

## Redmond

Continued from A1

“We believe our schools are safe places,” he said. “But as the St. Charles incident has demonstrated, even people who are well-trained can make mistakes, and the virus can spread.”

Furthermore, all Redmond teachers who want to be vaccinated will have received both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine by Feb. 22, Cline said. This means that when schools reopen by that time, staff shortages due to quarantine will be a much more minor issue, he said.

“On the 22nd, when our staff have been vaccinated, we can call (students) back,” Cline said. “It would take a major natural disaster to change that.”

Teacher vaccinations began Thursday in Deschutes County. District spokesperson Sheila Miller said Redmond officials do not know how many of their teachers have been vaccinated so far.

Cline said he sympathized with families who may be upset about the reopening delay.

“I want to get students back as much as anybody,” he said. “But by doing this, it creates a much more stable (school).”

Central Oregon’s other large school district, Bend-La Pine Schools, is sticking with its plan of a tiered reopening, beginning Monday with K-3 students, according to Superintendent Lora Nordquist.

“Our plans remain unchanged at this time,” Nordquist wrote in a text, via Bend-La Pine spokesperson Julianne Repman. “The district continues to monitor the data and will provide an update at Tuesday’s (school) board meeting.”

Barry Branaugh, a social studies teacher at Ridgeview High School and a board member of the Redmond Education Association teachers’ union, said he’s heard both frustration and relief from fellow teachers about the reopening delay.

Branaugh personally found the decision unfortunate but necessary, as too many staffers are quarantining from COVID-19 at the moment, he told The Bulletin.

“If we were to bring kids back, and we didn’t have enough staff, we’d have to go right back into distance learning,” he said. “That’s even more frustrating than the additional wait time.”

Dan Grubb — a science teacher at Obsidian Middle School and father of two daughters at Obsidian — said he appreciated the school district’s willingness to delay the reopening for teacher safety.

“For them to push back (reopening), I feel very respected,” he said. “This is going to give us more time to get our vaccines.”

Local parents also had a mixed response to the delay.

Sarah Miller, whose second grader attends Hugh Hartman Elementary School, said she was relieved by the school district’s decision.

“As much as I’m anxious to have my daughter back in school, I thought it was premature to do it before the teachers had the opportunity to get vaccinated,” she said.

Stephanie Oster — a parent of a fourth grader at M.A. Lynch Elementary and a senior at Redmond High School — was angry at the reopening delay. She called it a political decision, and disliked that the district gave families false hope of an earlier return to in-person learning.

“I think it’s a crock,” Oster said. “All they do is gain a little ground with the parents, then lose it all by jerking us around by pushing it back more.”

■ Reporter: 541-617-7854, jhogan@bendbulletin.com



A couple walks along a snow covered path in Drake Park on Friday during the first serious snowfall of the winter.

Ryan Brennecke/Bulletin photos

## Snow

Continued from A1

Freezing fog was also expected overnight Friday. No significant weather is projected Saturday, with daytime temperatures expected to be in the upper 30s and early 40s. The next storm system is due in Central Oregon late Sunday, Adams said.

Anticipating Friday’s snowfall, the city streets division applied magnesium chloride to heavily traveled roads Thursday night. The chemical lowers the freezing point of water and helps prevent snow from sticking and ice from forming.

Like many cities in the Western United States, Bend

does not salt its roads due to environmental impacts and salt’s corrosive effect on vehicles. The city does apply sand in winter storm events to give drivers added traction in the snow.

Between 8 a.m. and 2:20 p.m., there were more than 100 calls for emergency service related to the snow, according to Deschutes County 911.

“We had many crashes today that were caused by weather and road conditions combined with driver behavior,” Bend Police Sgt. Tim Guest said Friday. “Mt. Washington and Archie Briggs had a fair share of crashes, jackknifed semis and other stuck vehicles. I am unaware of any

resulting in injuries.” David Abbas, director of transportation and mobility for the city of Bend, said the department had 13 pieces of heavy equipment on the ground Friday — 11 plows and two graders.

“With the moisture in the snow and the temperature, it’s just real slick,” he said.

Abbas said the city took lessons from recent “Snowmageddons” in 2018-19 and 2016-17, which stretched resources thin and led to a greater reliance on contract plow operators.

One lesson was to prioritize certain heavily traveled “snow zones” in town and work outward from there.

■ Reporter: 541-383-0325, gandrews@bendbulletin.com



Several inches of fresh snow accumulated on a cluster of benches in Drake Park during the first heavy snow of the winter.

## Vaccines

Continued from A1

Dr. Dean Sidelinger, the state’s top infectious disease expert, said the Oregon Health Authority had not made estimates of the number of people who could die because the starting date for older Oregonians’ eligibility was moved back two weeks.

OHA reported Thursday that COVID-19 related deaths had “surged” to 195 the previous week, the highest weekly toll to date. It broke the record set the prior week. According to OHA statistics, those aged 70 and over have accounted for 77% of the state’s COVID-19 deaths.

Extrapolating those numbers, 390 Oregonians would die over a two-week period based on current rates and 300 would be over 70. OHA has not responded to a request for

*OHA reported Thursday that COVID-19 related deaths had “surged” to 195 the previous week, the highest weekly toll to date. It broke the record set the prior week. According to OHA statistics, those aged 70 and over have accounted for 77% of the state’s COVID-19 deaths.*

comment on the estimate.

Brown and health officials were able to point to some good news during the press conference. OHA on Friday reported 877 new COVID-19 cases and 22 new fatalities. The report showed a continued gradual decline in cases and hospitalizations at a time when the state had previously forecast both would rise this month.

A feared “Christmas spike” in cases due to residents traveling and gathering for the holidays has been shallower than expected.

Thursday marked the fifth

day in a row with fewer than 850 cases.

The current positive infection rate is 5.9% of tests, still above the 5% target set by the OHA to indicate infection rates are not growing rapidly.

The state also updated its vaccination numbers, saying 253,711 shots have been given since the vaccines began arriving in Oregon late last year.

With schools mostly closed since March, Brown has consistently said the long-term damage to students’ quality of education, mental health and emotional well-being had been damaged by distance learning.

She’s set Feb. 15 as a goal for most schools to reopen if they meet minimum COVID-19 health recommendations.

While noting on Friday that school-age children are not in danger of widespread severe illness or death, Brown said the damage was deep enough that it warranted what she cast as a brief diversion of vaccine to jump-start education.

“It’s really pretty simple,” Brown said of her priorities. “I am using every single tool I have to get kids back into the classroom this school year.”

Several studies have shown that students are losing ground because of remote learning. Schools also ensure access to meals for some and safeguard against child abuse because someone is seeing the student regularly outside of their home.

But Brown could not quantify the impact of reopening schools next month compared

to May or later.

Courtney Campbell, a medical ethicist at Oregon State University, told Oregon Public Broadcasting that Brown deserves credit for making sure that COVID-19 resources reach underserved communities and those that have been disproportionately harmed by the pandemic. Black and Hispanic residents have a higher risk of infection due to having less access to quality health care, being in crowded housing conditions more frequently and a higher incidence of having jobs that cannot be done remotely.

But Campbell said the decision to bump up school employees on the list of those most in need of vaccination was questionable at best.

“Health equity does not support prioritizing teachers and K-12 staff,” she said.

■ gwamer@eomediagroup.com

## Marijuana

Continued from A1

It said the county must approve those applications that were denied for being within 1,000 feet of youth activity centers.

Adam Smith, an attorney for Deschutes County, wrote in an email he did not have a comment on the rulings for either application. He plans to schedule a conversation with the Deschutes County Commission about whether there is interest in appealing these rulings to the state Supreme Court.

“If the County does not appeal, then the County will be compelled to approved both pending land use permits,” Smith wrote in an email.

The ruling comes after the county voted to no longer allow any new marijuana growing and processing facilities in the rural part of the county.

Waveser of Oregon, a company that seeks to build a 36,000-square-foot facility east of Bend to grow and process marijuana, was one of those applications. David Rosen,



123RF

**The ruling comes after Deschutes County voted to no longer allow any new marijuana growing and processing facilities in the rural part of the county.**

the CEO of Waveser, had his application rejected because it was near facilities that host “youth oriented equestrian activities” and “4-H agricultural activities,” according to court documents.

Rosen said Friday he was “thrilled” by the Court of Appeals decision, and said he is confident that even if the county appeals to the state Supreme Court the outcome will

remain the same.

“It seems we’ve reached an end, and we look forward to opening up in Deschutes County this year,” Rosen said.

Tommy Nehmzow, who wants to build an 1,800-square-foot indoor marijuana facility, has the other application the court evaluated. County commissioners denied his application because they believed it would be too close to Sun-

dance Meadows Ranch.

The county deemed the ranch, which is a timeshare facility that includes a campground, horse stable and other features, a youth activity center.

Michael Hughes, the attorney representing Nehmzow, said he wasn’t surprised by the Court of Appeals ruling, and is now waiting for the county to either appeal to the state Supreme Court or put the issue to rest.

“Whatever happens, happens,” Hughes said. “I’m hoping Tommy can get to go on with his business.”

At this point, it is unclear whether the commission will want to appeal the rulings to the state Supreme Court.

Commissioner Patti Adair, who supported appealing the LUBA decision last year to the Court of Appeals and voted to deny both applications when they came to the commission, said she did not want to make a comment until she heard from the county’s legal department.

Commissioner Phil Chang said the county has been told multiple times that these applications were unfairly denied,

*“It seems we’ve reached an end, and we look forward to opening up in Deschutes County this year.”*

— David Rosen, the CEO of Waveser, had his application rejected because it was near facilities that host “youth oriented equestrian activities” and “4-H agricultural activities,” according to court documents

and that it was time for the county to “cut its losses.”

He considers the ongoing court battle over the term “youth activity center” a waste of taxpayer dollars.

“We have been making decisions based on the ideological and cultural preferences of certain people,” Chang said Friday. “It’s time to make decisions based on the law and the best financial interest of the county.”

Commission Tony DeBone did not respond to a request for comment.

■ Reporter: 541-633-2160, bvissler@bendbulletin.com