

City of Umatilla to buy Big River Golf Course

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

Big River Golf Course in Umatilla will be under new ownership in 2021.

The owners announced on Wednesday, Nov. 25, that after 13 years of ownership, they are planning to sell to the city of Umatilla.

"This golf course has been a labor of love for over a decade and we are truly grateful for the experience, the tremendous friendships made, and the endless amount of support we have received from members and patrons throughout the years," they wrote.

City Manager David Stockdale told the *Hermiston Herald* before its print deadline that the city council was planning to vote on official approval of the sale during their Tuesday, Dec. 1, meeting. He said the council was already aware of the city's negotiations with the golf course and he didn't foresee any dissenting votes Tuesday night.

"If the council approves it, we will be signing that immediately," he said.

According to the sale agreement, the city will pur-



Lyle Brown, 88, tees off at Big River Golf Course in Umatilla on March 26, 2020. The golf course owners plan to sell the course to the city of Umatilla.

Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald, File

chase the golf course, its water rights and all of its equipment for a total of \$2 million. The city plans to take over operations on Jan. 1, 2021.

Stockdale said there were several reasons for the city to invest in the course when its collection of partners decided to sell. First and foremost, he said, the course

generates economic benefits for the community by drawing visitors, and serves as an amenity for area residents. While a golf course may go out of business if its private owners are not successful in turning a profit, Stockdale said the city would have more flexibility to supplement the course from its general fund during a bad

year if needed.

"Big River Golf Course is one of our premier recreational features in the community, and we wanted to make sure it will stay there, and will always be here," he said.

The golf course also comes with a valuable water right and an already established point of diversion in

the Columbia River, which Stockdale said will be helpful for the city's overall efforts to expand its water infrastructure. The course also adds value to the undeveloped property the city owns adjacent to the course, where they hope to see housing built someday.

One of the city's goals is to create more "destination" events for Umatilla, and Stockdale said the golf course could possibly be used for a concert or other event during the "shoulder season" when fewer people are using the course but it is not too cold to hold an outdoor event. He said as the city looks to expand its recreational offerings, ownership of the course also opens up opportunities, such as golf classes and tournaments.

According to Stockdale and the statement by Big River Golf Course, during 2021 the city plans to continue the course's current business model, including honoring membership fees, rentals, book money and other arrangements already in place before they take ownership.

Stockdale said once the city owns the course it does

plan to make some improvements to the irrigation system to increase efficiency and automation, and add some other improvements, including some additional hazards.

"There will be some nice changes out there that I think will be welcomed by the golfers," he said.

The Oregon Secretary of State's business registry lists 10 partners for the course. Megan Olsen, who manages the course, said the statement from Nov. 25 is a good reflection of how they feel about the years they have enjoyed running the course. They stated that the city of Umatilla shares "the same love for the course that we will always have" and they believe the course will be in great hands.

"We will walk away from this experience with full hearts and gratitude," they said. "Thank you again for all of your support throughout the years. The friendships made during our time at Big River will always be cherished. If we aren't able to see you in person before the end of the year, then we will see you out golfing!"

New COVID-19 restrictions will keep gatherings small

After the current 'freeze' is over, different limits still will be in place

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

Umatilla County residents hoping to see COVID-19 restrictions lifted after the state's two-week "freeze" ends on Dec. 3 will instead see a new slate of restrictions — some less restrictive, some more.

On Wednesday, Nov. 25, Gov. Kate Brown announced the state would be moving away from the previous "phase" system of restriction and instead place counties into four categories of risk — extreme, high, moderate and low.

According to a list released by Brown after her news conference, as of Nov. 25, Umatilla County's metrics put it in the extreme risk category, while Morrow County fell into the moderate category. However, the governor's office stated that the Oregon Health Authority would be reevaluating each county right before the new system starts on Dec. 3. Once the system starts, counties will spend at least two weeks in each category before possibly being moved up or down the list based on factors, such as the number of COVID-19 cases and what percentage of cases contact tracers were able to trace to a known source.

Brown said the restrictions were in response to dwindling hospital beds in the state, in the hopes that no Oregonian will die because a hospital did not have room for them.

"Not everyone dies from COVID-19, that's true, but trust me, this is not a virus you want to get," she said. "Even young people's lives can be devastated by the virus. We continue to learn more about the longterm impacts



The parking lot adjacent to The Pheasant Blue Collar Bar & Grill in Hermiston is among several the city of Hermiston is offering to restaurants for outdoor dining while Umatilla County restaurants are banned from indoor dining under a new system of COVID-19 restrictions.

Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

of the disease — extreme tiredness and fatigue, loss of taste and smell, permanent lung damage."

During the city of Hermiston's Nov. 23 city council meeting, Mayor David Drotzmann said he had been in conversation with Brown and other officials about hospital capacity in the state, and was concerned.

During the summer, when Hermiston's COVID-19 cases were by far the highest of any ZIP code in the state, Good Shepherd Health Care System did not have to deny anyone a hospital bed due to lack of availability.

However, Drotzmann said, when other communities had lower numbers of hospitalizations, hospitals, such as Oregon Health & Science University in Portland and Kadlec Medical Center in Richland, Washington, were able to take transfers from Good Shepherd.

"That's not an option for us when those beds are full," he said. "And so even though our numbers

are not where they were in July, they're still increasing, and there are impacts from what is happening in the rest of the state on us."

According to OHSU, that hospital has accepted 69 total transfer patients from Good Shepherd, St. Anthony Hospital in Pendleton, Grande Ronde Hospital in La Grande and Saint Alphonsus Hospital in Boise since May.

Dr. David Zonies, the medical director for the intensive care units at OHSU, said at the governor's press conference that Portland hospitals weren't turning away patients yet, but it was a concern that was coming.

He said he was also concerned by the fact that he was meeting patients who were in the intensive care unit of OHSU because of COVID-19 but told him they still did not believe the virus exists.

Extreme risk restrictions

Since the state initially placed Umatilla County in the extreme risk category, the county's COVID-

19 cases have continued to rise, making it unlikely the county's status will be lowered in time for the end of the two-week freeze. In the seven-day period from Nov. 24-30 the county reported 134 new cases and one new death, of a 72-year-old woman who tested positive Nov. 16 and died Nov. 22 at Good Shepherd.

Restrictions under the "extreme risk" level include:

- Gatherings with people outside of your household will be limited to a maximum of six people with a recommended limit of two households.

- Restaurants, bars, and other eating and drinking establishments will be limited to a maximum of 50 people for outdoor dining only, with six or fewer people per table. Takeout is strongly encouraged.

- Indoor recreation, fitness and entertainment establishments, including gyms, will remain closed.

- Outdoor recreation, fitness and entertainment activities, including outdoor gym activities, will be

CITY OFFERS OUTDOOR SEATING OPTIONS

For restaurants interested in offering outdoor seating while Umatilla County is restricted to outdoor dining and take-out only, the city of Hermiston is offering the use of its parking lots to downtown restaurants.

Restaurants near municipal lots will be able to use portions of those lots to set up seating, fencing, canopies, space heaters and other amenities for outdoor dining. While they will be required to sign a rental agreement to use the space, they will not be charged a fee, according to a news release from the city.

The city is also donating \$15,000 to the Hermiston Downtown District to help businesses with the cost of setting up outdoor seating, and is working with the district to make all restaurant owners in the downtown district aware of the opportunity.

"Our downtown businesses and restaurants are part of what makes this community special, and it's our priority to make sure they have every chance to succeed in these difficult times," Mayor David Drotzmann said in a statement. "As they get creative and find new ways to serve their customers, I encourage residents to make an effort to shop local and support our friends and neighbors."

Available lots near restaurants are on East Gladys Avenue and Hurlburt Avenue, adjacent to restaurants, including The Pheasant Blue Collar Bar & Grill, Golden Palace and La Palma.

allowed, with a maximum limit of 50 people.

- Retail stores, grocery stores, pharmacies, and indoor and outdoor shopping centers and malls will be limited to a maximum of 50% of capacity, with curbside pickup encouraged.

- Faith institutions, funeral homes, mortuaries, and cemeteries will be limited to a maximum of 25% of capacity or 100 people indoors (whichever is smaller), or 150 people outdoors.

- Office workplaces will be required to utilize remote work to the maximum extent possible, with offices closed to the general public.

- Personal services businesses will be allowed to continue to operate with health and safety measures currently in place.

- Long-term care facilities can allow limited outdoor visitation, following current rules.

Capital Bureau reporter Gary Warner contributed to this report.

CHRISTMAS COUNTDOWN

NOV. 30 - DEC. 6: 20% OFF

DEC. 7 - 13: 30% OFF

DEC. 14 - 20: 40% OFF

DEC. 24 - 31: 50% OFF

KOPACZ

NURSERY FLORIST

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Mon-Sat 9am-5:30 • Sun 11am-4pm
541-567-3278

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25th Annual CHRISTMAS KICKOFF

DECEMBER 7TH - 13TH

- Our first 100 customers will receive a gift bag (1 per family)
- The 20th customer purchase gets a free smoothie
- Daily Drawings for Door Prizes (end of day)
- Every \$25 purchase gets a ticket for our daily drawing to win a gift!
- 25% OFF Christmas Gifts & Décor, Home Décor, Clothing, Baby Items, Jewelry, Kitchen Items, Prints, Wall Décor, Purses, Lamps, Luxury Lite Candles, E-cloth, Toys, Andalou Products, Books, Bibles, Children's Books, CDs & DVDs and more. *excludes doTERRA, Produce & Deli items
- 30% OFF Melissa and Doug toys and clothing
- Spend \$30 to purchase a valued item for just \$10 (while supplies last)
- 10% OFF Health Foods, Bulk Foods & Supplements
- Daily "Find the bluebird" for a prize
- Free gift with \$20 purchase (while supplies last)
- \$1 OFF Soyberry Delight Smoothie and \$6.95 for our Daily Lunch Special

Season of Savings thru Dec 24

WEEKLY SALES AND SPECIAL BUYS

Social Distancing: Limit 24 customers at a time in the store, 6' distancing and please wear a mask.

ALIVE & WELL

541-567-0272
2150 N. First St. • Hermiston

Morrow County Health Department
541-676-5421

Drive-Thru Flu Vaccine
December 4, 2020 • 10:00am-6:00pm

Morrow County Strong!

There will be FREE masks and hand sanitizers!

AC Houghton Elementary - Parking lot
1105 N. Main Ave NE, Irrigon, OR 97844

GET YOUR FLU SHOTS HERE

Departamento de Salud del Condado de Morrow
541-676-5421

Vacuna de la gripe desde su carro
4 de Diciembre, 2020 • 10:00am-6:00pm

El Condado de Morrow Fuerte!

Habra mascarillas y desinfectante para manos GRATIS

Estacionamiento de la escuela AC Houghton
1105 N. Main Ave NE, Irrigon, OR 97844

VACUNARSE CONTRA LA GRIPE AQUÍ