

The Blue Mountain EAGLE

Grant County's newspaper since 1868



Wednesday, November 17, 2021

153rd Year • No. 46 • 14 Pages • \$1.50

MyEagleNews.com



Courtesy of Opsis Architecture
This conceptual drawing shows what the proposed aquatic center at the Seventh Street Sports Complex might look like.

John Day pool plan moves ahead

By BENNETT HALL
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — Plans for a new public swimming pool took another step forward on Tuesday, Nov. 9, as the John Day Planning Commission granted a permit for the project and the City Council took several actions to advance the proposal.

In the first of two back-to-back meetings at the John Day Fire Station, the Planning Commission voted 3-1 to grant a conditional use permit to the John Day/Canyon City Parks and Recreation District for a proposed aquatic center at the Seventh Street Sports Complex to replace the old Gleason Pool, located in a city park adjacent to the Kam Wah Chung State Historic Site.

Gleason Pool, which opened in 1958, has been closed the last two seasons due to COVID-19 concerns and has significant deferred maintenance issues. Plans for the new aquatic center call for a six-lane, 25-yard competitive pool with spectator seating and an 8,000-square-foot structure to house locker rooms, a lobby and office space for parks and recreation staff.

The project has an estimated price tag of \$6 million.

In the second meeting Tuesday night, the John Day City Council voted unanimously to approve the sale of Gleason Park to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department for \$222,000, the 3-acre property's maximum appraised value. The state plans to expand the Kam Wah Chung Historic Site on the park property and add a number of improvements, a \$4.5 million project that will include a new interpretive center highlighting the history of Chinese immigrants who flocked to John Day during the city's days as a mining boomtown.

As part of the land deal, the city agreed to demolish the old pool. City Manager Nick Green estimated the

demolition would cost about \$80,000, but he added that state grants were available to offset most of the expense and the city would be able to use concrete from the old pool in street projects.

The city has already obtained \$2 million in state funding for the aquatic center project and is considering up to \$1 million more in cash and in-kind contributions for site improvements, including the money from the sale of the Gleason Park property. The city also plans to cover utility costs for the new pool.

The parks and rec district still needs to raise roughly \$3 million to \$4 million to cover design and construction of the aquatic center, depending on the city's contribution and final cost estimates. The district plans to put a bond measure on the ballot next year for either the May or the November election.

At that price range, the bond add between 53 cents and 72 cents per \$1,000 of assessed valuation in taxes for property owners in the district, according to data presented by Green at the council meeting. For the average household with property assessed at \$120,000, that would mean \$64 to \$86 per year in added property taxes for the 20-year life of the bond.

If voters in John Day and Canyon City (the area covered by the district) approve the bond measure, the new aquatic center could open as soon as the summer of 2023 (based on a May 2022 election). If voters reject the measure, the pool would not be built.

Design work on the pool is still in the preliminary stage, making it difficult to obtain accurate cost estimates, Green said. He proposed that the city obtain a \$3 million line of credit, secured by the proceeds from the land sale, to cover 90% of the design costs so design work can begin before the \$2 million state grant comes through. That way, he said, voters would have a clear idea of how much pool their money would buy before the bond measure comes to a vote.

Several councilors spoke in favor of that strategy, and the council voted unanimously to put out a request for proposals from design firms.

Both of Tuesday's meetings drew plenty of public comment, with the vast majority of speakers favoring the new aquatics center.

Arguments in favor included teaching children to swim in a supervised setting, providing a facility for the Grant Union High School swim team to train and host swim meets, supporting the health of the community and providing an amenity that would attract people to the area.

BOUNCING BACK FROM BULLYING



Steven Mitchell/Blue Mountain Eagle

After Billy Radinovich's parking spot at Grant Union High School was defaced with a hurtful slur about her weight, friends rallied around her and painted over the graffiti with a show of kindness.

Grant Union student speaks out on body shaming and mental health

By STEVEN MITCHELL
Blue Mountain Eagle

Initially, Grant Union High School's Billy Radinovich thought the black markings on her senior parking space were tire tracks from someone peeling out in the school parking lot.

However, after pulling her car out of the spot, the glaring ugliness of the spray-painted message came through loud and clear: "450LB," a cruel public shaming referencing her weight.

"My instant reaction was: why?" Radinovich said.

Sadly, Radinovich's experience underscores the fact that bullying is far too common in schools around the state and across the country.

In the most recent edition of the Oregon Health Authority's Healthy Teens Survey, conducted in 2019, three out of 10 Oregon eighth-graders surveyed reported they had been bullied at least once in the past 30 days.

That number was slightly higher close to home, with 35% of eighth-graders in Lake, Harney and Grant counties reporting that they had experienced bullying in the previous month.

The numbers were lower for high school juniors in the region (which



Billy Radinovich, left, sits with Kate Hughes during a Grant Union volleyball game. With many friends in school, Radinovich was shocked by the graffiti incident.

Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

includes the Prairie City and Grant school districts), but they were still alarming at 25% and higher than the statewide average of 20%.

Nationally, 28% of middle-schoolers surveyed said they had been bullied one or more times during the most recent 30-day period, according to a 2019 study conducted by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The nationwide figure for high school students was 16%. The average for students of all ages was 20%,

or one in five.

Still, there are reasons to be optimistic: According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, bullying in schools has decreased by 11% over the last 10 years.

What is bullying?

Traditionally viewed by some as a rite of passage everyone has to go through in life, bullying can have very

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Contact tracers face abuse

By STEVEN MITCHELL
Blue Mountain Eagle

CANYON CITY — As the pandemic drags on, contact tracers with the Grant County Health Department say they are facing rising levels of uncooperative and abusive behavior.

Kimberly Lindsay, the county's public health administrator, said during a meeting of the Grant County Court on Wednesday, Nov. 10, that contact tracers are increasingly on the receiving end of verbal tirades from people who are deliberately flouting pandemic protocols.

The goal of contact tracing is to limit the spread of COVID-19 by identifying people who may have been exposed to the disease and advising them on the need to get tested and possibly self-quarantine.

But with communities around the state and across the country growing increasingly weary of COVID-19, public health workers are facing an increasing level of vitriol.

Lindsay said the hostility level had driven one contact tracer to quit.

"It's hard when you're getting yelled at all the time," Lindsay said, "or people make comments when you go into the grocery store and it's like the Red Sea



Steven Mitchell/Blue Mountain Eagle

Jessica Winegar, Grant County Health Department clinic manager, addresses the Grant County Court.

parting."

One staffer, according to Lindsay, avoids going out in public due to the hostility.

Lindsay said quarantine impacts people and businesses, especially now that the dollars in programs to offset the loss

of income are drying up. She said it is understandable that people are frustrated in that respect.

County Judge Scott Myers said on Friday, Nov. 12, that Lindsay emailed

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