

Pool

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officials from each of the five cities.

Walker, who is also the Grant County Regional Airport Manager, said a representative of the swim team was always invited to be a part of the stakeholder meetings. This was important because it allowed the swim team to add additional input that an expert might have missed, Walker said.

Weigum said, while John Day initiated the conversation regarding a new pool, it was a plan that involved representatives from the community that discussed different design ideas, costs, other failing pools and funds.

"Part of the exploration was looking at where our users come from and asking, 'Do users of the city pool come from Monument or Long Creek?' No," Weigum said. "Would you include them in a proposal if no users come from that area?"

Walker said swimmers come from all around the county, and a main goal for the swim team is continuing their swim program for the youth in Grant County.

"We get swimmers from John Day, Canyon City, Mt. Vernon, Prairie City, and I know Grant Union School District sends kids for their summer academy so it reaches all the way to Seneca and the Izee kids," Walker said. "This project covers a great area of Grant County for sure."

Along with recreational benefits, Walker added that the pool has provided economic and safety opportunities. She said people come in from The Dalles, Bend, La Grande, Baker, Lakeview and Prineville for home swim meets.

"We have up to 250 swimmers, and many of their families come as well, so they bring a whole lot of business into Grant County for Friday, Saturday and Sunday," Walker said. "We hear oftentimes that the John Day swim meet is the favorite of all these folks, and that's why they continue to come every year."

Weigum added it's important to have a pool in the county because of its benefit for community health opportunities and people of all ages.

"I understand that whenever you're talking about taxation, it's really scary and nauseating thinking about it now with our current economic climate, but for me, the benefit outweighs the costs," Weigum said. "Community health is worth \$66 a year for me. Is it going to be like that

for everybody? Probably not, but for me it does."

What is proposed?

The aquatics center is planned to be a 7,700-square foot facility featuring a six-lane, 25-yard competition pool and a future 600-square foot warm water pool.

The aquatics center design includes a lobby, locker rooms, restrooms, a party room and office space. Along the north edge are the utility support spaces and seating for competition, which could potentially seat about 200 people, according to Green.

The diagram that Green presented showed an aquatics center with pickleball courts, which would not be funded as part of the initial construction but could be added through non-profit fundraising to create some variety until phase two.

"The thought behind the design of the phase one facility is that it could expand to year-round use with a covered pool and an expanded recreation component in the future," Green said. "It's why it's designed the way it is. If we were just building an outdoor pool, and that's all we ever wanted to have, then we wouldn't go with this type of design."

The aquatics center funding package would include all the site development costs to complete parking, grass and help reconstruct a portion of the trail system to make it accessible.

"The question I get is what's \$6 million buying us? Does that mean a covered pool and a gym?" said Councilor Paul Smith. "I say, 'No. It lays out an outdoor pool with the pretense of a phase two, which would be a later development.' What we're voting on now is that outdoor pool facility and the operations, maintenance and replacement."

In addition to the aquatics center, the city is looking into options to add an indoor recreation center to the area as part of phase two. Green said the possible rec center, however, would be a separate project not funded by the aquatics district.

"This phase one facility that we would ask the county court to refer to the voters, I think, would serve this community very well," Green said.

During June and July, listening sessions will be held in the communities that would be affected, and action committees will then present the final plan to be recommended to the county, Green said.

Struggle

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said she is concerned that easing the coronavirus restrictions too quickly could have unintended consequences for a community like Grant County, with 30.4% of its population 65 and older.

She said her kitchen is small and is not sure how employees will maintain proper social distancing.

Squeeze In kitchen manager Desi Burrill, who during the closure painted the kitchen at the restaurant, said she would like to see the state take its time in easing restrictions.

Squeeze In employee Stephanie D'Angelo said she is immunocompromised and that she needs to be careful when the social distancing directive gets lifted.

Duncan said the closure has been hard, and she misses both customers and staff.

"They are like family," she said.

Meanwhile, El Cocinero owner Fernando Leal in Prairie City said he wants to open his restaurant next month.

"We need to get back to work," he said. "This has gone on for too long."

He said a former employee who

helps him with paperwork from time to time helped him fill out an application for the PPP loan, but he said he did not know if he was approved.

Leal said he had to lay off his staff and has been running the restaurant by himself.

Kattie Piazza, the owner of House to Home in John Day, said she applied for an Economic Injury Disaster Loan, what many were calling a grant of up to \$10,000, but found mid-process that the loan is based on employees and that she potentially can qualify for \$1,000, which barely covers her operating expenses.

Piazza, who is in her fourth year of business, said she has shifted to online sales, even creating a Youtube channel to drive sales.

"I am finding ways to try and be successful in this current environment and honestly praying that it does not last until September," she said.

She said she is averaging roughly two sales a week, and those have been local sales.

Piazza said more money is going out than is coming in, and she cannot sustain the closure for much longer, two months at best.

"I feel like rural America has been left out," Piazza said.

Joe Madden, co-owner of the recent-

ly-closed Blue Mountain Mini Mart, said he looked into the SBA loans, but realized the qualifications were based off payroll.

Madden said closing the Mini Mart was difficult and it was not an easy decision. He said laying off his long-time manager, Jolene Moulton, was especially hard.

"(Laying off an employee) is actually one of the hardest things I've ever had to do and one of the worst feelings that there is," he said. "She had been the lifeline of the business."

Madden said he and his brother, Jesse, do not know if they can keep Suds Pub in Mt. Vernon or Prairie Pub in Prairie City open. He said they have been trying to keep food from expiring and that alcohol and lottery sales were a significant income stream. He said 100% of the payments to keep the business open are out of pocket.

Madden said he is trying to keep things in perspective and recognize others are going through much worse.

He said his son was sick, and it looked like he might have had the virus, but doctors ruled that out and now he has recovered. Madden said the experience made him much more aware of the public health crisis.

"People are losing loved ones," he said.

Economy

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equipment and the public health staff for contact tracing."

Information discussed in the call also indicated that each Oregon county would have to certify that it had adequate hospital beds to handle a surge in COVID-19 cases and sufficient personal protective equipment for medical personnel and first responders.

Unlike in some states, Brown is focusing on a regional approach.

"The main thing the governor told us is that there clearly are counties, particularly in Eastern Oregon and southeastern Oregon, that have zero cases or maybe one case, and they should be prioritized for reopening in a way that's consistent with maintaining public health," Nik Blosser, Brown's chief of staff, said. "So how quickly can we do that and what's the framework we need for them?"

Blosser said the governor's Medical Advisory Panel was working through plans this week on comprehensive testing, contact tracing and isolating people with coronavirus;

allowing non-emergency medical and dental procedures to resume; and the specific metrics required statewide and regionally for that reopening to recur.

In Wallowa County, Dr. Ronald Polk expressed concern about opening without adequate testing.

"We have been told that there are sufficient tests available for everyone to be tested. This appears not yet to be the case..." he said. "I would like to see a full court press on getting tests distributed throughout the rural health departments to find out the extent of disease before reopening."

Dr. Bob Dannenhoffer, the Douglas County health officer, said he knew of no Oregon county that was yet meeting all criteria laid out last week by Trump for initial reopening. Dannenhoffer is a member of Brown's panel but emphasized his views were his own, not the panel's.

Sen. Tim Knopp, R-Bend, noted that new cases of COVID-19 are declining in Deschutes County but the coronavirus will not disappear for a long time.

"We need to learn how to live with the virus and still continue on. The current shutdown and having 300,000 Oregonians essentially unemployed

because of it is completely unsustainable and is going to cause serious problems — catastrophic problems, I would say — with the state being able to fund important programs," he said. "I think we really need to look at a county-by-county opening of the state."

Oregon Senate Minority Leader Herman Baertschiger Jr., R-Grants Pass, agreed the state must learn to maintain both public health and a healthy economy. The place to start is with rural health care, he said.

"Our hospitals in rural Oregon are really hurting right now. They need to get back to work, both for their income but also for all those people who need their hip replaced, bypass surgery, all that stuff," he said.

Two Eastern Oregon lawmakers, Sen. Lynn Findley, R-Vale, and Rep. Mark Owens, R-Crane, proposed using Harney County as a pilot project, citing its lack of COVID-19 cases, its small population and its isolation from other communities.

"This is a proposal to recognize the health hazards and the health risks and work through those and mitigate restrictions..." Findley said. "If we can't make a pilot work there, we can't make it work anywhere."



Grant County Oregon Covid-19 Coronavirus Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Information Page.

The Grant County COVID-19 EOC (emergency operations center) has a web site.

www.gc-or-covid-19.info/

- It provides daily updated statistics for COVID-19 tests undertaken in the county as provided by the Grant County Health Department.
- The website also provides scam alerts, content for families and others impacted by stay at home restrictions, health information to assist keeping you and your family safe.
- The website offers assistance on money-related matters for: unemployment matters, employers who have lost business and for small business owners who have been impacted.
- It provides up-to-date information on what is or is not currently allowed. There is content about what you can do to help and there are answers to many frequently asked questions.
- Employees of the county will all find content specific to their needs during this time. We encourage people to take a look.

The EOC welcomes your helpful suggestions for improving the website.
The website address is: gc-or-covid-19.info/