

Court

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three of us (court members) who are sitting way too close to each other.”

Myers pointed out that the court members were not 6 feet apart.

“This is not 6 feet. This is a 12-foot table. We’re at about 4 feet,” he said. “I’m just pointing that out. We’re not good examples necessarily, but this is a narrow room.”

Hailey Boethin, assistant watermaster, asked the two commissioners, who are leaders at the county’s Emergency Operations Center, why they had not put tape on the floors at the courthouse to indicate social distancing guidelines or put signage out during a pandemic.

“I don’t understand why those (directions) are not being

provided,” she said.

County Commissioner Sam Palmer, public information officer at the EOC, told Boethin that she was right, that the county could have been more responsive.

Boethin asked Hamsher why, as a leader at the EOC, he just visited the water department two weeks ago. Hamsher said because the courthouse was closed until June 1 and that he was waiting for direction from both the county’s insurance carrier and the state.

Planning Director Shannon Springer asked that uniform and consistent direction be given to all departments.

“Every court member has been to my office, and every court member has given my office direction, each one a little bit different direction,” she said. “A conversation between you and me today and a conversation between you and Kathy

tomorrow is inconsistent.”

Springer said it’s not just about guidance but also about communication. She said she was in a meeting with Vicki Bond, the county librarian, and Bond did not know that Dave Dobler was no longer the incident commander at the EOC.

Justice of the Peace Kathy Stinnett said it appeared that the court devoted a majority of their time to the EOC.

“I think that’s a little bit of the feeling we’re getting is that everything was devoted to that one emergency department, and we’re left to figure out what we’re supposed to do,” she said.

Hamsher said their focus has been on reopening local businesses.

“We had every business in the county pretty much closed down,” he said. “It was, I think, our responsibility to get our taxpayers back to work, get

their buildings and their businesses opened up in the fastest manner possible.”

Stinnett said she understood that those are his constituents.

“In addition to politics and the constituents and, you know, legislating, making rules, I just think there’s room for some administration,” she said.

Stinnett said she was mostly addressing things after June 1.

Mindy Winegar, Grant County Fairgrounds manager, said the department heads just want communication.

“I don’t think anybody is saying nobody has done their job or not,” she said. “We don’t get communication.”

She said the department heads do not know what happened to the EOC.

“It’s just like with the EOC, we need the EOC, we thought we needed the EOC and then now department heads don’t know what hap-

pened to it,” she said.

Winegar said she communicates with Hamsher frequently, but a group email “could be really appreciated.”

Palmer said he would like to move forward and look for a resolution. He asked which would be more reasonable, working with county’s safety committee or getting direction straight from the court. The court agreed to provide further guidance through the safety committee.

Hamsher said he had spoken to all of the departments where he is the designated liaison, sometimes multiple times a week, and other departments even where he is not the liaison.

Grant County District Attorney Jim Carpenter told the Eagle after the meeting that he had not been contacted by his designated court liaison, Hamsher, “even once” during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Masks

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Fauci stopped short of directly criticizing President Donald Trump, who has refused to wear a mask in public despite pleas from public health agencies that he model the behavior they say is needed to defeat the virus.

The Oregon Health Authority has used forecasts provided by the Institute of Disease Modeling to create a trio of scenarios of the growth of infections: optimistic, moderate and pessimistic.

In recent days, state epidemiologists have said they were aiming to stay within the moderate scenario in which COVID-19 cases would rise to about 900 a day. Daily hospitalizations would go to 27 per day.

The worry has been that the state would trend toward the worst case scenario — “pessimistic” — in which new cases could spike to more than 4,800 per day and 82 new patients would need hospitalization each day.

The optimistic scenario saw cases remain at about 180 new daily cases. But Oregon has already passed 200 cases in a day, with all but one of the highest number of daily cases occurring in the past two weeks.

Oregon joins a growing number of states that are backtracking on “reopening” amid a surge of new COVID-19 cases. Only two states — Rhode Island and Connecticut — have not shown a rise in coronavirus infections in the past week, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Florida, Texas and Arizona — three states that quickly reopened businesses in recent weeks — are showing the sharpest increases.

Oregon health officials have also been concerned about the rise in cases that cannot be traced to a known source. This is an indicator of “community spread,” in which the virus is spreading from casual contacts among numerous people.

As of Saturday, Oregon’s overall positive testing rate was 4.3% of tests performed. That’s much lower than the national average of 9%. But with the rate rising, state officials decided Monday it was time to act.

Oregon has reported 8,485 positive cases, though officials believe the real number is much higher because many people who are infected do not show symptoms or have delayed symptoms. The virus has killed 204 people in Oregon.

Less than 1% of those under 50 who are infected have died from the virus. Fatalities increase rapidly with age, with 20% who are 75 and older dying.

A New York Times statistical analysis reported this week that 54,000 of the deaths in the United States — 43% — are tied to nursing homes and long-term care facilities.

Riding

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Grant County resident and Vietnam veteran Bob Van Voorhis said Highway 26 is the eighth highway in Oregon dedicated to POWs/MIAs.

Van Voorhis said events like the highway dedication let veterans know that the community is “all in” for them.

Larry Moyer, president of the Central Oregon Chapter of the VMA and a Persian Gulf War veteran, said each rider has a personal reason for participating in the ride.

“For me it’s been really important to be a part of something that takes care of veterans that are in need,” he said.

Moyer said his uncle, a World War II vet awarded the silver star, the third-highest military award for valor against an enemy of the United States, had post-traumatic stress disorder when he came back from the war and ended up committing suicide.

“He ended up being one of the 22 vets per day that takes their life,” he said. “So it touches me there, and when you’re in the service, all this stuff touches you all the time.”

Cliff Brumels, co-organizer and Persian Gulf War veteran, said many people do not think about the “after effects” Veterans go through when they leave the military.

“Everything in your life changes because you’re in a structured environment,” he said. “And then when we come out into the public, we have to change, but we have things we carry with us that we didn’t notice when we were in, like



The Eagle/Steven Mitchell

A caravan of motorcycle riders with the Oregon Veterans Motorcycle Association ride through John Day on Sunday to dedicate Highway 26 as a POW/MIA highway. A sign dedication ceremony and luncheon was held at the John Day Elk’s Lodge.

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“Everything in your life changes because you’re in a structured environment,” he said. “And then when we come out into the public, we have to change, but we have things we carry with us that we didn’t notice when we were in, like

our PTSD.”

The outside world for veterans, said Brumels, is kind of “strange.”

“When you come out into the world, the only comrades we have our brothers and sisters you see here,” he said.

Brumels said his uncle, a pilot in the Vietnam War, was

shot down and held as a POW. He said he passed away in Prineville about four years ago.

“I stay connected with my cousins because that was their father,” he said.

Dennis Guthrie, a former Army medic during the Vietnam War, said about 80,000 soldiers have not been

accounted for since World War II and 60,000 of them never will be because they were lost at sea during the war.

He said there are another 20,000 soldiers that could be accounted for so the families can get closure.

“We ride for those who can’t ride,” he said.

Money

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Program and the Economic Injury Disaster Loan.

LeQuieu said she is hopeful the county will receive \$160,000, but that number could change.

She said the money would be awarded through a lottery system through a

yet-to-be-identified impartial, third-party agency to ensure fairness.

According to Business Oregon’s application, eligible small businesses must meet the following conditions:

- A business must have been economically impacted in one of the following two categories: a for-profit or non-profit

corporation that could not operate due to the COVID-19 shutdown orders, or a business can demonstrate a one-month decline in revenue more significant than 50% in March 2020 or April 2020 compared to sales in January or February of the same year.

- The business has 25 or fewer employees.

LeQuieu said the prelim-

inary application window will be July 6-12.

Additional application windows may be added, she said, but due to the deadline requirements from the state may limit that.

Documents that may be needed include a 2018 tax return, year-over-year profit and loss documents and an employee identification number.

LeQuieu said the money needs to be disbursed in 45 days.

She said the states’ rigid requirements may leave a lot of other businesses out, especially sole propri-

etorships and independent contractors.

She said there will be a separate grant businesses can apply for through the county, but she did not release the details.

“We decided to put a separate pot of that same money that has fewer restrictions,” she said. “This makes it a lot easier for these especially sole props, independent contractors to really be able to access very needed funds.”

LeQuieu said anyone who wants more information can reach out to her personally at stephanie@oregonrain.org or 541-965-1598.



Eastern Oregon Mutual Aid
Volunteer to help local food pantries and those most impacted by COVID-19

The Eastern Oregon Mutual Aid Network (MAN) was created to assist folks and food pantries in Eastern Oregon who have been affected by COVID-19. This program connects community needs with community volunteers and resources. The Mutual Aid Network operates in 12 Eastern Oregon counties, including Baker, Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Lake, Malheur, Morrow, Sherman, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, and Wheeler Counties.

Ways you can support:

- Volunteer at your local food pantry
- Sign up and support members who need your help
- Donate to the Eastern Oregon Mutual Aid Network GoFundMe

Some current needs include:

- General personal hygiene items in local food pantries
- Donations to support CAPECO food pantry operations
- Lake County needs transportation to help bring fruits and vegetables to Christmas Valley

For more information about how to request support or offer support, please visit our website:
<http://eohla.org/easternoregonmutualaid>

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