

Goals

Continued from A1

A final list of goals will be brought back to the commission later this winter. Housing remains a top priority for the county, including addressing a growing homeless population. Commissioner Patti Adair said Thursday she is concerned for the safety of the neighborhood around China Hat Road — which is home to homeless camps in the Deschutes National Forest southeast of Bend — and asked about the possibility of allowing people living in RVs to park at the Deschutes County Fair & Expo Center to get people off the streets and give them a legal place to go. Commissioner Phil Chang said looking at land use code to incentivize the development of RV parks and mobile home parks could be the way to address a lack of affordable housing in the county. He also suggested the county look into finding land that could be turned into campgrounds, which in the summer could be used by tourists to lessen the pressure on already stretched recreation areas and then leased out to people who need a space

for an RV in the off season. “There are so many people who are dispersed camping on our public lands...I think we need to be doing something to help them,” Chang said. There was also interest by the commission in furthering a proposal to redesignate land zoned for farming as non prime resource land, which has been contested by groups like the Department of Land Conservation and Development and environmental groups. Starting 2019, the county has worked on a proposal to rezone land that is technically zoned for farming but isn’t suitable for it due to poor soil quality or the fact that the land is already developed. One proposal to rezone six rural subdivisions has not faced much opposition, whereas another proposal to create a set of criteria to rezone this kind of farmland elsewhere in the county has been controversial. Chang said he supports coming up with a sort of agreement that would allow them to have the ability to rezone specific parts of the county in the future to accommodate growth without the fear of setting a precedent. “I think everyone can see taking extreme positions and

trying to haggle is not working for us,” Chang said. Doing more to mitigate impacts from wildfires was also a shared goal among commissioners. Chang advocated for the county to prioritize more fuel reduction efforts in the county possibly by investing more local dollars to do so. Commission Chair Tony DeBone questioned whether it would be better to redirect county resources away from an Eastern Oregon forest planning effort after a forest planning for the Blue Mountains National Forests didn’t end with closure. “If it’s a goose chase that never ends, let’s acknowledge it as such,” DeBone said. Chang also said he wants to look for opportunities to invest in mental health services to support law enforcement agencies. The idea would be to fund more mental health positions to respond to mental-health related 911 calls to reduce the demand on law enforcement while improving the outcome of the situation, Chang said. DeBone said with multiple agencies, such as the Deschutes County Sheriff’s Office and the District Attorney’s office, both expressing interest in more

mental health related staffing, coordinating these efforts are important. DeBone also mentioned the goal of finding a way for residents in the rural county living on private roads to come together to maintain them by either helping them form a road district — which collects taxes from a specific area for the upkeep of roads — or find an easier, less bureaucratic way to come together to maintain these roads. Continuing to improve the county’s response to COVID-19 was also discussed. Adair asked about the county’s focus when it comes to reaching out to the county’s Latino population and vaccinations. “I worry about the Latinx and I don’t want to ignore them,” Adair said. Chang also said the county should focus on more preemptive testing and more targeted messaging to people about responsible behavior during a pandemic. Promoting rural agriculture businesses, as well as finding a site for a new landfill within the county’s border, are goals that were also discussed. ■ Reporter: 541-633-2160, bvissler@bendbulletin.com

Dropout

Continued from A1

This change resulted in school districts re-connecting with students more often, Wiens said. “That effort to re-engage students during distance learning contributed to the decline in the dropout rate,” he said. David Burke, who as director of secondary programs for Redmond School District oversees all middle and high schools in Redmond, agreed. “Those kids, even though they would’ve been 10-day dropped in the past, they were still enrolled,” he said. “So that could’ve impacted that dropout rate.” However, Burke also believes Redmond’s lower dropout rate is due to extra effort from school staff, and even the families of struggling students. “I think parents really stepped up in the spring,” Burke told The Bulletin. “I would give them a lot of credit for reaching out and making sure we were connected with their students.” Burke, and his counterpart in Bend-La Pine, Katie Legace, also said the dropout rate dip could be a result of trickle-down effects from Measure 98, passed by Oregon voters in 2016. Measure 98 generated extra funding specifically geared to reduce dropouts. Both Bend-La Pine and Redmond used that money to hire graduation coaches and start programs that identify struggling students who need intervention, Legace and Burke said. Bend-La Pine also used funding to create more career and technical education programs, hire staffers focused on social-emotional health, start programs designed to

struggling ninth-graders on track to graduate and open three magnet high schools: Bend Tech Academy, Realms and Skyline. Legace said all these aspects combined likely helped in preventing dropouts. “I don’t know that it’s any one thing,” she said. “It’s a systemic shift in how we work with high school students, and how we transition them in.” Legace said she wasn’t sure if the 10-day dropout rule had any impact on dropout rates. Representatives from America’s Promise Alliance — a D.C.-based nonprofit focused on helping youth — said Oregon’s falling dropout rate in 2020 is likely indicative of a strange time for education. Next year’s rate is probably going to be an outlier as well, said Liz Glazer, part of the nonprofit’s graduation-focused wing, Grad-Nation. “We’d assume that for the time of COVID, these rates are going to be anomalies,” she said. Melissa Mellor, spokesperson for America’s Promise Alliance, added that it doesn’t make sense to compare 2020 and 2021’s dropout numbers with previous years, unless the context of COVID-19 is taken into account. “These graduation and dropout rates for this year are going to be very tricky to interpret,” she said. “The unsatisfying answer is, we have to wait and see how they shake out.” Regardless of why dropouts shrank locally, educators agreed that it was a bright spot in a challenging year. “Any time we have fewer students dropping out, that’s a positive thing,” said Burke. ■ Reporter: 541-617-7854, jhogan@bendbulletin.com

Inmates

Continued from A1

He sensed disorganization among the prison staff. “I’m just tired of being moved around,” Monahan wrote to his sister. “I’ve been moved eight times since COVID broke out. I’ve been on and off my medications because staff lost it.” The letter left Howard even more unsettled. “I’m worried for him,” Howard said. “It just doesn’t seem like the prison knows what they are doing.” Some relief came this month when inmates across the state started receiving COVID-19 vaccinations. So far, 1,434 inmates have received the vaccine out of about 13,000, according to the Oregon Department of Corrections. But prisoner advocates say vaccines are not being administered fast enough to stop the spread of the virus. They say the damage has already been done. Tara Herivel, head of the Oregon Habeas Strike Force, a group of attorneys representing about 330 prisoners across the state, including 17 at Deer Ridge, said there is no consistency for how vaccines are given in the prisons. “Prison to prison, we are getting totally different reports,” Herivel said. “But what I’ve heard is that they had extremely limited supplies for prisoners.” Meanwhile, the virus continues to get worse in the prisons, she said. In addition to Herivel’s group, a separate class action lawsuit was filed in federal court in Eugene over the handling of COVID-19 in the prisons. The Oregon Justice Resource Center, which handles civil rights cases, filed the lawsuit earlier this month to compel Gov. Kate Brown and the Department of Corrections to vaccinate everyone in custody against the virus. The resource center, which alleges that a refusal by prison staff to wear masks “has massively contributed to the unacceptable spread” of COVID-19, said Oregon prisons “have consistently been among the most dangerous workplaces during the pandemic.” “Everybody has been on edge since March of last year,” said Juan Chavez, an attorney with the center. “They haven’t seen their loved ones. They are watching guards come in without masks. They are watching other people engage in risky



Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin

The Deer Ridge Correctional Institution is in Madras. Prisoner advocates say vaccines are not being administered fast enough to stop the spread of the virus. They say the damage has already been done.

COVID behavior and they are scared.” Chavez said the lawsuit aims to have inmates vaccinated at the same rate as senior citizens and teachers, which should be possible since the inmate population is much smaller. “It makes sense that if you are at high risk of catching the disease then you need to be a priority for vaccination,” Chavez said. Chavez understands if there are not enough vaccines available at a given time, but he believes the prisons need more urgency to address the spread of the virus. “We are saying that they have ignored this,” Chavez said. “They acknowledge it’s a problem, but they have ignored the solutions.” Both groups of prisoner advocates are hearing the same concerns. Inmates, like Howard’s brother, are troubled by how often they have been transferred to other prisons during the pandemic. They’re also unhappy with how little information they are given about plans to combat the virus and many are concerned by how few staff and other inmates have complied with wearing masks to protect against the virus. Herivel said she was appalled when she heard prison officials admit in court they have been transferring inmates who are infected with the virus. “They are doing it and they are spreading the virus that way,” Herivel said. Jennifer Black, a spokesperson for the Oregon Department of Corrections, said the department has heard the concerns from families and advocates about inmate transfers. But it’s necessary to bring infected inmates to prisons that are better equipped for medical care, she said. “We are required to med-

ically care for those in our custody and sometimes that requires they be moved to another institution,” Black said. “For example, not all of our institutions have 24/7 medical care.” As an advocate for prisoners, Herivel does not bother trying to convince people prisoners are deserving of care. Instead, she says there is a logical reason prisoners need to be protected from the virus. If vaccine distribution is prioritized by need, then prisons have to be included with nursing homes, hospitals and food process facilities because each has experienced COVID-19 outbreaks, Herivel said. “Those are the top areas that are the highest levels of contraction,” Herivel said. “So that’s just an objective measure.” Howard understands the lack of compassion for prisoners. She certainly does not excuse her brother’s crimes and knows he must serve his time. But he does not deserve to die in prison from a virus, she said. Monahan, 49, was in and out of jail for many years from drug use. He was convicted of rape in 2008 and sentenced to 15 years in prison. “I believe in my heart he would have never done that if he hadn’t been high out of his

mind on methamphetamine for so many days,” Howard said. Howard wants to see her brother again when he is released in three years. She hopes the advocacy groups will help keep him safe in the meantime. Still, Howard is discouraged. Her brother sounded happy at Deer Ridge when they talked on the phone regularly over the summer. He was making progress on his mental and physical health after a life of drug addiction led him to prison. That all changed when the virus began to spread. “He seemed really upbeat, and now it’s all gone,” Howard said. Howard is still unable to regularly hear from her brother. Lately, she’s missed his calls from a Umatilla number she doesn’t recognize, but could mean he was transferred to Two Rivers Correctional Institution. “It’s sad,” Howard said. “I just don’t understand the moving around of inmates during all of this.” And the lack of information only fuels her dread. All she knows about the Umatilla prison is it has the most COVID-19 deaths in Oregon. In January alone, 13 inmates died. ■ Reporter: 541-617-7820, kspur@bendbulletin.com

Can you believe this maniac? NO SUNSCREEN!

Did You Know?

- Up to 80% of the suns rays can penetrate clouds.
- UV Exposure increases with every 1000 ft. above sea level.
- Snow reflects up to 80% of the UV light from the sun.

At Peters Dermatology Center, we never forget that we’re treating *you*, not just your skin. Discover 21st-century medicine and good old-fashioned care for the skin you’re in. Trust the region’s expert in Mohs surgery, high-risk skin cancer treatment, early detection and prevention.

PETERS DERMATOLOGY CENTER

Gerald Peters, MD, FAAD, FACMS
Ann Reitan, MHS, PA-C • Ericka Luckel, PA-C
Julie Natoli, PA-C

541-323-5KIN (7546) • www.petersderm.com
2353 NE Conners Ave, Bend

SENIOR SOLUTIONS

- Medicare
- Supplemental Insurance
- Short Term Care
- Final Expense

61396 S HWY 97 #222, BEND ■ 541.420.3209 ■ SCHOLZINSURANCE.COM

AspenDental

Here for you in every way.

20% off

general dentistry and dentures

\$399 per arch

Replacement dentures starting at one low price.

- ▶ Routine + emergency care
- ▶ Flexible hours + payment options
- ▶ All your dental needs, covered

- ▶ Book today.
- AspenDental.com
- 1-800-AspenDental

Bend
541-640-4584

General Dentistry Office. For a list of practicing dentists, please visit aspental.com.
Not valid for previous or ongoing work and cannot be combined with other discounts or dental discount programs. Offer does not apply to orthodontia. Discount taken off usual and customary fees and does not apply to services rendered by a specialist. Patients with insurance will receive either the 20% discount or insurance plan pricing, whichever discount is greater. Offer expires 12/31/2021. Starting price is based on a current denture wearer selecting a basic single arch replacement denture. Price does not include relines. Additional fees may be incurred in individual cases. Offer expires 12/31/2021. ©2021 Aspen Dental Management, Inc. Dr. Arwinder Judge