

State to investigate Grant School Board

By BENNETT HALL
Blue Mountain Eagle

The Oregon Government Ethics Commission has decided to move forward with an investigation into whether the Grant School Board broke the law during an executive session on Aug. 19.

The state ethics panel made the decision on Friday, Oct. 22, after reviewing a preliminary staff report on the matter.

At the same time, the commission decided to drop school board member Kelly Stokes from the scope of its investigation after determining that Stokes did not

participate in the Aug. 19 executive session, either in person or by phone.

At issue is whether the five school board members who did participate may have violated the state law that governs how public meetings may be conducted.

The ethics commission's ruling, which came in response to a complaint filed by the Blue Mountain Eagle, is not a finding of fault against the school board. However, the preliminary staff report makes it clear that there is ample supporting information to warrant a full investigation.

"There appears to be a

substantial objective basis to believe that a violation of the executive session provisions of Oregon Public Meetings law may have occurred on Aug. 19, 2021, when topics not authorized under ORS 192.660(2)(f) may have been discussed," the report says in part.

State law allows public bodies such as the school board to go into executive session — where the public is barred and reporters are instructed not to report on the proceedings — only in certain narrowly defined circumstances.

The board had initially scheduled a public meeting for that day to discuss

requirements for returning to in-person schooling, including Gov. Kate Brown's order that all educators, school staff and volunteers be vaccinated against COVID-19. That meeting was canceled seven hours before its scheduled start time and replaced with an executive session "to discuss confidential information."

Based on a reporter's observation of the proceedings, the Eagle believed the school board's discussion during the executive session far exceeded the legal basis it cited for the closed-door meeting. When the newspaper informed

Grant School Superintendent Bret Uptmor and School Board Chair Haley Walker of this view, Uptmor defended the board's actions and demanded that the Eagle not print any information from the executive session.

State law allows journalists to report on executive session discussions that stray from the specific parameters used by the public body to justify the closed-door meeting.

So far the paper has refrained from publishing a detailed account of the school board's Aug. 19 discussion, although an Aug. 24 article did

describe the general outlines of what was said. The Eagle filed a complaint with the Oregon Government Ethics Commission in order to get clarification on whether the school board violated state public meetings law by discussing broad policy matters that went far beyond the "confidential information" cited in the meeting announcement.

The Oregon Government Ethics Commission has up to 180 days to complete its investigation. The commission is scheduled to consider the results of the investigation at a public meeting on April 8.

Student aces interview contest

By STEVEN MITCHELL
Blue Mountain Eagle

A Grant Union High School student took the top spot in the job interview contest at the FFA district competition in Ontario earlier this month.

Competing via Zoom, junior Jasmine Bryers beat out students from 10 other schools in the district when she interviewed to intern at Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch in Bend. Bryers said the ranch takes traumatized children and horses and uses the Christian faith to heal them both.

"This is a job I actually want to get when I'm older," Bryers said. "So I was pretty excited about applying for it, and it made it a lot easier to interview because I was really passionate about this company's mission statement."

Wayne Suchorski, Grant Union High School ag shop teacher and FFA adviser, said that Bryers winning the job interview contest is extraordinary.

"We're all proud of her, and for her to win this contest is a big deal," Suchorski said.

Bryers has been in horse 4-H for three years. She said she likes to help others in any way she can and she loves children.

Currently, Bryers is interning at the Grant-Harney County affiliate of Court Appointed Special Advocates, a national association that supports and promotes court-appointed advocates for abused and neglected children. She was hired for the summer to work at the farmers market and harvest festival, but the organization decided to keep



Ryan Gerry, Grant Union's principal, shakes hands with junior Jasmine Bryers, who won the FFA district job interview contest in Ontario earlier this month.

the 16-year-old on to work on a video project explaining what CASA is like through the eyes of a child from the foster care system.

Bryers, who was in and out of foster care for an extended period of her life before moving in with her grandparents, said she has been interviewing children in the system.

Bryers said her goal in life is to overcome her negative experiences and become the person she wants to be to help

change the world.

"Being able to give other kids opportunities to talk about their experiences is really empowering," she said.

As a devout Christian, Bryers said, it is crucial to be of service to her community. Moreover, she said she would have wanted someone in her life who had a similar experience to show her that it is still possible to have a successful life.

A 4.0 student since she

was a freshman, Bryers said that after she graduates high school next year, she plans to attend Harvard University to earn a master's in psychology.

She said getting into Harvard has always been a goal to give her motivation, but she is also looking at other four-year schools such as Eastern Oregon University and Whitman College for undergraduate work before moving on to Harvard to pursue her master's.



Steven Mitchell/Blue Mountain Eagle
A Grant County Health Department staffer holds up a COVID-19 rapid test during a testing event on Aug. 30.

Grant County records 13th COVID-19 fatality

Blue Mountain Eagle

Another Grant County resident has died from COVID-19.

The individual, a 63-year-old male with underlying medical conditions, died on Friday, Oct. 15, at St. Charles Medical Center in Bend, according to a news release issued Oct. 19 by the Grant County Health Department.

The man's name was not released. Public health officials in Oregon do not routinely disclose the names of people who die from COVID-19, citing privacy concerns.

"We encourage everyone to be respectful as a family

in our community grieves," the news release said.

The latest fatality marks the 13th COVID-related death of a Grant County resident since the start of the pandemic. As of Monday, Oct. 25, Grant County has recorded a cumulative total of 1,002 cases of the disease, Oregon Health Authority statistics show.

Statewide, there have been a total of 359,733 cases and 4,295 deaths, according to OHA data.

As a nation, the United States has now had 45.5 million cases of COVID-19 and 737,301 COVID-related deaths, according to information compiled by Johns Hopkins University.

Thursday, Oct. 28
Grant County Republican Central Committee Meeting
• 3 to 5 p.m., John Day Fire Hall, 316 S. Canyon Blvd.

The meeting will include a bylaws update, presentation of the 2022 meeting schedule, a report from the state platform convention, and a Zoom meeting with Sandy Mayor Stan Pulliam, who's running for governor, starting at 3:30. The public is welcome.

Friday, Oct. 29
Community Coffee with Sen. Lynn Findley
• 10 to 11 a.m., Squeeze-In Restaurant and Deck, 423 W. Main St., John Day

The Dist. 30 state senator will meet with constituents to hear their concerns and answer questions about topics of interest.

Halloween Party and Spook House
• 5 to 9 p.m., John Day Elks Lodge, 140 NE Dayton St.

The John Day-Canyon City Parks and Recreation District and the John Day Elks Club are teaming up on this event. Kids party starts at 5 and runs until 7. There will be a haunted house as well as goodie giveaways. The



adult will go from 7 to 9 with the haunted house and open lounge.

Saturday, Oct. 30
Grant County Conservatives All-Grant County Call to Action

• Noon to 5 p.m., Trowbridge Pavilion, Grant County Fairgrounds, 411 NW Bridge St., John Day

Topics for discussion will include development of a citizen-run school cooperative for Grant County children, a local political candidate nomination drive, creating true community resilience and self-reliance, and moving toward a 2nd Amendment ordinance for Grant County.

Sunday, Oct. 31
Halloween Day Clay Pigeon Shoot
• 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Brad and Julie Smith's B Bar J Ranch, Highway 402 near milepost 9.

Prizes awarded for women's, men's and kids' clay pigeon shoot, which costs \$3 per round. Bring your own pumpkin for the pumpkin chunkin' shoot. The event, a benefit for Monument High School's Flying Tigers Club, will feature concessions, a live auction and a dessert auction. Halloween costumes are welcome. A meal of ribs, beans, cornbread and corn on the cob will be available for \$12 per person, or \$10 for kids 9 and younger. For more information, call 541-934-2143.

Trunk or Treat
• 4:30 to 7 p.m., Mt. Vernon Community Hall, 640 Ingle St.

Participants decorate their cars for Halloween and fill up the trunks with goodies to hand out to trick-or-treaters.

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HALLOWEEN KILLS (R)	
Friday	4:10, 7:10
Sat & Sun	1:10, 4:10, 7:10
Mon-Thurs	7:10
DUNE (PG-13)	
Fri - Sun	3:30, 6:45
Mon-Thurs	6:45
RON'S GONE WRONG (PG)	
Friday	4:00, 7:00
Sat & Sun	1:00, 4:00, 7:00
Mon-Thurs	7:00

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