

## Cities making adjustments for COVID-19

By Rudy Diaz  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Cities in Grant County are making adjustments as the number of reported cases of the new coronavirus grow in Oregon.

The city of John Day is now requesting people to use the dropbox in front of the office for payments and avoid coming into the office. City hall will also only be open for scheduled appointments, according to Julie Larson, the John Day senior accounting clerk.

People can also use the John Day city website to make payments and access other services. The city will update their Facebook page with any additional changes. Call 541-575-0028 to schedule an appointment. There are no scheduled cancellations at this time. Prairie City has also closed their city hall to walk-in traffic. The city is requesting customers use the payment box, according to Bob Shive, the DeWitt Museum director. For cash payments, there will be somebody in the office to collect the payment and then hand the receipt to the customer outside.

The city has put time into wiping down city hall, the doors and providing hand sanitizer for the people in the building. No meetings are scheduled to be canceled at the moment. Call 541-820-3605 for more information or questions.

While the hours of business at Monument City Hall remain the same due to little traffic in the office, City Manager Dorothy Jordan said the St. Patrick's Day dinner and the EMS dinner in April have been canceled. There are no other meetings scheduled to be canceled.

The Long Creek City Hall business hours will also remain the same due to minimal traffic in the building. City Recorder Marsie Watson said senior lunches that are provided will only be takeout and not dine in, and no meetings have been canceled.

Seneca's office hours will continue as normal, and city hall will remain open. City Manager Raamin Burrell said, if customers do not feel comfortable with making a payment in city hall, customers can use the dropbox instead. While one social event has been postponed, there are no plans to cancel the next city council meeting, thanks to minimal traffic in the building.

Dayville City Hall will also be open during normal business hours, but the door will be locked. Having the door locked will give Dayville City Recorder Ruthie Moore, who has a cold, enough time to respond to customers and give them an option to come into the office or talk outside of the office. Customers can also use the dropbox for payments.

Dayville is considering canceling their next city council meeting due to council members having colds, but no decision has been made at the moment. The cities of Canyon City and Mt. Vernon have not canceled any upcoming meetings. Canyon City plans to have their city council meeting this week. Due to minimal traffic, office hours and access to city hall remains the same.

## Coronavirus

Continued from Page A1

mildly ill patients may be able to stay home and isolate and care for themselves at home. Winegar said it is important to isolate in another room, away from other people.

Rand said the hospital has a trained staff taking calls around the clock, and the after-hours number is the same, 541-575-1311.

Rand said people with appointments should still call ahead if they believe they have been exposed and are experiencing a fever, cough or shortness of breath.

Rand said anyone who develops emergency warning signs for the virus or any illness should seek medical attention immediately.

According to the CDC, the emergency warning signs include bluish lips or face, chest pains or pressure in the chest, difficulty breathing and new confusion or inability to arouse.

Rand said the hospital has three negative pressure rooms to contain the virus and that the hospital would air ambulance those who have been infected to Bend or elsewhere for more intensive care.

Rand said people can call 211 for general questions about the coronavirus.

### Who is most at risk from infection?

Rand said those in vulnerable populations — people with suppressed immune systems and people over 60 with underlying health issues such as heart disease, diabetes and lung disease — have an increased risk of complications if they contract the disease.

In Grant County, where the Census Bureau reports 36.5% of the population is 65 and older, Rand said there needs to be a focus on keeping the virus out of the community.

Rand said younger people, who are relatively healthy and do not have underlying health conditions, should bounce back from the coronavirus within roughly 10 to 14 days and experience mild symptoms that resemble the flu or a bad cold.

"I would not be too worried if I were to come down with the virus as someone who is young and relatively healthy," Rand said. "But I am worried about passing it along to my 80-year-old grandmother with lung cancer."

### Is this new coronavirus really a serious danger?

As new cases appear, some have compared the coronavirus to the



The Eagle/Steven Mitchell

**Deputy Dave Dobler, the incident commander of Grant County's coronavirus response, updates the community during Thursday's informational meeting.**

seasonal flu, much to the dismay of public health officials.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said in a hearing before the House Oversight and Reform Committee March 11 that the coronavirus is 10 times more lethal than the seasonal flu.

"I mean people always say, 'Well, the flu does this, the flu does that,'" Fauci said. "The flu has a mortality rate of 0.1%. This has a mortality rate of 10 times that. That's the reason I want to emphasize we have to stay ahead of the game in preventing this."

According to the New England Journal of Medicine, the new coronavirus also appears to be more contagious. On average, each person infected with the coronavirus infects 2.2 other people, while someone with the seasonal flu spreads it to roughly 1.3 other people.

### Emergency operations center

In coordination with Grant County Health Department, the county has opened an emergency operations center at the Forest Service building. The center is not a medical facility, and it is closed to the public, said incident commander Deputy Dave Dobler.

The center is working with local, state and county health authorities in the response effort by providing structure, communication and outreach to local businesses, first responders, schools and other stakeholders.

Dobler said, after a meeting with first responders, he trained the group on proper mask removal to avoid infections.

"There have been medical workers who have been exposed. We think, we don't know, but we think part of it had to do with the mask," Dobler said. "If you don't do it right,

you actually contaminate yourself."

Dobler said he is working on getting funding to hire a sanitation worker to focus on keeping frequently touched surfaces at gas stations and other high-traffic areas sanitized.

"I've had people say, 'Well, that should not be the county's job,'" Dobler said. "Well, actually it should because everybody goes to those places."

He said he is also trying to get people from the health department to provide handouts with information about enhanced sanitation to high-traffic businesses within the community.

Dobler said the core team at the EOC is made up of about five or six people with other jobs. Additionally, he has been collaborating with officials in law enforcement and health from Harney, Baker and Wheeler counties. He said he has also worked with state health officials.

Dobler said Wheeler County will likely adopt Grant County's emergency plan.

Dobler said the purpose of emergency and disaster management is prevention, and that requires planning and carrying out directives.

"Last week, when I wanted to stand this up, a lot of people said you're overreacting," Dobler said. "Now when we have a governor and the president saying this is an emergency, I think people are paying attention a little bit."

Dobler said, with the declarations from the governor and the president, hopefully resources and funding will allow the EOC to carry out more prevention efforts.

He said, for up-to-date information, community members can submit questions to the EOC at [virusquestions@grantcounty-or.gov](mailto:virusquestions@grantcounty-or.gov).

## Science

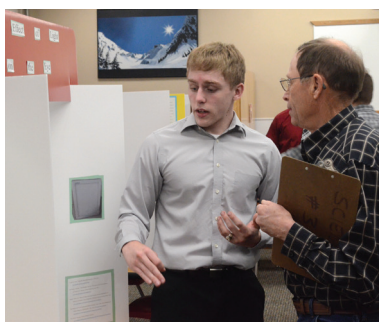
Continued from Page A1

"This experience is really important because they have to explain and defend their work to somebody else verbally," he said. "Also, being involved in the process of science and actually doing science and going out there and collecting data and analyzing and there's great value in that too."

The two gold winners were freshmen Max Bailey and Amelia Hall — who also won best of fair with her project titled "Which Food Provides More Energy for Athletic Performance?"

Hall gave a variety of different foods to people — a protein shake, an air head or pepperoni stick — and then had them complete a workout that consisted of a 20-minute run followed by six 200-meter repeats.

"I compared their blood sugar,



The Eagle/Rudy Diaz

**Quinten Hallgarth shares his project about the effects of light on the eyes during the Grant Union science fair March 12.**

their performance and how they felt to see which one was the best," Hall said. "I found that a mix of fat and protein was the best, and sugar was the worst."

Hall said she enjoyed the opportunity to be with her cross country team for this project.

A silver award went to Paige Weaver, and bronze was awarded to Ashleigh Ostberg

and Devon Stokes.

An important aspect that led to the success in many of the students' projects was the question they asked and researched. Many students said they researched a question they were genuinely interested in, and it made the experience great.

Amy Stiner of the South Fork John Day Watershed Council had the opportunity to return and be a judge for the fair. She said she was excited to see the students research what's important to them.

When Stiner was a student at Grant Union, she had the opportunity to present her project at the science fair.

"I did this research project and I have thought about how this affected my life with the job I'm in now in natural resources," Stiner said. "I have to do a lot of grant writing, and it all goes back to the scientific process and how you write your grant proposals, and it really ties into how you develop a research project and report on it."

## COVID-19

Continued from Page A1

missed meals at school. Each school system was devising its own plan for how to get bagged meals delivered. Many were establishing central pick-up points while others intended to run meals out on school buses.

And Sunday was the first time that church congregations across the state avoided traditional services, heeding Gov. Kate Brown's order to suspend all gatherings of more than 250 people — which she revised Monday to 25 people — and advising those 60 and older or with certain medical conditions to be in groups no larger than 10.

In community after community, life was being altered by cancellations, frenzy shopping and local governments struggling to keep up with almost hourly changes.

The cities of Redmond and Hood River, for instance, announced they were suspending all public meetings. The city of Forest Grove declared a state of emergency because of the "threat of imminent widespread illness, human suffering, loss of life, and financial loss."

The High Desert Museum, south of Bend, canceled a youth climate summit, while in The Dalles the Wind Challenge was canceled.

In Pendleton, a two-day EMS conference at Blue Mountain Community College planned for this weekend was scrubbed while the "Friends of the NRA" banquet was pushed back to June.

In Medford, a Jackson County Justice Court judge granted 60-day extensions to those required to appear in court for traffic tickets.

And the suspension of major league sports was having local impacts. The Hood River News reported that a 10-year tradition of rewarding fifth-grade students with a trip to a Blazers game was disrupted. About 50 students had been picked to go this year.

"Most of our students have never been to a Blazer game and very few have even been to the Moda center," according to elementary principal Kim Yasui.

Across the state, small retailers and restaurants decided to close. Nike, the Oregon-based shoe manufacturer, announced Sunday morning it was closing all its stores in Oregon and across the U.S.

To deal with panic buying, Fred Meyer announced it had immediate openings in its stores to help restock shelves and clear stores. Winco, the discount grocer typically open around the clock, said it would close late at night to give its employees time to resupply and clean stores.

While health officials confronted the spread of COVID-19, state and local officials are considering the economic impacts, ensuring employers and business owners are aware of low-interest loan programs and other services to cushion what is likely to be a hard blow to Oregon's economy.

On Saturday night, state Rep. Cheri Helt, a Bend Republican, called for an immediate \$1.6 billion distribution to Oregon taxpayers, accelerating kicker tax credits due later this year. She proposed checks be sent directly to taxpayers by Memorial Day and called on legislative leaders to convene a 24-hour special session within the next two weeks.

"The Legislature should lead now to help families and small businesses weather this financial storm," Helt said in a statement. "School closures, shutdowns and social distancing are critical to slow the spread of the coronavirus, but they also mean financial hardships for the wallets and jobs of Oregon families."

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