

## TRACK

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The black lettering backed in red proclaims notice of a temporary order: "Play structures and school grounds closed until further notice by governor's executive order 20-12."

The notice continues "all sport and community group practices and games are cancelled. All athletic fields and outdoor spaces are closed to programmed and permitted uses."

Harvey says he doesn't understand how any of that relates to people walking on a track that many community residents helped pay to build. He believes the track should be available to the public as a safe way to get fresh air and to exercise as has been encouraged by Gov. Kate Brown as well as city and county officials.

Harvey says he visits the area daily because his mother lives across the street from the track. She walks short distances on it frequently and it provides a safe alternative to walking in the streets for her and other older adults as well as people with young children.

"It's a beautiful track, a beautiful place to walk and a safe place," he said.

Harvey said he's planning to start walking on the track and he's encouraging everyone he knows to walk on it.

Not all schools in the area have interpreted state restrictions in the same way.

The La Grande School District, for example, has not closed its track to the public, said Joseph Waite, the District's facilities and maintenance director.

"I have had no instruction to close it or to put up any signage on the track," Waite said.

He says he drives by the track frequently and there are usually people walking on it, including couples walking together and those who walk individually. Seldom does he see more than five people at a time on the track, he said.

Harvey first took his concerns to Baker School District Superintendent Mark Witty, who later referred Harvey to Chris Hawkins, Baker School Board chairman.

After several email conversations with Hawkins and still no action, Harvey said he called Shannon McKone of Elkhorn Media Group radio station.

On Friday, Hawkins issued a response to McKone and the email later was forwarded by request from the School District Office to the Herald.

Hawkins' letter stated that the District "has closed its athletic facilities as required by the Oregon School Activities Association (OSAA) and in compliance with the Governor's executive order."

Hawkins said he understands how frustrating it must be for those who live near facilities such as city and county parks, the Baker Sports Complex and community businesses they are used to frequenting.

He stated, however, that violating the OSAA restrictions could put the District "at risk of being penalized therefore negatively affecting our students involved in OSAA activities."

"Our students are our priority, they have been through a lot this

year and we hope our community can support our position with the closure of the high school track," Hawkins stated.

In an email to the Herald, Peter Weber, OSAA executive director, stated that "the OSAA Executive Board, in alignment with the Governor's Executive Orders, has instructed member schools to close their athletic facilities."

He said there is no expectation for schools to monitor public compliance at all facilities, adding that "we've had a good response from schools in following the order."

"As for the risk of being penalized, certainly that's not our goal in putting out this guidance," Weber said. "Ultimately our Executive Board does have authority to penalize schools but our intent is for schools to abide by the directives until such time that the Governor and the Oregon Health Authority permit opening things back up again."

Hawkins said the news Tuesday that the governor was allowing the limited reopening of some state parks, outdoor recreation and day-use areas in the state could make the issue a moot point in the coming days.

He said if phase 1 of the county's economic reopening plan is allowed to proceed on May 15, the school district will be awaiting further instruction from OSAA and the governor as well.

"And we'll be back to some kind of normal and can take the signs down," Hawkins said.

But in the meantime, he said: "We're asking that folks abide by the closure."

## Driver seriously hurt in crash on Interstate 84

A California man was flown by Life Flight to a Spokane hospital Tuesday afternoon with life-threatening injuries sustained in a one-vehicle crash on Interstate 84 near North Powder.

Sr. Trooper Andrew McClay wrote in his media log that he responded to the crash at 12:58 p.m. Tuesday at Milepost 289. The Nissan Sentra sedan involved in the crash was driven by Ryan D. Ziegler, 34, of Lancaster, California.

A witness told McClay that

Ziegler's vehicle left the west-bound freeway lanes, went into the median where it struck a bridge, and then traveled end over end into the river on the other side of the freeway.

Ziegler was traveling with a pet python in his vehicle, McClay said. The snake was taken to a veterinary clinic for evaluation. Ziegler's vehicle was pulled out of the river by RoadRunner Towing.

No other information about Ziegler's condition was available in time for this report.

## COUNTY

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Bennett said the county has addressed the criteria that Gov. Kate Brown listed as requirements for approving county reopening plans, including available ventilators and additional hospital capacity.

"We also have worked with a local hotel that if you need to be isolated and you really don't have the home setting to do that, the county would put you up at that hotel and we'd make sure you got food and everything," he said. "Or, if you have impaired immune system or you're in the high risk and the house has folks that are impacted, we can locate them there."

In other business Wednesday, commissioners:

- approved an ordinance allowing the county to administer permits and reclamation plans for its gravel quarries rather than relying on a state agency for approval.

"This is only for Baker County property, this is not anybody else's property we're addressing," Commission Chairman Bill Harvey said.

- approved the purchase of two satellite communication systems for \$25,110.37. The money comes from the state rather than the county budget. The equipment will ensure communication is available during emergencies in areas with limited or no cell coverage.

## FIREWORKS

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Haines City Recorder Valerie Russell said she checked with ODOT officials Monday, and she was told the agency is not issuing permits for parades on state highways now.

Rowe said that although she's disappointed about the cancellation of the parade and other events, she remains optimistic about the potential for the holiday's crowd-pleasing culmination.

The fireworks display is different from the parade and other events in that many spectators watch from their cars, she said.

"If we can get the fireworks up in the air I think it would be a huge uplift for the community of Haines and the people of Baker City," Rowe said on Tuesday. "Our energy is going to be focused on the fireworks."

The other big draw in Haines during the Fourth of July is the two-day Haines Stampede rodeo.

As of Tuesday, rodeo organizers were still preparing for the event, set for July 3 and 4, according to a post on the Haines Stampede's Facebook page.

"We are working with the County to see if we can comply with the reopening requirements," the post reads in part.

Colleen Taylor, a member of Haines Stampede & Rodeo Association Inc., said the organization had no further comment.

Baker County Commissioner Mark Bennett said he talked with Taylor on Monday about the possibility of putting on the rodeo.

Whether that's possible depends largely on factors that simply can't be predicted today, almost two months before the holiday, Bennett said.

"I know people like dates, but we really just don't know

at this point," Bennett said.

A key issue is when Oregon Gov. Kate Brown approves Baker County's reopening plan, which county officials sent to the governor's office on April 24 and revised earlier this week.

Brown has previously set May 15 as a date for potentially allowing counties such as Baker, with few confirmed cases of coronavirus, to begin reopening.

The governor announced Tuesday that daytime use of some state parks would resume Wednesday. The list didn't include Sumpter Valley Dredge State Heritage Area, or Unity or Farewell Bend state parks in Baker County.

Brown said day use could begin at some other parks starting next week.

Baker County's plan has three phases, and calls for advancing from one phase to the next within two weeks presuming there is not a rash of local cases or a large outbreak elsewhere.

Bennett said that if the county reaches the third phase of its plan, an event such as the Haines Stampede could possibly happen, although likely with some level of social distancing or other precautions.

All other things being equal, the later in the summer the event the more likely the county will reach the third phase of its reopening plan, Bennett said.

He said county officials have had frequent discussions about the Baker County Fair, set for the first week of August.

If Brown OKs the county's plan around May 15, it's quite possible that the Fair could happen on schedule, Bennett said.

There could be financial challenges, however.

The Oregon Lottery, which supplies revenue to several county departments, has seen cuts of about \$20 million

per week from video lottery, which has all but ended with the closure of bars since March 17.

About one-third of the Baker County Fair Board's annual revenue — \$55,000 — comes from video lottery revenue.

Bennett said he's also concerned that sponsors and other contributors to the Fair won't be able to help as much as usual this year because they've suffered economic losses from the pandemic.

Bennett said he understands that organizers of

some events have to decide well in advance whether to go ahead, while others have the flexibility to decide not long before.

He said the county is looking at assigning someone to serve as a coordinator helping event organizers with their planning.

"Our goal is to have all of these events going," Bennett said.

Some have already been canceled, including the Hells Canyon Motorcycle Rally in July, and the East-West Shrine All-Star Football

Game scheduled for Aug. 1.

Shelly Cutler, executive director of the Baker County Chamber of Commerce, said the Miners Jubilee is still being planned for July 17-19, and the new organizer of the Baker City Bronc and Bull Riding events said those rodeo competitions are also still slated for July 17 and 18.

Bennett said he understands that regardless of which events happen as planned, attendance could be down as people remain leery of being in large groups.

He said the county's goal with its plan is to be in a

position where individuals can choose the types of events they want to attend, rather than being precluded, by government orders, from attending any type of gathering.

Bennett noted that the county's plan, even as it eases restrictions on businesses and events, calls for encouraging people to follow social distancing guidelines when possible and to use proper sanitation in all situations.

"We believe our plan both protects people and is aggressively moving us forward," he said.

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