

DOW 30,937.04 -22.96	NASDAQ 13,626.06 -9.93	S&P 500 3,849.62 -5.74	30-YR T-BOND 1.80% ...	CRUDE OIL \$52.61 -16	GOLD \$1,850.70 -4.20	SILVER \$25.53 +0.07	EURO \$1.2167 +.0028
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BRIEFING

U.S. home prices rising at fast pace

U.S. home prices jumped in November at the fastest pace in more than six years, fueled by demand for more living space as Americans stick closer to home during the pandemic.

Home prices soared 9.1% in November compared with 12 months ago, according to Tuesday's report on the S&P CoreLogic Case-Shiller 20-city home price index. That is the largest increase since May 2014.

Low borrowing costs are also contributing to rising home sales, which have sharply reduced the number of dwellings available. The limited inventory of homes is pushing up home prices. Sales of existing homes rose in December and home sales for all of 2020 rose to the highest level in 14 years.

Phoenix posted the largest price gain in November from a year earlier.

Portland bike stores sold to Trek

One of Portland's best-known bike shops has been sold.

Mike Olson, the owner of Bike Gallery, which has six retail locations in the Portland metro area, told employees Monday that he had sold the stores to Trek Bicycle Corp., according to a report from BikePortland.

Olson did not immediately respond to a request for comment from The Oregonian.

"Although I know this is the right decision, it is made with mixed emotions," Olson wrote in an email to employees obtained by BikePortland.

Current Bike Gallery staff will be offered the chance to retain their jobs, according to the BikePortland report. It is not immediately clear what impact the sale will have on the stores' operations.

Olson purchased the Bike Gallery chain from founder Jay Graves in 2012. Olson is also the owner of the Trek Bicycle Superstore, a chain of six stores in San Diego and New Mexico, and Nytro, a cycling and triathlon store north of San Diego.

The purchase comes a month after Trek bought Bicycle Sport Shop, an independently-owned bike store chain in Austin.

U.S. consumer confidence rises

U.S. consumer confidence rose in January as Americans became more optimistic about the future.

The Conference Board reported Tuesday that its consumer confidence index increased to 89.3, a rebound from December when it dipped to 87.1.

The increase was fueled by the board's rising expectations index, which measures perceptions about the future path of incomes, business and labor market conditions. The present situation index weakened further, however, reflecting concerns over the resurgence of COVID-19.

"The slow rollout of the vaccines and the still raging pandemic continue to depress consumer confidence despite the prospect of further fiscal aid and a brighter and a brighter health situation," said Kathy Bostjancic, chief U.S. financial economist at Oxford Economics.

— Bulletin wire reports

Deschutes County jobless rate rises

Staff report

The effects from COVID-19 continue to be seen in Deschutes County jobless numbers, but in Crook County, the shock from the pandemic has not been as severe.

Rural counties that do not rely on tourism for jobs have received a glancing blow from the restrictions imposed by

the government to contain the spread of the coronavirus, said Damon Runberg, Oregon Employment Department regional economist.

Deschutes County lost jobs last month for the first time since April due to COVID-19, according to the Oregon Employment Department's monthly report.

"The pandemic is running the show, and government is trying to alleviate the impact with the restrictions," Runberg said.

Deschutes County's unemployment rate rose to 7.6% in December, compared to 2019 when it was 3.2%, according to the department report.

In all, about half the jobs lost

since the start of the pandemic are a result of the government mandates to shut down businesses, according to the report. Many of the job losses are still occurring in the leisure and hospitality sectors.

Jefferson County posted an unemployment rate of 7.1% in December, compared to 6.8% in November, but much higher

than the same time the year before when it was 4%.

The county's pace of recovery is slowing, according to the report.

Crook County's unemployment rate rose to 7.6% in December, up from 7.4% in November. Overall, it's up over December 2019 when it was 4.7%, according to the report.

Coos Bay channel expansion navigates looming challenges



Sierra Dawn McClain/Capital Press file

Margaret Barber, director of external affairs at the Oregon International Port of Coos Bay, looks at the Port-owned rail lines that carry cargo, including logs, to ships that are loaded in the channel.

BY SIERRA DAWN MCCLAIN
Capital Press

COOS BAY — Plans for a major West Coast liquefied natural gas pipeline and export terminal have hit a roadblock that could impact how the Port of Coos Bay moves forward with its channel modification, which is closely connected to the pipeline project.

The pipeline proposal, called the Jordan Cove Energy Project, hit a snag last week when a federal commission turned down a key permit.

The ruling was hailed as a victory by long-time opponents of Jordan Cove, including Southern

Oregon tribes, anglers, environmentalists, coastal residents and Gov. Kate Brown.

But the ruling came as a blow to the Port of Coos Bay, which has been preparing for the largest project in its history: expanding its channel to 45 feet deep and 450 feet wide to become one of the West's largest international shipping points for agricultural goods and other commodities.

Until now, the port's channel modification has been partly dependent on the success of the Jordan Cove project, and port officials say they were "disappointed" by the new ruling. But the port's leaders say the ruling did not take them by sur-

prise, and they already have alternatives in mind to keep their own project on track.

"The port does not view (Jordan Cove Energy Project) as a panacea for the future development of the Coos Bay Harbor," said Margaret Barber, director of external affairs at the port.

The reason the port has been dependent on Jordan Cove's success is because, under current federal law, the port is required to list two beneficiaries for its channel modification — two companies that would directly benefit from a deeper and wider channel.

See **Coos Bay** / A12

New boutique hotel in Portland expected to open this spring

MICHAEL RUSSELL
The Oregonian

An upcoming Portland boutique hotel backed by a Los Angeles-based hotel brand will feature two new restaurants from Submarine Hospitality, the group behind popular local restaurants Ava Gene's and Tusk, The Oregonian has learned.

Finishing work was underway Monday afternoon at the former Shleifer Furniture building at 509 SE Grand Ave., a site most recently home to a temporary homeless shelter. The new hotel, Hotel Grand Stark, comes from the Los Angeles-based Palisociety hotel brand, which is in the middle of a major domestic expansion jump-started in 2019 with the first non-California Palihotel in a



Michael Russell/The Oregonian

The century-old former Shleifer Furniture building, which operated as a hotel into the 1970s, will return to its roots with the new Hotel Grand Stark.

historic building near Seattle's Pike Place Market.

That Seattle hotel featured a second location of The Hart & Hunter, a critically acclaimed southern restaurant

found at a Los Angeles Palihotel. But Hotel Grand Stark, scheduled to open in May, looks to be getting a pair of concepts all its own.

See **Hotel** / A12

Ranchers back blueberry growers trade claims

BY DON JENKINS
Capital Press

Some cattlemen are cheering on blueberry farmers who are seeking protection from foreign competitors, countering the jeers from sectors of U.S. agriculture that depend on serene trade relations.

Almost two dozen organizations, led by R-CALF USA, have sent a letter urging the U.S. International Trade Commission to recognize that imported blueberries are seriously harming U.S. growers.

R-CALF CEO Bill Bullard said Monday the letter was inspired by one sent in Dec. by 31 farm associations and companies warning the commission to not start a trade war over blueberries.

"We felt a need to counter that," Bullard said. "We respect and admire the blueberry

farmers for taking this action, which is an action we may be taking in the future."

Blueberry farmers in Washington, Oregon, California and elsewhere say foreign blueberries flood the U.S. market in the spring and fall, suppressing what should be profitable early and late harvest prices.

U.S. companies that process or grow foreign blueberries blame low prices on U.S. farmers competing with each other.

The Trump administration ordered the trade commission to investigate whether imports are or will seriously injure U.S. blueberry farmers.

The commission is due to make a determination by Feb. 11 and submit a report to the Biden White House on possible trade actions, such as tariffs or quotas, by March 29.

See **Blueberries** / A12