

Pool

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According to Parks and Rec's Aug. 11 neighborhood meeting minutes, the board said it had successfully managed Gleason Pool with a smaller staff than the district has now and would not need to go to the public for staffing and maintenance costs.

Weigum said a majority of the concerns at the meeting had to do with pedestrian and traffic safety. She said Parks and Rec and the city are work-

ing together to mitigate those concerns.

Secret meeting?

In the Aug. 11 planning meeting, the Parks and Rec board responded to allegations that the meeting was illegal because the public had not been properly notified.

Weigum told the Eagle that the board was required to hold a neighborhood meeting before applying for a site design review with the John Day Planning Commission.

John Day's municipal code states that neighbors within 100

feet of the proposed project site are allowed to comment on a project before the formal planning process begins.

John Day's code requires that those living within 100 of the site get notice of the meeting at their addresses of record at the Grant County Assessor's Office at least 14 days before the meeting and at least 21 days before applying for the site design review with the city.

Weigum said the board had met that notification requirement and expanded the invites out to nearly 200 feet. "We wanted to make sure we were

being mindful of potential property owners who may be impacted," she said.

Background on the pool

The city of John Day scrapped an earlier plan to ask voters to approve a bond for construction and a taxing district for operations costs for a replacement for Gleason Pool after Canyon City and Mt. Vernon elected officials voted against supporting the taxing district last summer.

Those cities would have been in a taxing district that would have covered John Day,

Canyon City, Mt. Vernon, Prairie City, Seneca and their rural fire districts. Without their support, the project was rendered infeasible, Green said at the time. Although Grant County could have still placed the construction bond on the ballot, the county could not include cities that did not pass resolutions supporting the proposed taxing districts.

Green told the Eagle in June that there would have been no way to raise the estimated \$90,000 per year to operate and maintain the pool.

While Canyon City Mayor

Steve Fischer and representatives from the Grant County Farm Bureau focused on repairing Gleason Pool, Green said that option was not feasible as the cost would have been between \$540,000 and \$810,000 to extend the old pool's life by 10-15 years. Weigum said the pool was built in the early 1960s.

Fischer and Mt. Vernon Mayor Kenny Delano also expressed concerns with the taxing district. Delano said last year that he wished there was a way to provide a pool that wouldn't be a long-term burden on taxpayers.



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain/La Grande Observer

A customer enjoys the outside seating Wednesday, Sept. 15, at La Laguna Family Mexican Restaurant in Enterprise. The restaurant, along with a similar one in Joseph and the Rusty Spur Saloon in Joseph, got by through the summer largely with college students as employees.

Workers

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since 2017, when it reached its peak, according to U.S. Census Bureau data.

The rate at which the baby boomer generation has been retiring is accelerating, according to Pew Research Center. From 2019 to 2020, approximately 28.6 million baby boomers — those born between 1946 and 1964 — retired, a 3.2 million uptick from 2019. On average, that number had previously been increasing by around 2 million retirees per year.

The impact

"One of the other factors is that boomers are retiring at an enormous rate, which is, in a way, sucking everybody up the corporate ladder or corporate world," said Matt Scarfo, a Union County commissioner and owner of Long



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain/La Grande Observer

A "now hiring" sign greets customers coming into Heavenly's Hamburgers in Enterprise. The restaurant has had a tough time getting and keeping employees, co-owner Cindy Ellis said.

Branch and Benchwarmer's Pub & Grill in La Grande. "Everyone's getting the bump up to those higher positions, if they did have them, and so it's causing a vacuum down to the X, Y, Z generation."

On the ground, restau-

rants and service industries reported having to hire much younger staff than in normal years — though the restaurant industry has historically been staffed by younger workers and those looking for part-time work, and the data from

the U.S. Census Bureau and Oregon Employment Department indicate there hasn't been any significant changes in the employment level for those younger than 18.

Angelica Zurita, who with her husband, Jose Lopez, owns the La Laguna Family Mexican Restaurants in Enterprise and Joseph and the Rusty Spur Saloon in Joseph, said they employ about 15 people at the three establishments.

During the summer tour-

ist season, they were fortunate to hire college students who were eager to work. But now, as the students return to campus, finding reliable help is a problem.

"They really don't want a job," Zurita said of some of the locals who have applied. "They show up drunk, call in sick, don't show up at all or they show up late."

Still, as the tourist season ends, she's optimistic the restaurants and saloon will manage.

"It's slowing down to where I think we've got it covered," she said.

The trades, too, are having a tough time finding workers. Jared Hillock, manager and co-owner of Hillock Electric, said the biggest problem is a lack of qualified electricians.

"There are just not enough people in the trades right now," he said. "I think it's important we get kids in trades and not preach so much college."

He said a starting electrician right out of high school — after a four-year apprenticeship — can make \$32 an hour, with benefits.

"We're trying to push more

kids to think about trades," he said. "You can make a good family wage right out of high school."

He does have an opening for a counter person, which he's not gotten many adequate applications for.

"We got a lot of random resumes dropped off, which I guess is people trying to satisfy job-search requirements," Hillock said.

Renaissance Design, Fabrication & Powder Coating, which opened in May in Joseph, has well-paying positions available that remain unfilled, owner Rick LaFave said.

"I'm still trying to hire three or four more welders," LaFave said. "People don't want to work, I guess. ... I've talked to several people who've put feelers out, but I'm not getting people who want to go to work."

Though he doesn't have concrete evidence, he has his opinion on the cause.

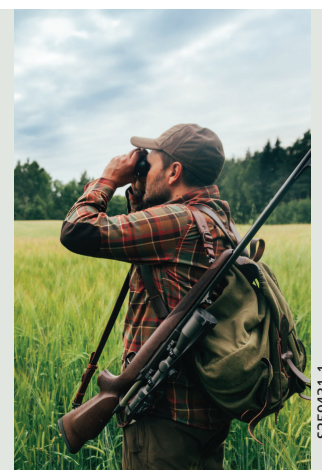
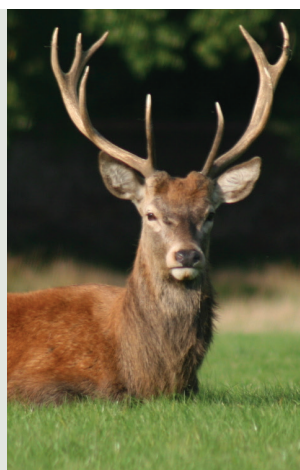
"My opinion is because the (unemployment) money hasn't run out," he said. "Hopefully, we'll get people wanting to go back to work once that runs out."



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