

# Reopen

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The regions must also show they have the ability to test at a rate of 30 per 10,000 residents per week, and that there are enough testing sites that underserved communities can access. Hospitals also must have enough room and personal protective equipment to address an outbreak.

As of May 12, Grant County has administered 80 tests.

The governor's plan also calls for contact tracers, people who interview those who test positive for the virus and then try to identify all people who might have been in close contact with that person.

The state's plan calls for 15 contact tracers per 10,000 residents.

The Grant County reopening plan recommends the governor's office consider

hiring county-based state contact tracers.

EOC employee Chris Rushing, who presented the county's reopening plan Thursday, said the EOC is pushing for those jobs to be local.

County officials, who originally submitted the plan Monday, submitted a revised version to reflect the governor's decision to allow restaurants and bars to open within two weeks of the plan being approved. Initially, Brown's plan called for restaurants and bars to open up during the second phase.

According to Oregon Health Authority guidelines, restaurants and bars would have to comply with social distancing, keeping tables at least 6 feet apart, and employees would be required to wear face masks.

The governor's plan is less restrictive in that it allows the business to determine maximum occupancy to maintain social distancing requirements and limit customers accordingly.

The plan limits dining parties to 10 or fewer and does not allow for restaurants to combine parties who have not chosen to sit together for shared seating situations. Bars will need to eliminate most seating. Restaurants and breweries are required to close by 10 p.m.

The governor's plan raises the maximum allowed in social gatherings from 10 people to 25 in Phase 1.

The most stringent requirements are on barber shops, salons and tanning booths. The businesses will be required to ask customers prior to scheduling an appointment if they have had any symptoms of COVID-19, or had close contact with someone who has been diagnosed with the virus. If the business is willing, the state is

encouraging owners to check the temperature of each client.

The businesses are required to keep the contact information of each client, which includes date and time of their appointment and who served them with the purpose of tracking the potential spread of the virus.

Should OHA approve Grant County's plan, the county could begin reopening as early as May 15. The first phase could last 21 days, at which point, absent a surge in cases, the county could transition to the second phase.

After 21 days in Phase 1, the state will begin Phase 2 of the reopening process. The goal of the next phase will be to expand gathering size, allow some office work and begin allowing visitation to congregate care. The details of Phase 2 will be based on data collected during Phase 1, according to the governor's website.

# Pool

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After a presentation, Hamsher said he would recommend the city council send a survey to residents.

"I would like to hear the concerns and questions as a mayor in my community and the questions from the county so I can do my best to represent the people," Hamsher said.

Hamsher added that there are many large landowners in the rural fire districts that will have their taxes greatly impacted, and they need to have an ample opportunity to have their questions asked and answered.

Seneca City Manager Amanda Born said the aquatic center proposal will be on the agenda for the next city council meeting on May 12, past press time. This will be an opportunity for residents to voice their thoughts and questions on the plan and give the council an opportunity to discuss the report.

"For John Day and Canyon City, for about the same (purpose) as Parks and Rec, there will be two taxing districts, and then a bond."

Another concern Fischer had was, while the hospital bond retires this year, the new aquatic taxing district has no end date, and the decrease in the overall taxes paid per year would be temporary for some homeowners.

While the aquatic district tax rate cannot change, Fischer said property owners could see their property taxes increase 3% annually due to the assessed value of a property rising each year. Oregon law prevents assessed values from rising more than 3% per year.

While Fischer still has questions and concerns, he said it was important to hear from the community in Canyon City, and then work with the council to make a decision.

"We are waiting to discuss the resolution once we have what we feel is adequate feedback from our constituents, and then we will vote as a council," Fischer said.

## Question and concerns

Hamsher said one thing he would still like to see is a cost estimate for repairing and maintaining Gleason Pool. Canyon City Mayor Steve Fischer said he would like to know this as well and stated that he was disappointed that he never saw an estimate on fixing Gleason Pool.

"I just wish that we could look at it, and if we're told by a legitimate, licensed contractor that to fix Gleason Pool, it's going to be \$6 million, then you would have to go, 'Well, might as well build a new pool,' but I don't think it will be that much," Fischer said.

The John Day City Council learned on April 16, 2019, that a professional condition assessment of Gleason Pool could cost from \$20,000 to \$30,000. The final report states that neither John Day nor the John Day-Canyon City Parks and Recreation District have sufficient funding in their budgets to conduct an inspection of Gleason Pool.

"The city's consulting team estimated the cost for repairs could be between \$540,000 and \$810,000 or more, though it is difficult to accurately assess the cost without a complete on-site inspection," according to the final report. "In addition, repairs to the facility would likely extend the life of the pool another 10-15 years at most. At that point, the entire structure would need to be replaced."

The report also states that the current pool location would impair expansion of the Kam Wah Chung Interpretive Center since the location impedes on the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department's plans to construct a new interpretive center, according to the final report.

Fischer also raised concerns regarding the implementation of a new taxing district when Canyon City is already a part of the John Day-Canyon City Parks and Recreation district.

"For us, a \$6 million bond is one thing, but creating a new taxing district when we are already in Parks and Rec is another thing. The idea behind Parks and Rec was to cover the swimming pool when it was Gleason and the city couldn't afford it, and that's where Parks and Rec came into play," Fischer said.

## Social media feedback

On social media, a prominent comment about the pool is that it should be open year-round.

"I am definitely supportive of a pool/rec center being built," said Alicia McLane from Mt. Vernon. "However I feel it's a waste of resources if it's not retrofitted for covering to be used year-round. Swim lessons year-round is very necessary."

John Day City Manager Nick Green said during a city council meeting on Dec. 18, 2018, that operations and maintenance costs for an outdoor pool depend on the length of the season.

An extended season drives up costs for heating and labor, and with insurance and other benefits, five full-time employees can cost \$300,000 over a full year, Green said. Expected annual costs for the proposed aquatic center's operations, maintenance and equipment replacement is \$90,000.

The proposed aquatic center anticipates that the use of the pool could be extended from 10 weeks per summer to 12-14 weeks per summer, according to the final report.

"The years of memories and entertainment this will bring to the children and families in our community is totally worth the tax!" Heidi Wolf said in a post. "...Would it be awesome if it was year round, of course. But if that's not something we can do then this sounds like the next best thing."

Ellen Bush said the pool would cost too much for how long it would be open.

"The cost is also too great for the number of people that will use a seasonal pool," she said. "It's a no for me."

"I agree that the property tax increase seems a little steep for just a couple months of access," said Jeannine Sibley of Prairie City. "I really wish the county could find a way to keep it open year-round... not just for the kids, but for older adults seeking low impact exercise, physical therapy, etc."

John Day published the final report on May 8, which can be viewed at [cityofjohn-day.com/planning/page/final-report-central-grant-county-aquatics-center-published](http://cityofjohn-day.com/planning/page/final-report-central-grant-county-aquatics-center-published).

# Educators

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When Watterson talked to parents, a shared difficulty has been for parents still working full time and finding a way to manage their time with work and finding time to help their kids.

"If they're working from home now and figuring out that schedule with their kids' schedule to help them with school work, usually it was things here and there that students could finish at school, but now it's everything," Watterson said.

With the increase in participation from parents in their kids' education, it has added a new stress when making sure their child is learning and prepared for the new school year. However, Grant County ESD Superintendent Robert Waltenburg wants to assure parents not to worry and know that teachers and administrators continue to provide support.

"Don't worry, when they come back in the fall and things return to a more structured setting for us, we're going to get your kids where that kid needs to be, and we appreciate their work and partnership," he said. "Where



Contributed photo/Rhonda McCumber  
**Andrea Combs, a special education teacher at Grant Union, gets ready to start a Zoom meeting with students.**



Contributed photo  
**Erin Beil, an instruction assistant at Humbolt Elementary.**

we're at is where we're at, and we are going to get there."

Even with the challenges at hand, schools and families continue to work together to overcome tribulations.

"Our teachers across the county have stepped up, and I would venture that, if you were to interview the teachers, (general education) as well as (special education) teachers, they're going to tell you, 'Yeah, I used to work from 7:15 in the morning to 4:00 in the afternoon.' What I hear now is: 'Holy crap, I'm up at 6. I'm worried about this. I'm working until 7 in the evening and then Sunday I come in and try to figure out

how to do this or that,'" Waltenburg said. "We have some rock stars across the county."

At the start of distance learning, Watterson and McCumber shared that parents and educators have come a long way since they started.

Watterson said her conversations with parents were about 20-30 minutes long when distance learning started because they were figuring out the best way to implement distance learning. Now the phone calls average 5-10 minutes.

"At the beginning our parents were really stressed and asked, 'I don't know how to do this,'" McCumber said.

"From then to now, I think a lot of territory has been covered, and I am proud of our families, kids and our teachers of making the best of the situation."

Watterson added that schools and educators around the county are in this together to overcome the current obstacle.

"I feel that together we are one, even though we are at different schools, serving different kids, we're all in this together and we all understand what our needs are," Watterson said. "Even though we're in different places and different situations, we're in this together."

# EOC

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The county court approved \$125,000 in funding to hire staff, purchase supplies and COVID-19 test kits when the center was established in March. Myers said the EOC should first look to bring on county employees who could not work from home to see if they were a good fit. Myers said approval was needed from the court for any purchase over \$200, and he instructed Dobler to avoid overtime hours as well to avoid burnout of both him and his staff.

Dobler, who initially requested \$250,120, was instructed by the court to go over the budget and reassess whether additional funding was needed after 45 days.

Meanwhile, the EOC has



The Eagle/Steven Mitchell  
**Seth Klingbeil, Emergency Operations Center communications lead, said the EOC website answers frequently asked questions. Klingbeil said he helped build the new website, grantcounty-covid.com, with the help of the Economic Development office.**

built an infrastructure at the airport that includes a new website, high-frequency

radios and a high-powered antenna to communicate with neighboring counties during

emergencies.

Dobler said, as a taxpayer, he understands that people in the community want to know where and how their money is being spent. He said now, with the county hoping to move into Phase 1 of reopening and with the EOCs infrastructure in place, he and his staff have the time to share information with the media and public.

Dobler said the EOC has spent roughly \$117,000 of its budget. He said the caveat folks need to remember is that the EOC, though approved for funding March 31, was formed in early March.

"I start from the beginning of the month," Dobler said.

The county's PPE inventory as of May 5 shows 100 COVID-19 test kits, roughly 150 face shields, 250 N95 masks and upwards of 750 procedure masks across the county.

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