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BRIEFING

Portland Business Alliance fined over city lobbying rules

The city of Portland's auditor's office has fined one of the Portland area's most influential business organizations for repeatedly violating city lobbying rules last year.

An investigation found the Portland Business Alliance failed to disclose at least 25 times it had contacted city officials to request access, funding or action, Oregon Public Broadcasting reported.

The violations come with a maximum penalty of \$75,000.

But the auditor's office fined the alliance \$450 and recommended alliance staff get compliance training.

She also said the office rarely issues fines for these violations, but, it could not overlook the matter this time given the number of violations.

In an emailed statement to the media outlet, the alliance said it would review the violations and work with the auditor's office.

Jobless claims drop to 553,000

The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits dropped by 13,000 last week to 553,000, the lowest level since the pandemic hit in March 2020 and another sign the economy is recovering from the coronavirus recession.

The Labor Department reported Thursday that jobless claims were down from 566,000 a week earlier.

They have fallen sharply over the past year but remain well above the 230,000 weekly figure typical before the pandemic struck the economy in March 2020.

The four-week moving average, which smooths out weekly gyrations, fell 44,000 to 611,750.

Nearly 3.7 million people were receiving traditional state unemployment benefits the week of April 17.

Including federal program designed to ease economic pain from the health crisis, 16.6 million were receiving some type of jobless aid the week of April 10.

More Americans buying homes

More Americans signed contracts to buy homes in March after two months of declines, pointing to a healthy housing market as summer approaches and the economy continues what is shaping up to be a rapid recovery.

The National Association of Realtors' index of pending home sales rose 1.9% to 111.3 in March after declining 11.5% in February and 2.4% in January.

The increase Thursday, however was weaker than the 3.5% analysts surveyed by FactSet had projected.

Contract signings, considered a barometer of purchases that will take place in the next two months, are 23.3% ahead of where they were last year, largely due to lockdowns put in place when the pandemic hit U.S. shores in March 2020.

— Bulletin wire reports

OREGON

Grants will cover missed rent for 12K

State opens applications for second round

BY JAMIE GOLDBERG
The Oregonian

Oregon will distribute more than \$40 million in grants through the first round of its new Landlord Compensation

Fund to cover the missed rent of nearly 12,000 households.

Applications for a second round open Thursday.

Nicole Stingham, a spokesperson for Oregon Housing and

Community Services, the state agency administering the new program, said the first round will pay 1,940 landlords statewide.

The money comes from \$150 million that state lawmakers allocated in December

to seed the program, which partially reimburses landlords when tenants fall behind due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Landlords who accept funding will receive grants to cover 80% of their tenants' outstanding rent and, in turn, must for-

give the other 20%.

The first round covered missed rent accumulated between April 2020 and February 2021. Stingham said the agency funded every eligible landlord who applied.

See Rent / A8

COVID-19 | DISNEYLAND

First order: Shorten the Rise of Resistance

Clocking in at 18 minutes, the ride's original duration is 3 minutes over California's suggested time limit for indoor rides, meaning Disney will alter portions to comply



BY HUGO MARTÍN • Los Angeles Times

The Disneyland ride Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance is an 18-minute space adventure in which riders join the resistance movement, get captured by the evil First Order and finally escape with the help of members of the rebellion.

But even in a galaxy far, far away, Earth's deadly pandemic has had an impact: California health protocols mandate that all indoor rides last no longer than 15 minutes. To offer Rise of the Resistance, Disneyland has to shorten it.

Disneyland officials promised that when the park reopened Friday, the ride's major plot points will remain intact, including lots of explosions, drama and high-tech mayhem.

Disneyland representatives said the overall experience would be shortened by cutting down the

"dwelling points," where riders wait or stroll through the attraction.

That could include the segments when visitors are waiting to be interrogated by the First Order's leader Kylo Ren or when they are allowed to linger before a unit of stormtroopers in a Star Destroyer's hangar bay, according to Disneyland representatives.

A speech given at the beginning of the ride by a hologram of resistance hero Rey may also be shortened, they said.

To help reduce crowding in the park, Disneyland has also ex-

panded its virtual queuing system for the ride, allowing park visitors to join the queue through the Disneyland app twice daily — at 7 a.m. and at noon — instead of once. In the morning session, visitors can join the queue without having to be in the park. To join the queue at noon, parkgoers must be inside either Disneyland or Disney California Adventure Park.

The ride is Disneyland's newest attraction, added only two months before the pandemic closed the park last year.

See Star Wars / A8

PHOTO:

An early scene from the Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance ride features a holographic image of Daisy Ridley's Rey at Disney's Hollywood Studios at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida. Jay L. Clendenin/Los Angeles Times



John Jacob, beekeeper and owner of Old Sol Apiaries, displays a panel of honeycomb and bees.

Drought may hurt honey bees; experts say cover crops could help

BY SIERRA DAWN McCLAIN
Capital Press

Beekeepers and researchers say drought across the West this year will likely hurt honey bee colonies.

Bees are expected to struggle most in California followed by Oregon, where meteorologists predict a hot, dry summer.

"I'm really worried about it," said John Jacob, beekeeper and

owner of Old Sol Apiaries in Southern Oregon. "Seems like it's going to be extremely dry."

Honey bee colonies can typically handle extreme heat as long as they have access to uncontaminated water, pollination experts say. The more serious problem is a potential lack of pollen sources — especially during late summer.

Lack of food sources can lead to colony collapse.

"Colonies are probably going to do really well this spring," said Andony Melathopoulos, pollinator health specialist at Oregon State University Extension. "There's enough moisture in the ground and a lot of things are still blooming. Where the rubber will hit the road is when blackberries stop blooming around the end of June."

See Bees / A8

Pandemic recession

Recovery showing energy

BY MARTIN CRUTSINGER
AND PAUL WISEMAN

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Powered by consumers and fueled by government aid, the U.S. economy is achieving a remarkably fast recovery from the recession that ripped through the nation last year on the heels of the coronavirus and cost tens of millions of Americans their jobs and businesses.

The economy grew last quarter at a vigorous 6.4% annual rate, the government said Thursday, and expectations are that the current quarter will be even better.

Economists say that widespread vaccinations and declining viral cases, the reopening of more businesses, a huge infusion of federal aid and healthy job gains should help sustain steady growth. For 2021 as a whole, they expect the economy to expand around 7%, which would mark the fastest calendar-year growth since 1984.

As American consumers have stepped up their spending in recent months, they have consumed physical goods far more than they have services, like haircuts, airline tickets and restaurant meals: Spending on goods accelerated at an annual pace of nearly 24% last quarter; services spending rose at a rate below 5%.

But now, that disparity will likely shift as more restaurants and entertainment venues reopen and people look to spend more on experiences and less on tangible items. On Friday, for example, Disneyland opens, with limited capacity, to California residents.

Online sites that have capitalized on goods purchases during the pandemic — from Amazon to Etsy to eBay — are under pressure to show they can sustain accelerating growth even as consumers look more toward services and less on goods.

So far, Amazon, the dominant site by far, is hardly showing signs of slowing down. On Thursday, it reported that its first-quarter profit more than tripled from a year ago, fueled by online shopping.

The speed of the rebounding U.S. economy has been particularly striking given the depth of damage the pandemic inflicted on it beginning last year. With businesses all but shut down, the economy contracted at a record annual pace of 31% in the April-June quarter of last year before rebounding sharply in the subsequent months.

The bounce-back has been swift.

See Recovery / A8