

OREGON'S BIGGEST COVID-19 OUTBREAK CENTERED ON ISLAND CITY CHURCH



Screenshot from Lighthouse Pentecostal Church video

Members of the Lighthouse Pentecostal Church in Island City during services April 26 while Union County and the rest of Oregon remained under orders preventing large gatherings to help curb the spread of the coronavirus. The screenshot is from a video the church has since removed from its Facebook page. The Lighthouse Pentecostal Church is associated with at least 236 COVID-19 cases in the county.

Union County commissioners want to move back to phase 1

By Sabrina Thompson
The (La Grande) Observer

LA GRANDE — Union County commissioners voted Wednesday morning to recommend rolling back to phase 1 guidelines.

The move comes as the county is the state’s hotspot for the coronavirus with 240 confirmed cases as of Tuesday, according to the Oregon Health Authority, and at least 236 of those stemming from members of the Lighthouse Pentecostal Church in Island City just east of La Grande.

The Center for Human Development, which oversees

public health in the county, announced just two more cases Wednesday morning, bringing the total to 242.

The board of commissioners met via a Zoom call to address the community’s concerns about the outbreak. Members of the Center for Human Development, the Union County Sheriff’s Office, La Grande Police Department and the Incident Management Team’s J.B. Brock sat in on the meeting to provide further information and recommendations. In addition to recommending the roll back to Phase 1, commissioners voted to recommend

wearing masks.

The two motions are only recommendations. Commissioner Matt Scarfo said the board is looking into what power it has to enforce and regulate phases and mask use. Commissioner Donna Beverage said she would rather trust residents to voluntary enact phase 1 guidelines. The county, like most of Oregon, had moved into phase 2 re-opening earlier this month.

La Grande Police Chief Gary Bell and Sheriff Boyd Rasmussen confirmed there will be no formal enforcement of guidelines.

The two top local law enforcement officers said their agencies will continue to look into complaints about people not following guidelines and make recommendations to those who don’t to reconsider their actions to keep the community safe.

Public Health Administrator Carrie Brogiovanni said what happens next in the county depends on every member of the community stepping up.

“We don’t have a reliable treatment or vaccine,” she said. “So the tools we have to use are the preventative measures.”

Local students graduate from OSU

CORVALLIS —Seven Baker City students are among more than 7,000 who have earned degrees as part of Oregon State University’s class of 2020.

While Oregon State’s traditional commencement ceremonies were postponed due to the pandemic, the graduating students are being celebrated online. To watch celebratory messages and learn more about the Oregon State Class of 2020, visit <https://commencement.oregonstate.edu/>.

- Hannah J. Boruch, Bachelor of Science, Human Development and Family Sciences
- Ryan K. Cashen, Honors Bachelor of Science, magna cum laude, Chemical Engineering
- Rebecca S. Colton, Master of Education, College Student Services Administration
- Bailey M. Hill, Bachelor of Arts,

- English
- Levi S. Mansueti, Bachelor of Science, Chemical Engineering
- Bryson T. Smith, Bachelor of Science, Kinesiology
- Connor L. Yates, Master of Science, Robotics
- North Powder:
- Taylor M. Martin, Bachelor of Science, Human Development and Family Sciences

OUTBREAK

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Although almost all of the COVID-19 cases in Union County — 236 of 240, of which 218 were announced Monday or Tuesday — are connected to the Lighthouse Pentecostal Church in Island City, Bennett said there’s still the potential for Baker County residents to have been exposed while in Union County.

“I think it’s too soon to see the full implications here,” he said Wednesday morning.

Bennett said he has no reason to believe that any large gatherings of people not following social distancing guidelines or wearing face masks, as was the case at the Island City church, have taken place in Baker County.

“We’ve not received reports of anything

of that sort, even anecdotally,” Bennett said. “We’re not aware of that.”

Baker County has had only one confirmed case of the virus, which was reported May 6. That person, who was not identified but lives in the 97814 ZIP code area, recovered at home, according to the Baker County Health Department.

Saint Alphonsus Medical Center in Baker City, the county’s only hospital, has “a surge plan in place and are prepared for an increase in patients should that occur,” Laura Huggins, a spokeswoman for the hospital, wrote in an email to the Herald on Tuesday.

The plan Baker County submitted to the state prior to phase 1 of reopening, which started May 15, stated that Saint Alphonsus had boosted its capacity from 25 beds to 35, including five intensive care unit beds.

In addition, the county had set up an alternate site with the capacity for up to 60 more beds.

Bennett said the county’s emergency management team had a discussion Monday, and the team confirmed that the county’s contact tracers are ready if needed.

Bennett also said the county is ready to operate a call center if the Health Department starts to receive more calls from concerned residents than its staff can handle.

The call center, which would be staffed by county employees, is designed to give residents the information that’s also available on the county’s COVID-19 website, www.bakercountycovid19.com

Bennett said he understands that not all residents have internet access, and that some would prefer to talk to a person in any case.

CENTER

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Other measures recommended for visitors:

- Practice social distancing by maintaining 6 feet of space between you and others.
- Wear cloth face coverings where social distancing is difficult (except for those who are under age 2 or who have trouble breathing).
- Wash your hands often.

While you’re outdoors, use hand sanitizers.

- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Most importantly, please stay home if you don’t feel well.

Now that Oregon is allowing larger gatherings in many counties, including Baker, the BLM is moving forward with scheduled performances

in July, starting the July 4 weekend, including the 6 p.m. Saturday performances.

All entertainment will be

outside at the amphitheater (in the event of rain, performances will be on the front porch area).

Best Friends of Baker Saturday Market NOW OPEN!!

**Fridays & Saturdays
8 AM - 2 PM**

for shopping and donations
Thank you for your continued support.
We look forward to seeing you!

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6 am to 12 am Daily
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VISIT THE STORE FOR BAKER'S BEST GIFTS

Locals support effort to force recall vote of Kate Brown

By Sam Anthony
santhony@bakercityherald.com

Petitions to recall Oregon Gov. Kate Brown are nothing new, but Suzan Ellis Jones, the Baker County Republican chair, thinks that this might be the year when the effort succeeds.

Last year, two separate petitions seeking to put a recall on a statewide ballot failed to gather the required number of certified signatures from voters.

This month a petition, which needs 280,050 signatures by Aug. 31 to force a recall election, has been making its way around with supporters meeting with groups of friends to collect signatures, Jones said.

Although the coronavirus pandemic has prompted the cancellation of many events where petition supporters might have gathered signatures, Jones said the impediment so far hasn’t been the pandemic but rather the frequently rainy weather.

At least a trace of rain

fell in Baker City on 10 of June’s first 17 days.

Jones said that when the weather clears up — dry, warm conditions are forecast for the next several days — she plans to set up a booth at Geiser-Pollman Park where people can sign the recall petition.

Oregon Republican Party Chairman Bill Currier is the chief petitioner in the effort to unseat Brown, a Democrat who, as Oregon secretary of state, replaced John Kitzhaber as governor when Kitzhaber resigned in February 2015. Brown was elected to serve the remainder of Kitzhaber’s term in 2016, and then elected to a 4-year term in 2018.

Jones also said that she’s optimistic that Miners Jubilee will happen July 17-19, as that event would be a good opportunity to add signatures.

The Baker County Chamber of Commerce, which coordinates Miners Jubilee, has not decided whether to have the event in some form.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Danean Herrera-Riley awarded \$500 Vivan Crawford scholarship

Danean Herrera-Riley, who operates One Transition At A Time, a nonprofit that turns unused items into art and offers housing for women in addiction recovery, has received a \$500 Vivan Crawford scholarship sponsored by PEO Sisterhood Chapter CJ of Baker City.

Herrera-Riley is completing a master’s degree in social work/counseling at Grand Canyon University.

After earning her bachelor’s degree at Eastern Oregon University, Herrera-Riley continued supporting addiction recovery programs by teaching life skills classes at New Directions Northwest and through Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center at Pendleton.

Vivan Crawford taught school in Baker City for many years. The scholarship in her name was established by her husband, Ken Crawford, and by her PEO sisters and friends.



Herrera-Riley

Baker Ladies Golf and Bridge Association plans season-opening lunch July 1

The Baker Ladies Golf and Bridge Association will have its season-opening luncheon on Wednesday, July 1, at Quail Ridge Golf Course, 2801 Indiana Ave.

Weather permitting, golf will start at 8:15 a.m., with lunch served at 12:30 p.m. and bridge following lunch.

Prices are the same as last year — \$9 for lunch, \$1 for 50-50. Masks will be optional for bridge. Those who don’t feel well are asked to please not attend.

All new and former members are welcome. For lunch reservations, call Dianne Ellingson at 541-523-4553 or 541-519-4073 by Tuesday evening, June 30.

Baker County Democrats to meet by teleconference this evening

The Baker County Democrats will not be meeting at their usual location until September. Their June meeting will be done by teleconference this evening, June 18, at 6 o’clock. Anyone wishing to join can call Peter Hall at 541-519-7274 for call-in information.