at Boardman.

In an email issued by Peter Weber, Oregon School Activities Association executive director, who was in Baker City Wednesday, these "key planning considerations for athletic/activity events" were offered:

• Emphasize that participants, staff and spectators should stay away from the event if they feel unwell (have a fever and cough).

• Prioritize that all frequently touched surfaces throughout the venue are properly cleaned prior to the event with approved disinfectants and that adequate cleaning supplies are available for use during the event.

• Provide easily accessible soap and water or alcohol hand sanitizers and tissues in all venue common areas and consider having additional hand-sanitizer stations available to promote proper hand hygiene.

• Promote appropriate "respiratory etiquette" and hand hygiene practices prior to, and during, the event with signs and announcements.

• Encourage spectators to spread out in the venue, when possible.

From Baker City, Weber was planning to head to Pendleton Thursday where the state 2A basketball tournament will get underway at the Pendleton Convention Center and Pendleton High School, and then to Coos Bay for the state 3A championships March 5-7 at the North Bend and Marshfield high schools.

Similar precautions will be taken against the coronavirus at those venues, Weber said. And that will include reminders issued to the crowd by announcers routinely throughout the tournaments.

Kelly Foster, the OSAA's associate director, will be in Baker City providing oversight throughout the 1A tournament.

She said announcements issued during the breaks will include many of the thing she told children when she worked as a nanny: Reminding people to use hand sanitizer, asking them to stay home if they are not feeling well, and cautioning them to "catch your cough" either in the inside of their elbows or with a tissue rather than on their hands where the germs can easily be spread elsewhere.

S. John Collins / Baker City Herald

Kathy Taylor, Baker County Tournaments chairwoman, works to ensure that activities run smoothly.

COUNTY

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Bennett said that in terms of the climate bills, which haven't advanced in the Legislature because most Republican lawmakers have left the Capitol to deny the majority Democrats a quorum, he believes that "the people of Oregon deserve a right to vote on something so impactful."

Commissioner Bruce Nichols agreed with Bennett, saying "there's no doubt the climate is warmer, there's no doubt we have pollution everywhere."

"However, this particular bill puts a huge burden on the people of Oregon," Nichols said. "We're so overtaxed as it is right now, just everybody in general. If this ever passes, this will drive lots and lots of businesses out of Oregon."

Nichols said he believes the issue needs to be addressed at the national level, because Oregon's share of carbon emissions is "minuscule."

"I don't like having something from a Legislature crammed down the people's throats whether they like it or not and that's what this is, that's the way I see it," Nichols said.

Harvey said he sees this issue this way, as regards the Legislature: "do they or should they take the authority to decide for all Oregonians what we should or should not pay in new taxes?

"I do not believe the Earth is warmer," Harvey said. "I don't believe that, whatever we could do in this state, outside of cutting down our catastrophe fires that we have, would be adding anywhere near enough into the atmosphere in Oregon. I actually think we would be flatlined if we could stop that.

"This will tax people at every level of their life and actually harm more people than it could ever benefit," Harvey said.

In other business Wednesday, Nancy Staten, the county's public health director, talked about the coronavirus (COVID-19).

Staten said concerned citizens can call 211 to get information. People who believe they have symptoms should contact their health care provider — by phone.

"We don't want people going into clinics, to the health department, to the hospital. We want them to call their providers and go from there."

Staten encouraged people to take basic precautions, including frequently washing their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds, avoiding touching their eyes, nose and mouth, and staying home if they're ill.

Jason Yencopal, the county's emergency management director, said stores are running out of hand sanitizer and other supplies. The stores are working on getting more supplies in.

"We'll get through this together," Harvey said.

In other action Wednesday commissioners:

• approved the purchase of a heating and cooling unit for the Circuit Court for $8,924 from Baker County Heating and Cooling LLC.

• approved the purchase of a vehicle for the Sheriff's Office for $29,716 from Baker City Auto Ranch.

•approved the Search and Rescue trailer purchase bid from Central Oregon Trailers for $8,657.80

• approved a two-year $148,228 grant for the Victims of Crime Act Criminal Fine Account for an employee for the VOCA program.

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LOCAL BRIEFING

Master Gardener classes start with fruit tree pruning session on Saturday

Master Gardener classes will begin with a tree fruit pruning session on Saturday, March 7.

It will be a prelude to a series of "Keep the Look" classes aimed at helping gardeners keep their lawns and home landscapes in shape for the spring and summer.

The pruning session is scheduled from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. March 7 at the Baker County Extension Office, 2600 East St. The fee is $10. David Cowan, a Baker County Master Gardener volunteer, will teach the session.

Those attending are asked to bring a brown bag lunch, dress for the outdoors and be prepared for hands-on lessons.

Cowan also is coordinator of a five-part series of classes scheduled Thursdays on March 26, April 9, April 23, May 7 and May 21. Lectures start at 6 p.m.

For those who register for all five classes, the fee is $20, otherwise the charge is $5 per class. Those attending are asked to bring a pen or pencil. Drinks and light snacks will be provided. Accommodations for people with disabilities may be made by calling 541-523-6418 or at mastergardener.baker@oregonstate.edu.

Other presenters will be Mindy Sherrieb, Baker County Master Gardener volunteer, and MarkliAnn Johnson and Kim Anderson, senior Master Gardener volunteers.

For more information, call Sherrieb at 541-523-3449 or leave a message for her at the number or email address above.

Master Gardener classes start with fruit tree pruning session on Saturday

The Baker City AAUW chapter will meet at 6 p.m. Monday, March 9, at North Baker School, 2725 Seventh St., in the model preschool classroom. The presenter will be Betty Palmer, the Baker School District's assistant superintendent, who will speak about early learning and some of the things the Baker Early Learning Collaborative has been doing to address that need in Baker City.

Heritage Museum needs volunteers

Baker Heritage Museum will have a volunteer recruitment meeting and training on March 11 at the Museum, 2480 Grove St. There will be two sessions to choose from: 10 a.m. to noon or 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. The museum is seeking volunteer cashiers and docents.

Soil/water conservation districts meet

The Burnt River Soil and Water Conservation District will have its monthly meeting on March 10 at 5:30 p.m. at the USDA Service Center, 3990 Midway Drive, in Baker City. The Baker Valley Soil and Water Conservation District will meet March 19 at noon, also at the USDA Service Center. The public is welcome at both meetings. To RSVP, call 541-523-7121, extension 100.

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