

TRACK CHAMPIONS

LOCAL ATHLETES TOP
THE PODIUM AT
STATE MEET
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The Blue Mountain EAGLE

Grant County's newspaper since 1868

Prairie City senior Levi Burke won the 1A boys high jump title with a height of 6-05 at the Track and Field State Championships May 17-18 in Monmouth. For the Eagle/Ben Lonergan



CONGRATULATIONS TO GRANT UNION AND HOMESCHOOL GRADUATES | PAGES A6-7

Wednesday, May 22, 2019

151st Year • No. 21 • 20 Pages • \$1.00

BlueMountainEagle.com

Preparing for disaster



Contributed photos

ABOVE: Several emergency vehicles are parked ready to go in the Galena training exercise. LEFT: Dozens of staff and volunteer emergency services people from various agencies gather for an evaluation after the fire drill and evacuation exercise in Galena.

Search and rescue coordinates interagency fire evacuation drill

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

Dozens of staff and volunteers from various emergency services agencies swooped in to “rescue” several Galena residents May 11 during a mock fire emergency.

Grant County Sheriff’s Office Search and Rescue Coordinator Deputy Dave Dobler, who organized the event, said everything went as planned.

“We had a good turnout with our SAR team, and this was critical to the success of this exercise,” he said. “SAR worked well with the other

agencies and worked swiftly and professionally to achieve our operational goals in a systematic and professional manner.”

The residents of Galena were said to have “played along” well in their roles of people experiencing a real wildfire emergency.

A long list of other participants joined the local team, including the county Air Search, Amateur Radio Emergency Service, Emergency Communications Agency (911 Dispatch) and Emergency Management, as well as head of Firewise

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Dobler, volunteers make numerous improvements

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

December was a busy month for the Grant County Sheriff’s Office’s Search and Rescue team, with six days on missions in brutally cold conditions and two days with debriefing after a tough mission on Fields Peak.

Deputy Dave Dobler, the county’s Search and Rescue coordinator, updated the county court on the team’s achievements and presented grant and fundraising proposals May 8. Dobler, who joined the sheriff’s office eight months ago, also provided a detailed list of SAR needs.



Dave Dobler

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Votes next year could determine pool’s future

City submits application for planning grant

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

John Day area voters likely won’t see a ballot measure to create a new service district for operation of a public swimming pool or a bond election for the funds to build a new swimming pool until next spring.

New information about the Gleason Pool emerged during the John Day City Council’s discussion about a planning grant application May 14.

The council agreed to apply for a 2019 Oregon Parks and Recreation Department planning grant worth up to \$40,000. The city budgeted up to \$40,000 for matching funds for the grant, City Manager Nick Green told the council.

Service district

Planning grants can be used to determine and document a project’s viability, including information on the public need and benefit, types of amenities, locations, activities and likely users, Green said. Alternatives are analyzed and a recommendation is made on the best alternative, he said.

In this case the city, which owns Gleason Pool, and a steering committee composed of stakeholders interested in the pool’s future have been evaluating state law on county service facilities as an option for operation of an aquatic facility, Green said.

Oregon Revised Statutes Chapter 451 authorizes a county to establish master plans and service districts for a wide range of purposes, including public recreation facilities. The Grant County Court could approve a master plan for a service district that supports a recreation facility that includes land outside the jurisdiction of cities in Grant County, Green said.

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State revenue forecast dramatically higher than expected

Lawmakers debate how to spend \$770 million windfall

By Mark Miller
Oregon Capital Bureau

Oregon has come into an unexpected windfall, and now it’s up to lawmakers to figure out what to do with it.

Personal and corporate income tax collections during the 2019 tax filing season were dramatically higher than state economists expected, according to a report released May 15. While much of that money will go back to taxpayers next year in the form of Oregon’s unique “kicker” rebate, the new forecast gives legislative budget-writers about three-quarters of a billion dollars more to work with as they decide how Oregon will spend its money over the next two years.

They aren’t getting too excited, though. “It may seem strange, but the revenue forecast does not change the method in which we’re budgeting,” said state Rep. Dan Rayfield, D-Corvallis, who co-chairs the budget writing committee.

“We are still looking at reduction options. We are still being cautious and prudent about how we spend the resources that the state has.”

Decisions on agency spending touch practically every Oregonian.

Between general and lottery funds, state economists project that Oregon has \$24.8 billion to spend over the next two years. That’s up about \$770 million from the previous forecast.

Ken Rocco, legislative fiscal officer, advises lawmakers on how much their spending ideas would cost the state. His office concluded the state would need to spend about 14% more than the current two-year, \$21 billion budget just to keep in place services now being provided, because of the impact of inflation, pay raises and cost hikes in supplies and services.

That calculation doesn’t take into account the larger cash reserves that Rayfield and his fellow co-chairs, Sens. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, and Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, D-Beaverton, want the state to have by the end of 2021. It also doesn’t include any new programs or projects that the Legislature approves or jobs it adds.

“I think we’re probably much closer to being

able to fund the current service level, but that doesn’t mean that the co-chairs, for every agency, they’re going to do that,” Rocco said. “They’re still looking at making some current service level reductions.”

That hasn’t stopped key people in the Capitol from tossing out ideas for how the newfound \$770 million should be spent.

Gov. Kate Brown said she expects some of the extra money to go toward mitigating tuition costs for community colleges and universities, as well as investing in foster care and law enforcement.

“I have some key investments that I think need to be made,” Brown said.

Brown and House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, have also suggested putting some of the windfall into affordable housing, a priority they share.

“The more we can do for housing with the additional resources, we should try,” Kotek said.

But Rayfield and some of his fellow Democrats in the Legislature are leery of any new spending that would have to be covered in future budgets.

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