

People 80 and older to be vaccinated Monday

Health department to offer COVID-19 testing by appointment only

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant County will immunize people over 80 years old Monday between noon and 2 p.m. in a closed vaccine clinic.

Kimberly Lindsay, the county's public health administrator, said the health department and Blue Mountain Hospital would be calling roughly 100 people on the county's wait list to schedule a time for them to receive the vaccine.

Lindsay said the hospital and the health department, in addition to vaccinating seniors 80 and over, are also working to administer second shots to health care and educa-

tion staffers.

As of Monday, she said, the county expects to have around 110 doses available.

While roughly nine rural counties in Oregon had their vaccine doses reverted to the Portland metro area, Lindsay said in a text message last week the health department became aware of a "previously unidentified" pocket of in-home health providers.

Lindsay said she was able to secure doses for the in-home health workers and that the county expected to receive 100 additional doses.

Lindsay said it is "quite possible" there will not be enough doses for those who are over 80 years old and that she does not know when the county will get another round of shots.

She said if someone has called the hospital or health department and put their name on the wait

list, they have nothing more to do than wait to be contacted for their appointment.

How do I get on the wait list?

Lindsay said those looking to get on the vaccine wait list should email vaccine@ccsemail.org.

She said that all people need to do is let the health department and hospital staff know they are interested in receiving the vaccine.

From there, she said, people need to provide their name, date of birth, phone number, mailing address and any chronic health conditions. She said they would receive a confirmation email back within 48 hours.

Lindsay said, if it is not possible to email, people can call the health department at 541-575-0429 or Strawberry Wilderness Clinic at 541-575-0404 and ask to be placed on the COVID-19 vaccine wait list.

How can I get a COVID-19 test?

Lindsay said the Grant County Health Department would be administering COVID-19 tests by appointment only starting this week.

She said the county had seen an increase in strep throat, due, in part, she said, to a lower infection rate of COVID-19.

"When we schedule an appointment, if the person tests negative for COVID, we can investigate other causes for the symptoms," she said.

Grant County has seen one new case of COVID-19 since Jan. 27, bringing the county's total case count to 215 since the beginning of the pandemic, according to the health department.

According to a Monday health department press release, the 215th case resides in the John Day ZIP code.



The Eagle/Steven Mitchell
Rebekah Rand, director of emergency management services at Blue Mountain Hospital District, gets a vaccine shot ready Friday at the Grant County Fairgrounds pavilion.

Prioritizing John Day street improvement projects

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

Fourth Street repairs, Hill Family Park, Charolais Heights intersection and Government Entry Road are among priorities for the John Day City Council.

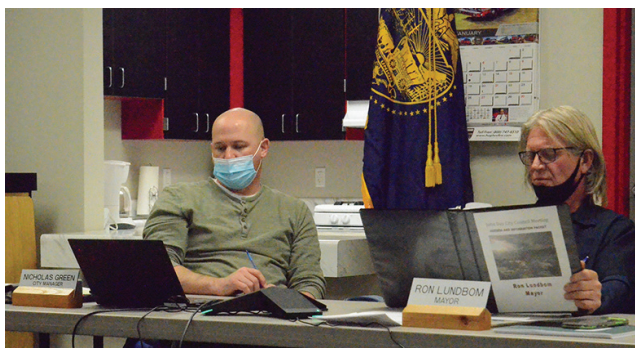
John Day City Manager Nick Green said during a study session Jan. 19 that there are more projects than money, which means the city will have to consider which projects to prioritize and which to put on hold.

"My bigger concerns are the projects that are partially funded, where if we shift and miss our deadline without an extension to the (funding) agreement, we're going to lose the money," Green said.

Fourteen street projects were organized into two tiers in the Jan. 26 council agenda with tier-one projects having contracts issued, deadlines and funding committed. Tier-two projects were capital improvements with design and incomplete funding, or right-of-way acquisitions.

The Charolais Heights intersection project has \$100,000 in funding committed from the Oregon Department of Transportation's Small City Allotment grant. The project would need to be substantially completed by July 31 so the city could apply for the next round of SCA funding in the summer.

The city would need an additional \$220,000 dollars to safely proceed with the project, according to Green. However, because the city does not



The Eagle/Rudy Diaz
City Manager Nick Green and Mayor Ron Lundbom talk about streets during a Jan. 26 city council meeting.

have the funds to proceed, the city council talked about alternatives to pursue, such as asking ODOT if the SCA funds could be used elsewhere so the \$100,000 is not lost.

On Jan. 26, Green presented an alternative to phase the Charolais Heights intersection project into two phases so the SCA funds could still be used, while beginning to address some of the issues at the intersection. The \$100,000 would be used on phase one, which includes utility relocations, repaving and reconstructing Davis Creek Road, tearing out a section of asphalt left of Davis Creek Road and re-rocking around a failing storm drain.

Green said the second phase would improve the approaches, change the elevation grade across the whole intersection and smooth out the turn and the rise.

"With the Fourth Street repairs looming, we can't do both, but I think this is one way we can get half of the project done," Green said.

The city council agreed with the phased approach and

motioned to pursue the two-phased plan.

The Hill Family Park has \$366,840 in funding committed to the project. The focus is to complete the bridge procurement and construction and then use the money left-over for additional developments at the park, according to Green.

The goal is to award the bridge project in March. Once the contract is signed and the cost of the bridge is subtracted, the city will have a better idea on what to emphasize.

The city talked about the importance of having another study session with the county to see if they can help with the road projects, especially since the Fourth Street still needs an estimated \$330,000 to complete.

"Let's go through these projects, and let's discuss the benefits to the county and the benefits to the city," Councilor Elliot Sky said.

Green said on Jan. 26 that a letter was sent to the county to try and plan a future study session to talk about street improvements.

Grant County businesses receive \$860,000 in grant funding

Demand exceeded available funding

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

Small businesses in Grant County have received more than three-quarters of a million dollars in grant funding.

The Grant County Economic Development Office released a COVID-19 business grants report for 2020 last month showing local businesses received \$863,064 in grants.

"It is projected that the number of applicants who have applied just scratches the surface for the financial support needed by our businesses negatively impacted by COVID-19," Tory Stinnett, Grant County economic development director, writes in the report.

Stinnett reported the county's small business program through Gov. Kate Brown's office awarded the county's businesses \$534,996. However, she said businesses in the county applied for \$1.2 million.

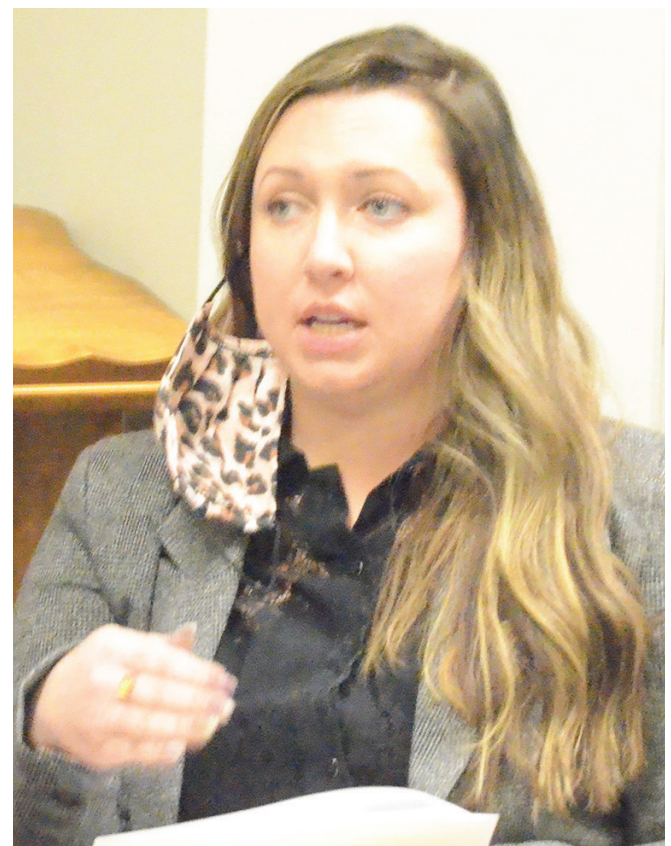
She said the state awarded 47 out of the 88 applicants. According to the report, this included 27 businesses in John Day, 10 in Prairie City, five in Canyon City, two in Long Creek, one in Monument and Mt. Vernon and one more that is yet to be determined.

Stinnett said 90% of the businesses met at least one of the governor's priority areas.

The first round of funding

The report notes that \$38,068 went out to 15 businesses, one in Prairie City, seven in John Day, four in Canyon City and three in Mt. Vernon.

According to the report, the Grant County Court approved \$70,000 as matching funds to leverage an additional \$70,000 from Business Oregon. Oregon Community Foundation awarded Grant County an additional \$20,000, and with assistance from Commu-



Eagle file photo
Tory Stinnett, Grant County economic development director, during a session of Grant County Court last month.

nity Lending Works, this grant program deployed funds to help small businesses survive through the pandemic.

Stinnett noted that the first round of funds limited the number of applicants to those who had not received any federal coronavirus relief funds, including an Economic Injury Disaster Loan or Payroll Protection Program loan through the Small Business Administration.

Greater Eastern Oregon Development Center

According to Stinnett, the funding through the Greater Eastern Oregon Development Center did not have as strict guidelines as the previous round did regarding PPP or EIDL loans. She said businesses that had received COVID-19 relief funds during the last round received a sup-

plemental award while those that had not received money received a regular award.

Three businesses in John Day and one in Canyon City received a supplemental award. Meanwhile, 20 in John Day, three in Canyon City and Mt. Vernon, and one Long Creek and Dayville received a regular grant.

A total of 32 businesses received \$207,500.

Grant County Small Business Stabilization Program

Stinnett said 33 businesses in the county received \$82,500. She said this included 15 in John Day, eight in Prairie City, six in Canyon City, one in Long Creek and Mt. Vernon, and two in Seneca.

Stinnett said these grants went out on a first-come, first-served basis or by lottery.

BTI to start truck-driving courses

By Corey Kirk
EO Media Group

Baker Technical Institute is starting a Truck Driving and Logistics School that will help students prepare to obtain a commercial driver's license (CDL).

The first four-week course starts March 8 at BTI's main campus in Baker City.

The course, which costs \$5,900 per student, will include a driving simulator that allows students to practice a variety of scenarios.

Students will have 101

hours of classroom lab time, where they work with instructors and spend time in the simulator.

Along with the class time, students will complete 44 hours of individual driving time, working one-on-one in a truck with an instructor.

The course will total about 160 hours of training.

Prospective students who already have a learner's permit will start March 15.

Those who don't have a permit can start March 8 and, for an additional \$500, obtain the permit needed to take the

course.

Space is limited, but BTI will add future courses based on demand.

Courses will run Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

More information will be available soon on BTI's website, <https://bakerti.org/school-of-trucking-and-logistics/>

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