

# EOU fieldhouse coming together

■ \$9 million structure being built on south side of campus

By DICK MASON

The (La Grande) Observer

LA GRANDE — The athletic skyline at Eastern Oregon University is rising.

The \$9 million fieldhouse, which is currently under construction on the south side of campus, will be at least 60,000 square feet and have a top height of about 33 feet. The facility is expected to be completed by April 2022 and be ready for use by students and student athletes by fall 2022, according to John Garlitz, EOU's director of planning and facilities.

The steel frame for the fieldhouse is nearly complete and soon exterior panels will be installed, providing the protection from the weather

needed for crews to do extensive interior work this winter.

"Seeing the fieldhouse come to life is a welcome addition to our campus," said Tim Seydel, Eastern's vice president for university advancement. "The improved capacity and opportunities this new building brings to EOU will be felt for many years to come. It's great to hear students talking about the new building and saying, 'I can't wait to get in there.' It's going to be awesome."

The facility will provide space for the Mountaineers' athletic teams to work out in the winter and other times of the year when there is inclement weather. Some EOU track athletes may view it as a second home since it will have a small track to work out on, a runway and sandpit for long jumpers and triple jumpers and pole vaulting facilities.

The structure will also house a classroom for EOU's

Health and Human Performance program that will double as a lab. In addition, the facility will be the new home of EOU's Outdoor Adventure Program, now in the Hoke Union Building. The space for the Outdoor Adventure Program will feature a 40-by-47-foot indoor climbing center.

Upper-level features will include a mezzanine above the classroom space.

Once completed, the fieldhouse will be the largest building of its kind at any college or university in Oregon, Washington and Idaho that is not a NCAA Division I school, said Ben Welch, EOU's head men's and women's track and field coach.

"It will be a difference maker for us," he said.

Welch believes that some student athletes may not fully appreciate what is being built because many universities do not have such facilities.

"I don't know if they totally understand the significance of this because they have nothing to compare it to," he said.

Original designs for the building called for it to have 88,300 gross square feet, which would have allowed for a 200-meter track, making indoor track meets a possibility. However, budget constraints led to reducing the space by about 25%.

Welch said the smaller building and track still will be a big plus for his team in the winter. He said the track team conducts its winter practices in Quinn Coliseum's small gym, which has 4,545 square feet. But in the fieldhouse, he said, his team will have access to about 48,000 square feet for practices.

The track coach said the south side of the fieldhouse will be designed so that an additional 80 feet could be added later when funding becomes available, providing



Alex Wittwer/The (La Grande) Observer

The steel frame of Eastern Oregon University's new fieldhouse gives a sense of the facility's size against a blue sky on Wednesday, Sept. 1, 2021.

the space needed to house a 200-meter track and making indoor track meets a possibility.

Garlitz said the biggest obstacle to getting the building constructed on schedule is receiving construction materials on time. He said there continues to be shipping delays because of COVID-19. Fieldhouses are more

common in the Midwest than in the Northwest, according to Welch, a University of Kansas alum. Welch had been working to help Eastern get a fieldhouse since coming to the university in the 1990s.

"It has been a long-term goal and dream," he said. "It is nice to see it coming to fruition."

# Union County commissioners oppose vaccine mandates

By DICK MASON and DAVIS CARBAUGH

The (La Grande) Observer

LA GRANDE — The Union County Board of Commissioners passed a resolution on Wednesday, Sept. 1, protesting the state-wide mandate requiring all teachers, school staff, school volunteers, health care workers and state employees to be vaccinated for COVID-19.

The resolution, passed on a 3-0 vote, contended that the decision to get vaccinated for COVID-19 is an individual one.

"It should be a personal choice between each person and their physician," said Union County Commissioner Donna Beverage.

The resolution stated that

denying personal choice on the matter shows a lack of trust: "Be it further resolved that the Union County Board of Commissioners considers it an invasion of privacy, places undue burden, and shows an inherent distrust in the ability of individuals to make decisions for themselves regarding bodily autonomy."

Beverage said she strongly endorses the resolution.

"I believe it is a good resolution. We need to protect our freedom. I am all for it," she said.

According to Commissioner Matt Scarfo, the public outcry over the past month had a major impact on the board's decision.

Scarfo said he has received

a high volume of objections from state employees, health care workers and education workers.

"It's about the impact it will have on our staffing," he said of the board's opposition to the mandate.

Scarfo noted that staffing across these sectors is already tight due to COVID-19 and that the vaccine requirement could have far-reaching consequences. He mentioned that the staff at Grande Ronde Hospital and other health care employees are worn out and already dealing with short staffing.

"Our health care workers should be getting raises after all they've been through, not being fired or forced to quit," Scarfo said.

The mandate the resolution opposes requires all educators, staff and volunteers in schools for students in kindergarten through 12th grade, health care workers and state employees be fully vaccinated for COVID-19 by Oct. 18.

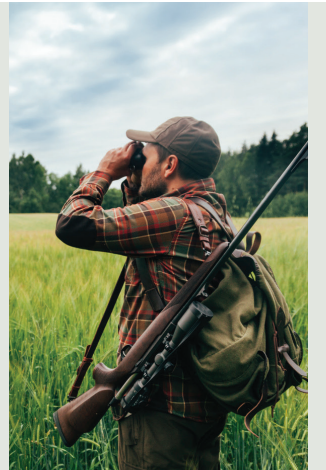
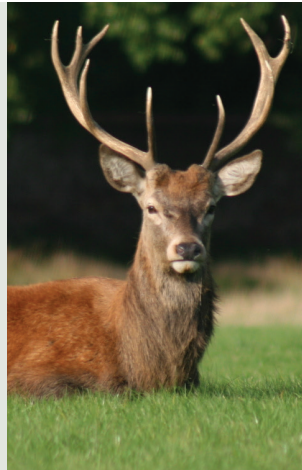
In the resolution, the Union County commissioners stated that this mandate will do more harm than good.

"A mandate will not result

in significantly more vaccinated health care workers, public employees and educators," the resolutions reads, but will possibly cause local workers to move to other states or leave their professions. "The decision to mandate vaccines will put our rural health, public service and education systems at risk by a loss of experienced employees, while potentially being counterproductive to

increasing vaccination rates."

One of the resolution's concluding paragraphs stated that the Union County Board of Commissioners has been and will continue to be supportive of taking a variety of steps to slow the spread of COVID-19 to keep everyone safe and healthy and "to thoughtfully keep Union County open for business and our schools open for our students."



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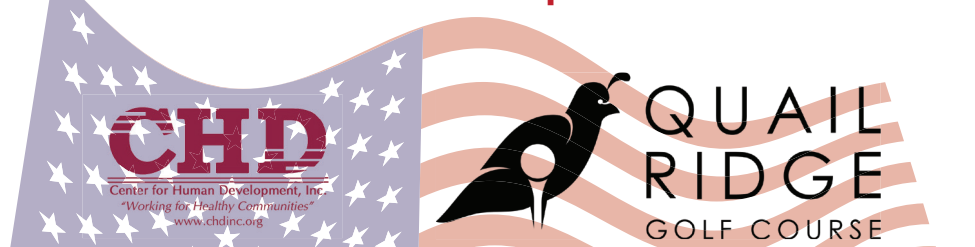
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