

Restrictions:

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Hodges said he doesn't believe Umatilla County should wait any longer to allow gatherings and reopening of businesses and churches, however.

And when they do open, he said, they shouldn't be required to take down peoples' information so they can be contacted and asked to quarantine in the event they were exposed to the virus. He also doesn't want to see people required to wear masks to do their jobs, or to be vaccinated in order to enter an establishment, once one is available. He called those type of safety measures recommended by public health experts "medical tyranny," and said efforts to track the virus are turning America into a surveillance state.

"There has never been a government in history that has taken rights away from people, and then given them freely back," he said. "It's never happened, and we don't think it will here."

He rejects the idea that people who are protesting for businesses to reopen are "selfish," a message he said he is getting a lot on social media from people concerned about the increased spread of COVID-19 expected from relaxing social distancing rules.

He said he is trying to protect peoples' constitutional rights, and protect people from negative effects of social distancing, such as increased rates of depression and abuse.

"People are being cut off from the things that keep them healthy physically and spiritually," he said.



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan, File
The sidewalks in downtown Hermiston sit empty on a Friday afternoon in early April. A group of Hermiston residents is pushing to reopen the town and put an end to social distancing requirements.

Cherie Bumpaous, who owns The Pheasant Bar and Grill, said business there is down 95% since the governor ordered bars and restaurants to switch to takeout and delivery only. She said she wants to see businesses be allowed to reopen, even if there have to be some extra sanitation measures in place.

Delivery would still be available for those who are at higher risk of complications from COVID-19, such as the elderly or those with conditions such as asthma or high blood pressure, as well as those who live with or work with them.

"If you're afraid to get sick, stay home," Bumpaous said. "People who are healthy and not afraid should be able to go out and about."

She said she supports

Hodges' efforts to ask Umatilla County and the city of Hermiston to hold town hall meetings about COVID-19 regulations, and believes that businesses should hire an attorney if they need to in order to fight regulations they feel are unconstitutional.

Tricia Munoz, who runs Yo Country Frozen Yogurt with her husband and is also an independent medical billing specialist, said she joined the Reopen Hermiston movement because she believes all COVID-19 restrictions need to be lifted.

"I feel they're just an overtake by the governor, and she's abusing her power and allowing small businesses to go under," she said.

Munoz said she had to lay off employees and let

product go to waste. Even if businesses are allowed to reopen, Brown's social distancing restrictions are too onerous, she said, including a ban on self-serve that would require extra employees for Yo Country to implement.

"It would be almost \$24 an hour just paying for labor," she said. "You think we're going to sell that much yogurt every hour?"

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has reported 79,756 deaths from COVID-19 in the United States as of May 11, which is higher than yearly flu mortality numbers, but Munoz said she believes the government is falsifying COVID-19 numbers.

"If people are worried, then that's their right to stay home and self-quarantine," she said.



Contributed photo
Ina Abercrombie, left, director of the Irrigon Boardman Food Pantry, receives a donation from Kelly Sanders of the Hermiston Lions Club.

Hermiston Lions provide support to local food banks

HERMISTON HERALD

The Hermiston Lions Club recently presented checks to two local food pantries to support families in need due to COVID-19. The Irrigon/Boardman Food Pantry was given \$1,000, and Echo's Chester Food Pantry received \$1,750.

Irrigon/Boardman Emergency Assistance Center is North Morrow County's food pantry and not only provides food for families in need but also rent support, propane for heating and cooking, as well as other assistance. Echo's food pantry is operated by the local Kiwanis Club and helps with food needs within their community.

Mike Duffy, president of the Echo Kiwanis, said in a statement in response to the support by the Hermiston Lions that the effort was an impressive one.

"The Lions and Kiwanis share a community spirit of service and volunteerism," he said. "It is impressive how quickly the Lions have put together this giving program in answer to the virus. We want to thank Hermiston Lions, and those others as well who, through support of service groups, help to make our communities a better place."

The Hermiston Lions Club still welcomes requests for assistance, ranging from \$500 to \$2,000, to support local charities in the communities of Echo, Stanfield, Hermiston, Umatilla, Irrigon and Boardman with their extraordinary needs related to COVID-19.

Applications should be sent to Bill Kuhn, club president, at wjk.kuhn-lawoffices.com. In that email should be a description of the need, how much is needed and contact information.

Beef:

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customers' needs."

The Tyson Fresh Meats plant in Pasco, Washington, shut down on April 23 after an outbreak among workers there, including a few Umatilla County residents who tested positive. They reopened on May 5 with additional safety precautions, including masks for employees and temperature checks.

Teresa Horn, who co-owns Eastern Oregon Mobile Slaughter in Hermiston with her husband Ted, said she has three to four rows of sticky notes with orders — about 40 as of Monday.

"It has been crazy," Horn said. "We are so busy we can't catch up. People got their stimulus checks and now they are stocking up on food. There is about a week's wait for an order. If you want half a beef, it could be a minimum of a month."

If you raise your own beef, Eastern Oregon Mobile Slaughter will process it for you. But for others, Horn said they rely on getting product from the processing plants to fill orders.

"As we get the meat, we are filling orders," Horn said. "The phone has been ringing nonstop."

While the smaller boutique beef processing companies are keeping plenty busy, the grocery stores are having to put limits on what people can buy — just like they still are doing

with toilet paper.

Columbia Harvest Foods in Umatilla is limiting customers to two packs each of beef, chicken and pork.

"It's happening everywhere," owner Dave Meade said. "Safeway and Costco have had to do that too in this temporary disruption in the supply chain. We get inventory daily, but if you are missing half of your load, we have to make sure we can get everyone something."

While restrictions have affected large families and those who like to meal plan and prepare for the week, Meade asks that shoppers be patient.

Janelle Carrera of Hermiston has a family of eight she has to keep fed. They do grocery pickup from Walmart, but have to go into the store to get meat — something they have had to do almost daily as of late.

"We try to shop in bulk for the week," Carrera said. "Meal planning is a big thing for us. Right now,

we have to plan to what is available. My three oldest are teenage boys. When I cook, it's like cooking for a crowd."

Carrera and her family make their own pasta or dumplings on a daily basis, and she cooks three meals a day.

"I don't know where it all goes," Carrera said. "They eat constantly. I'm lucky they will eat leftovers, if there are any. Because of the (meat) limit, I've had to get creative."

Meade said he understands the frustration of the shoppers, but assures that it won't last forever.

"We understand the frustration of the consumer," Meade said. "Meat is essential, especially at dinner. We've been buying what we can. We have brought in ground turkey to

try and fill the need. People may have to make multiple trips to the store, and that disrupts how they plan. We expect this to be over sooner than later."

CORONAVIRUS

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