

# Masks

Continued from Page A1

Haley Walker, school board chair, said the board would not be making any decisions at the meeting.

Walker said the purpose of the meeting was to get feedback from the community on the district's plan and submit it to the Oregon Department of Education. She said she believed the deadline was Aug. 19.

Masks, she said, were the "obvious" topic of conversation for most, if not all, in attendance. However, she told the audience, masks are one piece of an extensive plan to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in schools.

"Our administration is of the belief that we have several parameters in place to protect our students from the spread of communicable diseases," Walker said.

At the meeting, Uptmor said he would continue to push for local control over health and safety policies in the district.

"I continue again to try to find that pathway so that we can have our own local control," he said. "And I will not stop."

One of the parents in the audience said he appreciated Uptmor's efforts, but, in his opinion, the state is unlikely to



From left, Grant School District board members Jake Taylor, Aaron Lieuallen, Haley Walker and superintendent Bret Uptmor listen to community feedback during the Aug. 3 board meeting.

relinquish its control.

"I appreciate you are advocating," the parent said. "But that doesn't take a mask off of my kid's face."

The parent told the board the district would need to take the control back instead.

Jessa Bigsby, a first-year teacher in the district and a parent, asked the board what they would do to protect teachers who could be liable for students that may not comply with the mask rule.

Bigsby said she did not want to require her students to

wear masks, nor did she want to wear one as well.

She said that superintendents in Prineville that she had been in contact with had told her they would not comply with the state's mandate. She urged the board not to comply.

"We have to say no," she said. "We have to give parents the right to choose. If we stand for nothing, we fall for everything."

Uptmor said the teachers, school staff and administrators are all "in the same boat" when being held liable for not enforce-

ing the mask rule.

According to Uptmor, the entire district, including himself, other administrators and teachers, are responsible for enforcing the mandate.

He said OSHA would conduct an investigation and show in its final ruling that the mandate was not being enforced.

"It doesn't start in one spot, or with one person or one with a teacher," he said.

Uptmor told the audience that he encourages them to continue to lobby their local representatives for local control.

Grant County's two state legislators, Sen. Lynn Findley, R-Vale, and Rep. Mark Owens, R-Crane, sent an Aug. 3 letter to Gov. Kate Brown. In it, the lawmakers ask the governor to provide, immediately and to the public, "scientific data specific to Oregon necessitating the statewide, schools-wide, grade-wide mask mandate."

Findley and Owens also called for a series of public, in-person town halls and listening sessions to talk about the rules and their "very serious implications."

"We all agree our students cannot suffer another year without in-person instruction," the legislators write. "We also agree the health and safety of Oregonians must be a top priority. We now need to agree that building public trust through transparency and providing information before regulation will be key to slowing and eventually stopping the spread of COVID-19 and its variants."

Prairie City School District Superintendent Casey Hallgarth did not respond to a request for comment.



From left, Jerett Waddel, Simmie Waddel, Trinity Hutchison, Wade Waddel, Tate Waddel and Riddick Hutchison on their farm in Mt. Vernon.

# Waddell

Continued from Page A1

Simmie said she made sure the funds would be earmarked for pediatric equipment.

She said Tate always brings a calf to the fair so that he can be involved. The idea to get Tate a steer was born out of a conversation she and Wade had about giving back to the hospital.

"He just wants to be a normal kid," Wade said. "He sees the other kids doing something, and he wants to be out there too."

4-H members and their animals must pass a series of qualifications. In addition, animals get weighed to ensure they are within the ideal range for their species, making raising an animal to take to the fair a commitment that a 4-H'er has to

make throughout the entire year.

With Tate's disability, Simmie said the work to raise the steer, including feeding, grooming and other needs, is a team effort.

She, Wade and Tate's siblings, Trinity Hutchison, 20, Riddick Hutchison, 16, and Jerett Waddel, 11, have all pitched in on the chores to take care of the steer.

It's "not a big deal," Simmie said. She said the family makes it work. At times, it can be a juggling act, and the other kids have had to sacrifice here and there, she said, "but what family doesn't?"

Besides, she said, Tate's perseverance is infectious. She told the Eagle that every evening, without fail, he cannot wait to take his steer Bam Bam out for a walk at dusk.

"We don't want him to miss out on something that will make him go further in life," she said. "No matter how many miles we have to drive or how far we have to go."



Contributed photo/Greateridaho.org

The Greater Idaho concept.

# Idaho

Continued from Page A1

ing to serve on an advisory committee to work on those issues and create a government representing the region's values.

Grant County Judge Scott Myers said the court would need to find out how best to create a committee and that he did not know if it would be wise to have a county committee. He said some committees are very functional while others are not. Myers said Friday he is opposed to establishing an advisory committee.

During the meeting, Palmer asked Gilson how she would respond to an email that he received from a resident in opposition who said, "If you do not want to live in Oregon, why not move to Idaho?"

Gilson said someone on Facebook responded to similar criticism by ask-

ing if they would react to their Black neighbor with that sentiment if they felt uncomfortable living in their white neighborhood.

She said the comment is akin to telling someone to move back to Portland if they do not like it in Grant County.

John Day resident Paul Sweany said he joined via conference call to ask the court members to commit a "revolutionary act." He asked the court to request that the Eastern Oregon Counties Association put out a statement to join Idaho.

He said elected officials have "played it safe" to protect their positions, budgets and livelihoods during the pandemic and have not lost anything while others have. Sweany said good people compromising because of fear of losing their budget and livelihood is a form of corruption.

## Well Child/Adolescent Visits on August 17th and 18th, at the Health Department.

- This will include an OSAA sports participation form (sports physical) if needed.
- Patients will need to come 15 minutes prior to their appointment, they will need to fill out paperwork, and a parent will need to sign their OSAA sports participation form.
- Patients 17 and under will need to have a parent at least sign their OSAA sports participation form although they do not have to stay with the pt. So, parents may need to be reminded of this. (15 and older can sign their own paperwork but a parent is encouraged to do this until age 18).



We will also be doing **vision screening, offering vaccines** including HPV, TDAP, Meningitis and COVID-19 and any other vaccines that are needed.

- There will be incentives that will be given out after the completion of an appt. (likely a yeti bottle and greenbucks). They will also be entered into a drawing for likely a paddleboard or some other cool prizes.
- These will be billed as well child exams, so insurance information/cards will be needed.

## Grant County Health Department

528 E Main St | John Day  
541-575-0429 | 888-443-9104  
Open Mon.-Fri. 8am-5pm

5255684-1

inside every Wednesday

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