

Umatilla County sees 117 new COVID-19 cases since Aug. 25

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

Umatilla County continues to closely track COVID-19 data as the county looks ahead to a possible return to Phase 2.

Counties must go at least three weeks before moving to a new phase of reopening. Umatilla County returned to Phase 1 on Friday, Aug. 21, making Friday, Sept. 11 the three-week mark. Metrics the state considers when counties apply for a new phase include new case numbers per capita, the percentage of tests coming back positive, and the number of cases that were able to be traced back to a specific source.

As of Tuesday, Sept. 1, Umatilla County has had 2,562 cases — an increase of 117 cases from one week prior. The news release from Sept. 1 also stated the county had 144 presumptive cases and nine hospitalizations.

A total of 38 residents diagnosed with COVID-19



Staff photo by Ben Loneragan

A sign outside of Hermiston's temporary city hall advises people to wear a mask on Tuesday, Sept. 1, 2020. Umatilla County has seen 117 new COVID-19 cases since Aug. 25, 2020.

have died.

The Oregon Health Authority has issued statements asking Oregonians to carefully consider their Labor Day plans to prevent a spike in cases after the holiday.

“Past holiday weekends have led to outbreaks in Oregon among people celebrating in riskier ways and led to an uptick in the number of people who have COVID-19,” the agency stated in a recent Facebook post.

During an Aug. 27 news conference, Oregon's public health director, Dean Sidelinger, shared an example of 20 people in Oregon who rented a beach house together. Although none of them were showing symptoms during their vacation, right afterward 12 of the guests got sick, and those 12 people were linked to five workplace outbreaks sickening more than 300 people.

OHA's guidelines ask people to consider staying

home for the holiday weekend, and are asked to keep four principals in mind if they do risk travel.

The first is that the fewer people are involved, the lower the risk. Second, outdoor spaces with space to social distance and good airflow are the safest place to be around others. Third, staying 6 feet apart at all times helps lower risk of transmission. And fourth, shorter amounts of time together are less risky than lengthy visits.

Umatilla County Public Health has cautioned that people coming to work while knowingly sick have contributed to outbreaks in the area.

The Oregon Health Authority's weekly report lists workplaces with at least 30 employees that have had at least five cases of COVID-19 linked to them, either through an employee testing positive or through close contacts of those employees who test positive. The following are the Umatilla and

Morrow county worksites on OHA's most recent list, released Aug. 26:

- EOCI (Pendleton), 232 cases
- Lamb Weston (Hermiston), 182
- Regency Hermiston Nursing & Rehabilitation Center (Hermiston), 99
- Shearer's Foods (Hermiston), 68
- Lamb Weston East (Boardman), 58
- Walmart Distribution Center (Hermiston), 54
- Walmart (Hermiston), 54
- Atkinson Staffing (Hermiston), 54
- Columbia River Processing (Boardman), 39
- Good Shepherd Medical Center (Hermiston), 37
- Lamb Weston Pac Center (Boardman), 37
- TRCI (Umatilla), 33
- Smith Frozen Foods (Weston), 32
- Hill Meat Company (Pendleton), 32
- McDonald's (Hermiston), 30
- Lamb Weston West (Boardman), 27

- Columbia Basin Onion (Hermiston), 24
- Independent Transport (Boardman), 21
- Threemile Canyon Farms (Boardman), 18
- MJ's Labor Services (Hermiston), 17
- Port of Morrow Warehousing (Boardman), 16
- River Point Farms (Hermiston), 16
- Oregon Potato Company (Boardman), 15
- Ashley Manor (Hermiston), 11
- Home Depot (Hermiston), 10
- Family Health Associates (Hermiston), 9
- Boardman Foods (Boardman), 8
- J&J Snack Foods (Weston), 8
- Keystone RV Company (Pendleton), 7
- McDonald's (Stanfield), 7
- Columbia River Dairy (Boardman), 7
- Garrett Packing Company (Milton-Freewater), 6
- Dairy Queen (Hermiston), 5

Fifth candidate files for Hermiston council

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

Five candidates will vie for four seats in November after Maria E. Durón, a family engagement specialist for Hermiston School District, added her name to the list before the election's Aug. 25 filing deadline.

Durón said she filed to run because she is passionate about helping the community and wanted a better understanding of how the city works. She also sees a need for more Hispanic representation on the council, which is why the announcement that incumbent Manuel Gutierrez is not running again helped prod her to throw her hat in the ring.

Gutierrez is planning a



Durón



Hardin



McCarthy



Peterson



Primmer

McCarthy have also filed to run again. Hardin has served 28 years on the council, while Prim-

mer is running for his third, four-year term. McCarthy was appointed to fill the seat previously held by John Kirwan in May.

Hermiston's council consists of four at-large seats and four seats representing specific geographical wards within the city. The four at-large seats are up for election on Nov. 3. All five candidates will appear on the ballot, and the top four vote-getters will be sworn into office in January.

move outside Hermiston city limits, which would disqualify him from holding a position on the council. He is one of two Hispanic councilors, along with Roy Barron.

“I see a need for more Hispanic folks to step up to leadership positions,” Durón said.

Durón has previous experience as an elected official through about eight years on the Hermiston School District's board of directors.

She resigned from that position in 2017 in order to take a job with the school district.

She is one of two new faces running for the council. The other is Nancy Peterson, an accessibility specialist for Columbia Basin College who previously told the *Hermiston Herald* she was running because she hoped to help community members feel their voices were being heard.

Incumbents Rod Hardin, Doug Primmer and David

Umatilla City Council sees 3 contested races

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

All three seats on the Umatilla City Council up for reelection in November will be contested races, with a mix of newcomers and incumbents.

According to the filing paperwork for the election, councilor Michael Roxbury is not running again for position #2 on the council. Instead, Daren Dufloth and Devon Mitchell will be vying for the seat.

Mitchell said he has lived in Umatilla since 2014 and lived in Hermiston for almost a decade before that. He works for Eastern Ore-

gon Telecom and the Oregon Army National Guard.

He said he believes Umatilla has a lot of potential, and he wants to help the city continue moving in a positive direction.

“It's always felt like home. It's always been a nice place to live,” he said. “I want to see it grow and excel and if I can have a hand in that, great.”

Dufloth, who owns The Bridge (previously known as Riverside Sports Bar and Lounge) with his wife Paulette, has served on the city council before and was mayor from 2017-19 before being beat by current Mayor Mary Dedrick when he ran

for a second term.

Dufloth said he believes Umatilla is headed in a good direction and wants to be part of the “brain trust” that helps the city grow and improve.

“The city is making a lot of investment in our community and I wanted to be part of that,” he said.

Incumbent Ashley Wheeler is running for a second term in position #4. She was appointed to the position in 2018. According to her filing paperwork, she is a business owner and the office manager at Edward Jones Investments.

Wheeler is running against Isis Ilias, whose hus-

band Ivan Gutierrez is also on the ballot.

Ilias, a stay-at-home mother, said she and Gutierrez both decided to run because they wanted to be a voice for the community and support the city, particularly the public library, where Ilias serves on the board.

“We believe in this community and want to be of service to it,” she said.

Gutierrez is running against Roak TenEyck for position #6 on the council. TenEyck was appointed to the council in 2013 and successfully ran to keep the position in 2017. He is a crop advisor for Simplot Grower Solutions.

Travel warnings set for Labor Day weekend

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

As Oregonians anticipate a three-day weekend for Labor Day on Sept. 5-7, government agencies are reminding people to take precautions to stay safe and healthy.

The Hermiston Police Department announced it is conducting extra patrols for impaired or distracted drivers from Aug. 21 through Sept. 7. The overtime is being covered by a grant from Oregon Impact, a non-profit focused on reducing impaired driving through education and enforcement.

“Whatever plans you may have for this upcoming Labor Day Holiday, have fun, but please be safe and

responsible,” the announcement on Facebook read. “Remember: DUII can also apply to other (legal and illegal) drugs besides alcohol.”

Other law enforcement agencies, including the Oregon State Police, have announced similar patrol increases for the holiday.

The Oregon Department of Transportation has announced it is expecting more Labor Day traffic on Eastern Oregon highways than usual because COVID-19 is prodding people to stay closer to home — causing them to drive to their destination instead of fly.

A news release from ODOT described Eastern Oregon as a “favorite destination” for Oregonians

from other parts of the state this summer and stated that such travelers have already caused “significant congestion on roads throughout the region” on other weekends.

Drivers are being warned to expect heavy, slow traffic over the next week, particularly at the beginning and end of the three-day holiday weekend, and are advised to plan accordingly.

“Don't use back roads to get around traffic congestion; these roads are typically unimproved and pres-

ent a number of potential hazards,” the news release stated.

The department is asking people to pay extra attention to safe driving, including following speed limits and directions on signs, putting away cellphones and not driving impaired by alcohol or drugs. Travelers should pack masks, hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes and plan their trip to maintain as much social distancing as possible, and keep their fuel tank at least half full.



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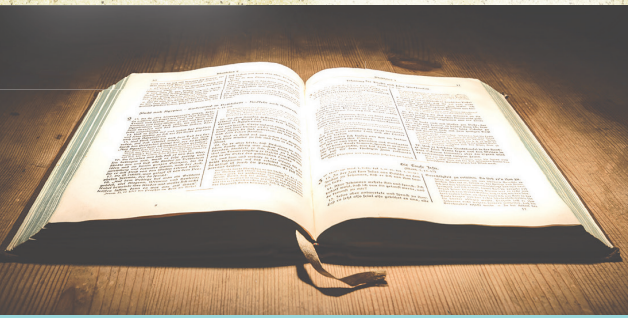
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