



Shoppers stream into WinCo Foods on opening day Monday, Feb. 1, 2021.

Dean Guernsey/The Bulletin

Winco

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Monday was a “soft opening” for the grocery store as the company wanted to prevent large crowds that could violate the state’s COVID-19 rules. Deschutes County remains in the extreme risk category, which requires grocery stores to permit 50% of capacity. There were no balloons, free-giveaways or other fanfare.

“Normally we try to draw as many people as we can in the community to an opening, but as responsible business people we didn’t want to do that,” said store Manager Steve Corbin. “We wanted to do what was safe for our employee-owners and our community. So we

have just asked (shoppers) to be respectful, wear masks and shop as they normally do.”

In their masks and face shields, shoppers perused the spick-and-span store, filling up their gray shopping carts with all manner of fruits, veggies, bulk items, and packaged goods. In addition to the usual grocery sections, there is also a sushi bar and a take-out pizza department near the checkout stand.

The bulk foods section functions as it normally does, but Corbin explained that touchpoints are sanitized every two hours, while scoops and tongs are replaced with freshly sanitized ones every four hours.

The store, which is open 24/7 except Christmas Day and

early closure for Thanksgiving, is employee-owned and notably does not accept credit cards. It does accept debit cards, checks, cash, WIC and EBT.

Like Trader Joe’s and Costco, WinCo has its own cult following.

The bullet-gray decor, wide-open aisles, and warehouse feel do bring up comparisons to wholesale retailers like Costco or Sam’s Club. But the food products are more diverse, making WinCo more in-line with a traditional grocery store such as Fred Meyer.

Shoppers in Bend on Monday all agreed that the low prices attracted them to the store.

“What we noticed when we came to Bend was the prices

are higher here compared to grocery stores in the Valley,” said 26-year-old Kevin Hunt, a welder who moved to Bend five years ago. “But the prices (at WinCo) are unbeatable.”

Nearby, 82-year-old Ruth Ferguson of Crooked River Ranch, a retired stenographer, was gathering some fresh produce. She wasn’t aware Monday was opening day but driving past she saw it was open and had to stop in.

“I was happy to see it finally open. I have been waiting patiently,” said Ferguson. “I am familiar with WinCo stores. I love ‘em. I like the variety and the bulk food section, and let’s face it, the prices are good.”

One aisle over, retired Bend resident Douglas Smith was shopping Monday morning for his wife, who was working from home.

“She is making the bacon; I am bringing it home,” said Smith, his cart steadily filling up. He was pleased at the look and feel of the store and called himself a “big fan” of WinCo.

“Look at everything they’ve got here. It puts most grocery stores to shame,” said Smith, 67. “And the prices are reasonable too; for people who are retired, it’s easier on the pocketbook.”

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11,000 Republicans in Oregon leave the party

BY BETSY HAMMOND
The Oregonian

More than 11,000 registered Republicans in Oregon, or 1.4%, have left the party since Election Day, state voter registration figures show.

Some of those departures were likely the result of administrative actions to correct voter rolls to reflect voters known to have died, left the state or otherwise lost qualification to vote. Statewide registration totals also reflect a loss of almost 8,500 registered Democrats, or 0.8%, since early November.

But it is clear that an unusually large number of voters have disavowed their Republican Party identities, particularly in Washington County, where the number of Republicans fell by nearly 1,900, or 2.3%, over the past two months.

Most of the Republican defectors appear to have rejected all party affiliation, rather than moved to a different party. Oregon’s count

of unaffiliated voters rose by more than 10,000 since Election Day, records show.

One of Oregon’s highest profile Republicans, former gubernatorial nominee Knute Buehler, told the New York Times he canceled his Republican Party registration recently after the Republican Party of Oregon issued a statement condemning the 10 Republican members of Congress who voted to impeach President Donald Trump and aligning itself with conspiracy theories about the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

Long a moderate in his party, Buehler cast himself as an all-out supporter of Trump during his unsuccessful May 2020 primary race for Oregon’s 2nd Congressional District seat in the U.S. House of Representatives won by Ontario Republican Cliff Bentz.

According to the Times, Buehler called quitting the Republican party “very painful.”

Councilor

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Throop quickly set to ruffling feathers on the council, according to testimony from fellow councilors, who said he quarreled with them and wrote unprofessional communications to staff.

On Jan. 27, Throop commented on a photo showing fellow Councilor Jennifer Holcomb and three other people

not wearing masks at a local gym, calling them “pathetic terrorists.”

He said Friday he was frustrated with a movement underway in Madras involving business leaders and members of the City Council to flout COVID-19 guidelines, which could accelerate the spread of the deadly virus.

Holcomb read a statement Friday chastising Throop for his unprofessional conduct and

calling on him to resign.

Another incident involving a councilor was discussed by the council Friday. Royce Embanks had raised his voice and stormed out of a meeting during public comment after a resident criticized Embanks’ wife, The Madras Pioneer reported.

Embanks apologized and the council decided it was sufficient to not sanction him.

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DEATH NOTICES

Claire Lillian Nichols
of La Pine, OR
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