

Local & State

Survey: Most support stay at home order

By Dick Hughes
For the Oregon Capital Bureau

Regardless of where they live, most Oregonians support Gov. Kate Brown’s stay at home orders, according to survey results released Wednesday by an independent firm. That support is strong even among the 40% of respondents who had suffered job losses, pay cuts or reduced work hours.

The survey conducted by Portland-based DHM Research indicated that overall, 60% of Oregonians strongly support the stay at home

orders, and an additional 22% somewhat support them. Only 6% are strongly opposed. Those are similar to national results, in which strong opposition is uncommon.

“This last week we’ve been seeing small but visible protests, including in Redmond, and they are just absolutely the exception,” said John Horvick, DHM’s director of client relations and political research.

The online survey of 900 adult Oregonians was conducted April 17-21.

Participants indicated that the most important prerequisites for reopening the economy were having widespread testing for COVID-19, sufficient hospital capacity and available effective treatments. But Horvick said support for testing hinges on Oregonians then seeing a decline in positive cases.

“This is very fluid. People could change their minds tomorrow,” he said. “As of today, without testing people are going to be reluctant to allow businesses to open. They’re going to be reluctant

for themselves to re-engage in the community.”

His takeaway was that Oregon should do whatever it could to increase testing.

The DHM survey found little support for allowing businesses, schools and other places to reopen on a specific date — either June 1 or Jan. 1 — no matter what. Neither was there support for using a high unemployment rate (15%) as a barometer for reopening.

Fifty-one percent of respondents said Oregon is headed in the right direction.

REOPEN

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The plan’s overview notes that although social distancing, business closures and other precautions have helped Baker County remain one of five of Oregon’s 36 counties with no confirmed cases, the “heartache, despair, uncertainty and fear caused by the efforts to slow or stop the spread of this terrible disease through the shutdown of non-essential business and commerce is another matter. At this point, with the favorable health condition that exists in Baker County, relative to COVID-19, the devastating economic impact to the county seems even more extreme, and relief to these aspects of the effects of the disease require as much attention as continuing disease mitigation effects.”

The overriding goal, Bennett said, is to transfer the decision-making about reopening businesses from the governor’s office to the county.

“We believe this is so critical to our county, and I’m speaking for Bill (Commission Chairman Bill Harvey) and Bruce (Commissioner Bruce Nichols),” Bennett said.

When the governor approves the first phase, restaurants would continue to be limited to offering takeout and delivery, and bars would remain closed.

Nonessential retail businesses that have been closed since mid-March could reopen, as could a group the plan describes as the “professional/personal services group,” which includes beauticians, barbers, accountants and lawyers.

Those businesses would have to ensure their patrons maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet, and employees would need to do “frequent cleaning of commonly touched surfaces.”

Businesses in the professional/personal services group would have to schedule appointments with clients, and those appointment logs would allow a team based at the Baker County Health Department to employ “contact tracing,” a method used, in the case of a confirmed case of the virus, to identify people who the infected person could have infected.

The county’s plan also calls for businesses in the professional/personal services group to wear cloth face masks, to limit the number of people in waiting

areas to make social distancing easier, and to frequently clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces.

The plan also lists general guidelines for residents. During the first phase the county recommends people considered especially vulnerable to the virus — those 60 or older or with health issues, such as asthma, chronic lung disease or heart disease — continue to shelter in place.

Other people should continue to follow social distancing guidelines and avoid social settings of more than 10 people unless they can either maintain spacing of at least 6 feet or wear cloth face masks. The county also recommends residents minimize nonessential travel during the first phase.

“Social distancing is probably the main tool we have,” Bennett said Friday. “I realize it’s not convenient, but we have to continue to practice it.”

The plan calls for the county to move to a second phase if two weeks pass without the county reporting at least eight positive cases of the virus in a one-week period, or without having at least two people hospitalized with COVID-19, one patient on a ventilator, or surrounding hospitals reaching 30% capacity.

If the county reaches any of those thresholds it would halt moving forward to the next phase, allowing time for the Health Department to pursue contact tracing.

Bennett said the county could potentially move to the second phase sooner than two weeks if the medical professionals who are part of the county’s team agree that’s reasonable due to a continuing lack of virus cases.

Second phase

Restaurants and bars could reopen, provided they maintain social distancing and reduce capacity to about 50% of normal by blocking alternate booths or tables or making similar changes. Businesses would have to clean and disinfect booths and tables between each group of diners, and physical barriers would be required at the cashier. Employees who have contact with customers would have to wear a cloth face mask.

Theaters, churches and swimming pools could reopen with social distancing and frequent cleaning of commonly

touched surfaces.

The county would no longer recommend people avoid nonessential travel.

It would continue to urge people to follow social distancing, including in groups of more than 10 people. People should avoid gatherings of more than 50 people unless they wear cloth face masks.

The county’s plan is based on the framework that Brown’s office released earlier this week.

That framework ties the reopening of the state’s economy to, among other criteria, a declining number of confirmed virus cases, sufficient hospital capacity (specific goals haven’t been set), adequate testing, personal protective equipment and the ability to do contact tracing.

Brown said she would consider special treatment for counties such as Baker that have no or few confirmed cases.

The governor’s framework requires counties to also submit endorsement letters of their plans from the county health officer and the CEO of the local hospital.

Bennett said both Dr. Eric Lamb, the county’s public health officer, and Priscilla Lynn, president of Saint Alphonsus Medical Center-Baker City, were involved in crafting the county’s plan and support it.

“Both have been involved from the start,” Bennett said.

Lynn said: “We are fortunate to have a very close relationship with the Baker County Health Department and Baker County Emergency Management and will continue to work together to support a safe and thoughtful reopening plan for the county.”

Third phase

Restrictions from the second phase, including limitations on restaurant and bar capacity, would end.

In addition, the county would allow visits at nursing homes and other long-term care facilities to resume provided visitors wear cloth face masks unless physical barriers are in place.

Bennett emphasized that the reopen plan is “adaptive,” meaning that county officials recognize that it will need to be changed based on circumstances.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Local students on EOU dean’s list

LA GRANDE — More than a dozen Baker County and North Powder students were named to the dean’s list for the winter term at Eastern Oregon University. To qualify, students must have a grade-point average of at least 3.5.

Baker City

James AhHee, Alayne Bennett, Koedi Birmingham, Candys Bogner, Boston Colton, James Dunlap, Madison Elms, Isabella Evans, Abigail Hobbs, Makenna Huggins, Rowdy Keller, Wyatt Knadle, Samantha Martin, Paige Pearce, Andrea Pettit, Lynn Robinson, Corrina Stadler, Braden Staebler-Siewell, Alexandria Wachtel, Kaitlyn Wyatt

Haines

Samuel Pointer

Halfway

Aubrey Vannice

North Powder

Tonya Dias, Kate Jesenko

Oxbow

Nathan Seggerman

Baker students on OSU honor roll

CORVALLIS — Baker County students were among those named to the scholastic honor roll for the winter term at Oregon State University. Students must have a grade-point average of at least 3.5.

Baker City

Hannah J. Boruch, senior, Human Development and Family Science; Josephine E. Bryan, junior, Design & Innovation Management; Zechariah D. Compos, junior, Sociology; Reno R. Hammond, freshman, Chemistry; Ezra R. Taylor, junior, Computer Science, Calli N. Ward, junior, Sociology

Halfway

Joseph W. Aguilar, junior, Animal Sciences

Available Through The Library

Although the library is closed, ebooks are available through the Library2Go service. There’s a link on the left side of the screen at www.bakerlib.org. Patrons can access Library2Go with their library card number and PIN.

NEWLY ADDED

- “Masked Prey,” John Sandford
- “The Plague” Albert Camus
- “Revenge,” James Patterson
- “House of Scarlett,” Meghan March
- “Code Name Hélène” Ariel Lawhon
- “Walk the Wire,” David Baldacci
- “Hidden Valley Road,” Robert Kolker
- “Broken,” Don Winslow
- “Simon the Fiddler,” Paulette Jiles
- “This is Happiness,” Niall Williams

ALWAYS AVAILABLE

- “Little Women,” Louisa May Alcott
- “The Call of the Wild,” Jack London
- “Pride & Prejudice,” Jane Austen
- “Think and Grow Rich,” Napoleon Hill
- “The Mysterious Affair at Styles,” Agatha Christie
- “Frankenstein,” Mary Shelley
- “The Red House Mystery,” A.A. Milne
- “Ulysses,” James Joyce
- “Treasure Island,” Robert Louis Stevenson
- “The Picture of Dorian Gray,” Oscar Wilde

LEARNING

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Hibbert also took part in planning for a scaled-down school remodeling project that would have been funded in part by a \$7.5 million bond measure that had been scheduled to go to voters in the May 19 election.

The District withdrew the bond measure from the ballot in March after Gov. Kate Brown announced an extended spring break for schools (which has now been extended through the summer), and ordered many businesses to close for an extended period in an effort to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

Witty stated at the time that the Board decided to postpone the bond measure to avoid adding to the community’s financial burden.

At Thursday’s session, Hibbert detailed how the District will spend \$2.2 million to make improvements to the North Baker building.

That budget includes \$1.8 million in state Student Improvement Act funding, \$200,000 in grants (\$100,000 already received from the Or-

egon Community Foundation and another \$100,000 Witty said the District expects to receive from the Ford Family Foundation). Witty said grant funding could reach as high as \$400,000.

The District will contribute \$96,158, and another \$80,000 will be provided by Preschool Promise, the Oregon Department of Education’s Early Learning Division, to purchase furniture for pre-kindergarten classrooms.

The budget includes a 9% contingency, which Hibbert said is cutting it close considering the age of the building.

An estimated \$601,767 will be spent before June 30 and the other \$1,494,391 will be spent in the next fiscal year, beginning July 1.

The Board will be asked to approve a resolution in May authorizing the initial expense because it is not included in this year’s budget.

The ground floor of the north end of the building, added to the 1909 structure in the 1950s, will be remodeled to include four classrooms for programs including Early Intervention, Head Start and preschool, Hibbert said.

The wing at the south end of the building, which Hibbert said was added in the 1970s, will be remodeled to include five kindergarten classrooms, which will be occupied in the fall of 2021. The kindergartners will remain in the modular classrooms at Brooklyn Primary School this fall.

Eagle Cap Innovative High School and the Culinary Arts program will continue to be housed on the upper floors of the building when classes resume. Those students will enter through doors on the west side of the building and then travel upstairs to their classrooms, Witty said.

Hibbert said the interior renovation will include abatement of asbestos tile, pipe insulation and fire escape cladding in the newer areas of the building as well as the tuffstone part of the school.

The first-floor improvements on the additions from the 1950s and 1970s will include new flooring, paint, lighting, cabinets and furniture.

A secure entry system will be placed in the front vestibule of the building. Restrooms will be remodeled to be accessible to people with handicapping

conditions and the electrical system will be upgraded, Hibbert said.

Heating, ventilation and air-conditioning upgrades will not be included in the remodeling project.

“North Baker has an old boiler that will be in need of upgrade in the future,” she said.

The project does not call for new walls to be built or new square footage to be added to the old school.

“The goal is to make it look like a positive, exciting and pleasant place that kids will want to be in,” she said.

The exterior of the building also will receive new lighting and paint (with the exception of the tuffstone portion of the original building, which will not be painted), Hibbert said. New windows will be installed on the ground floor and the play area on the north side will be fenced.

The parent and bus drop-off system will be reconfigured and the existing basketball court will be converted to a parking lot. The fire escape on the south side of the building also will be resurfaced.

The abatement work has

already gone out for bid and is expected to start May 11.

LKV Architects, a Boise firm that also has been involved in the District’s long-range building plans, is expected to have the scope design and documents ready by early May and will be looking for contractors to do the job.

“We’re optimistic we will meet our deadline,” Hibbert said.

Witty said multiple partners involved in early childhood education have been working closely with the District to develop the remodeling plan for the school.

“It’s critical to link our early learning partners with us so that it flows for the families and for us,” Witty said. “We’ve had multiple discussions around multiple community partners to get to this.”

VOTE

Laurie

DRAPER

OTEC

Board of Directors

Position 3

Harney County



Raised in Grant County and a Harney County Resident for 37+ years, my entire working career has been in customer service (US Bank, small business owner, and ODFW). I hope to continue that service for the member-owners of Oregon Trail Electric. Now retired, I have the time and energy to work with the OTEC Board and offer a fresh perspective to continue to provide reasonable, reliable power for you.

I ask for your vote.