

**BE MY VALENTINE: Ranching couple reflects on 55 years of marriage**



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**"ALMOST EVERYTHING IN OUR OFFICE IS EITHER SOLD OR PENDING. THERE'S NOT ENOUGH SUPPLY FOR THE DEMAND."**

—Wendy Cates, principal broker at Country Preferred Realty



A contributed image of a home under contract by East Oregon Realty.

Contributed photo/Traci Frazier

**Hospital cutting ties with longtime management company**

Contract expiring March 31 will not be renewed as task force works on next steps

By Steven Mitchell  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Blue Mountain Hospital District is parting ways with its longtime management company.

Derek Daly, the hospital's CEO and an employee of the management company, Health TechS3 Management Services, told the Eagle Thursday that the hospital board opted not to renew the company's contract at its Nov. 19 meeting.

The contract with Health TechS3 — which provides various services ranging from financial audits to a group purchasing organization to reduce costs for supplies — officially expires March 31, Daly said.

Daly said the board appointed a task force made up of four hospital board members to make recommendations on the transition. He said Amy Kreger, the board's chairperson, is heading up the task force.

"(The board) authorized the task force to work through the next steps," he said. "And we are progressing with those next steps."

In a Thursday phone call, Kreger declined to comment on the specifics of the board's decision, the task force and what the hospital's management will look like as of April 1. She said she would discuss the specifics in late March or the first week of April.

According to the Nov. 19 meeting minutes, the board was nearly unanimous in deciding to sever ties with Health TechS3, with six in favor and one opposed. There was only one dissenting vote to appoint Karla Averett, Levi Manitsas and Doty Parsons to the task force, who will work with Portland-based law firm Miller Nash Graham & Dunn LLP to begin the transition process.

Mike Lieb, regional vice president of Health TechS3, said in a Nov. 19 report that he was disappointed with the decision to end the contract, but Health TechS3 would be "graceful" through the remainder of the contract and is available for the hospital, if needed.

Averett said the company's years of service had not gone "unnoticed or unappreciated" and said she hoped the hospital and Health TechS3 would have a relationship in the future.

According to the Dec. 10 meeting minutes, the board unanimously authorized the task force to "engage in negotiations to employ executive leadership" and to negotiate any continuing "ancillary services" from Health TechS3 or an extension of the management services contract.

Mary Ellen Brooks, a former hospital board member who voiced concerns about quality of care, access and customer service at the hospital, said Saturday she supported the board's decision to part ways with Health TechS3.

"I am happy with their decision," she said. "They've got

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**HOUSING IS HOT**

**Demand for homes in Grant County is exceeding the limited supply, driving up prices**

By Rudy Diaz  
Blue Mountain Eagle

It's a seller's market for real estate in Grant County and most of Eastern Oregon.

The demand for housing skyrocketed in 2020, and brokers in the county remain busy into the new year, selling houses and land as the supply of available homes run low.

Jerry Franklin, the principal broker and owner of East Oregon Realty, said in his 35 years of experience, he has never seen such a drastic increase in interested buyers.

"The real estate market has been very active, and last year was the busiest year I've had in 35 years," Franklin said. "This year is starting to look the same way."

Wendy Cates, the principal broker at Country Preferred Realty, said many homes spend a short time on the market as abundant offers are coming in over the asking price.

"It's been really busy, and we about sold everything in our office," Cates said. "Almost everything in our office is either sold or pending. There's not enough supply for the demand."

**By the numbers**

At the current rate of sales per month, Grant County's residential property inventory would only last 1.7 months if no new properties were listed, according to a November 2020 Market Action report from Regional Multiple List-



A list of property and homes for sale at Country Preferred Realty with nine of the 14 properties listed as either sold or pending Feb. 7.

The Eagle/Rudy Diaz

ing Service. The metric divides active residential listings at the end of the month by the number of closed sales that month.

Since June 2020, the inventory has been 4.3 months or less. In 2019, only two months had such a low inventory, and in 2018, the lowest inventory was 6.2 months, according to RMLS.

Homes spent an average of 76 days on the market in November 2020, compared to 96 days in November 2019, according to RMLS.

Average sale prices also increased in Novem-

ber from \$164,800 in 2019 to \$249,800 in 2020, a 51.6% rise, according to the Market Action report.

"The values are going up, and that's good for the sellers," Franklin said. "... (but) our prices, compared to different areas around the state and surrounding states, is like a kid in a candy shop with how low they are."

Cates said several homes that sold a year ago

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**Groups seek to spur discussions on Greater Idaho movement**

By Steven Mitchell  
Blue Mountain Eagle

A measure related to moving Idaho's border to encompass Eastern Oregon may be on the upcoming ballot.

A group is gathering signatures to put a measure on the ballot that would require Grant County commissioners to hold meetings to discuss the county joining Idaho.

Grant County petitioner Sandie Gilson said she has until Feb. 11 to gather 231 signatures. She said she had 320 Tuesday, but some of the signatures may not be valid county voters.

The petition is about the "Greater Idaho" effort, a movement



Sandie Gilson

that advocates for adjusting the current state boundaries of Idaho, California and Oregon, thereby increasing Idaho's size to encompass several rural counties in California and Oregon. Grant County is one of the 19 Oregon counties the group seeks to have moved into Idaho's jurisdiction.

In November, 51% of Jefferson County's residents voted for the measure, and in Union County, 52% of their voters supported it.

**Gilson's view**

Gilson, a fifth-generation Ore-

gonian, said she got involved with the with the group in May. She said the state government no longer represents the value system she was raised with while growing up in Paisley, Oregon.

She said she noticed the shift in the 1990s when the northern spotted owl was placed on the endangered species list, beginning in 1990, which resulted in the loss of thousands of logging jobs and effectively changed the face of the timber industry in the northwest.

She said both she and her husband were in the timber industry at the time and switched careers.

"I was pregnant with my third child and on state assistance and went back to school, and I was not

rewarded for wanting to work to come out of welfare and that system," she said. "And so I knew that being a worker, and somebody who works, is no longer appreciated."

Gilson said a \$100 raise resulted in her losing her food stamps, housing assistance and child care.

Gilson said the state pursues "constant taxation, and small-town Oregonians are often mocked by the media."

She said rural Oregon's representatives in the minority are not heard in Salem.

"What's the point of voting on anything about Oregon?" she said. "Portland's going to rule us, and we

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