

## Coalition wants Oregon governor to deny Easterday dairy permit near Boardman

By KRISTIN M. KRAEMER  
TRI-CITY HERALD

BOARDMAN — A coalition trying to prevent the opening of a mega-dairy in Eastern Oregon plans to take their effort directly to Gov. Kate Brown.

A petition with more than 1,200 signatures was delivered Tuesday, Aug. 24, in Salem, according to Stand Up to Factory Farms.

The petition demands that Brown deny a Confined Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) permit that's being sought by Cole Easterday.

The Easterday agriculture conglomerate, based in Washington's Franklin County, wants to operate a large-scale, commercial dairy and feedlot in Boardman, about 60 miles south of the Tri-Cities.

A permit is needed before any animals can be housed in the dairy facility, which is expected to hold about 28,000 cattle.

"A broad swath of community, environmental, animal welfare and public health organizations have raised concerns given the Easterday family's financial distress, the outsize impact mega-dairies have on drinking water quality, climate change, and the enormous quantities of water they use," Stand Up to Factory Farms said in a news release.

The coalition cites the Easterday application in saying the controversial proposed mega-dairy would use about "20 million gallons of water per day in the midst of a historic mega-drought and generate 128 million gallons of manure-contaminated waste water in an area with dangerously high nitrate levels in the community's drinking water."

The application was submitted last month to the Oregon Department of Agriculture after Cole Easterday's father, Cody Easterday, was forced by the state agency to withdraw his own permit request.

Cody Easterday's application had been in the permitting process for two years.

He led the family businesses until earlier this year before both Easterday Ranches and Easterday Farms declared bankruptcy in court filings.

He also faces a few lawsuits over his business dealings, along with a lengthy federal prison sentence for bilking Tyson Foods and an unnamed company out of more than \$225 million in a "ghost-cattle scam."

Since Easterday had to withdraw his application for the dairy — to be on the previous site of the troubled Lost Valley Farm — his 24-year-old son filed a new feeding operation application that is similar to his dad's request.

The original application was no longer valid because Cody Easterday's name had been removed from official paperwork, and his controlling interest in Easterday Dairy was transferred to Cole Easterday.

Oregon state law requires the listed applicant on a permit to be the owner or operator of the facility.

The property was purchased by Cody Easterday and Canyon Farms II LLC in April 2019 for a reported \$66.7 million. The price did not include the cattle.

Easterday Dairy, which is a Washington corporation with a Pasco office, was registered in Oregon in March 2019.

Potatoes and other vegetables have been growing on the site while the Easterdays await the outcome of the permit application.

The Department of Agriculture said in July that the Boardman property has elevated levels of nitrates in both the soil and in one groundwater well.

A water quality advisory was issued for the property because testing shows soil nitrate levels could pose a risk of nitrate moving into groundwater.

The operating permit will have to undergo the usual public notice and participation period, and receive ultimate approval by the Oregon Departments of Agriculture and Environmental Quality before Cole Easterday can move forward with the dairy plans.

Stand Up to Factory Farms, in opposing the application, has pushed the Oregon Legislature to enact a moratorium on the creation of new mega-dairies and the expansion of existing operations.

The group wants policies instituted to "meaningfully protect our air, water and climate, and ensure the humane treatment of animals and the economic vitality of family farmers."

"Representing 114,000 Oregonians who want to see these industrial dairies stopped," the coalition's release said, "The Stand Up to Factory Farms coalition has worked with hundreds of community members and small farmers to elevate the voices of those on the front lines of mega-dairy expansion."

## Amstads auction off vintage tractors

By NICK ROSENBERGER  
STAFF WRITER

After collecting tractors for around 40 years, Tony and DeAnn Amstad successfully auctioned off hundreds of their prized collection on Saturday, Aug. 21, at their 2,400-acre potato farm outside Hermiston.

The main auction building was a full house, with people lining the sides to bid on more than 100 tractors ranging from antique John Deeres to Caterpillars and everything in between. They also were selling a 1956 International S120 truck and a 1983 Cadillac.

The Amstads listed 110 items for sale through the Booker Auction Co. based in Eltopia, Washington, with some dating back as early as the 1940s.

As words flowed in rapid-fire and bids were shouted out, the auction launched into action with bidders from Oregon, Washington and beyond.

With the auction livestreamed for online bids, many of the purchases were going to buyers from the Midwest, with numerous bids for the vintage tractors coming from Iowa, DeAnn said. The buyers would pack the tractors up and ship them wherever they needed to go.

The Amstads are second-generation Swiss-Ameri-



Nick Rosenberger/Hermiston Herald

Attendees gather Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021, in the main building to bid on tractors for sale at the Amstad Collection Tractor Auction at the Amstad family farm outside Hermiston. Booker Auction Co., based out of Eltopia, Washington, conducted the event.

can potato farmers, and Tony, who grew up on his dad's farm, first learned to drive on his father's 1945 John Deere Model A tractor. He bought his first John Deere, a Model R Diesel, in the early 1980s and continued to add to his collection throughout his life.

Tony was able to restore many of the tractors he bought and got them in working condition and, according to DeAnn, he still rode and

used them before the auction on Aug. 21. She said it took about two years to convince him to sell his collection, but it was nice to see them going to others with the same passions.

"It's sad to see them go," said DeAnn, and mentioned how much Tony loves going to a good auction.

"You really appreciate what they can do," DeAnn said.

### BRIEFS

#### GriefShare offers support, encouragement

A faith-based grief support group is starting soon at Stanfield Baptist Church.

The GriefShare program runs for 13 weeks. Each session is "self-contained," so participants are welcome to begin attending at any point. The next cycle of groups begins Wednesday, Sept. 8, from 6-7:30 p.m. at the church, 310 E. Wheeler Ave., Stanfield.

The sessions include video seminars featuring grief recovery experts, small discussion groups and personal study through a workbook. The nondenominational program features biblical principles and offers help and encouragement after the death of a spouse, child, family member or friend. A free workbook is provided.

For more information or to register for the group, contact Scott Zielke at 541-571-6886.

## More than half of Lifeways employees plan to join new county mental health provider

By BRYCE DOLE  
STAFF WRITER

PENDLETON — At least 60 former Lifeways employees are joining Community Counseling Solutions when the county's new mental health and substance abuse provider begins its contract this fall.

The new staff will be working for the Heppner-based provider by Dec. 1, when CCS' contract with Umatilla County begins, according to Community Counseling Executive Director Kimberly Lindsay. Several other employees are on the fence but may end up working for CCS, Lindsay said, adding that the employees transferring over worked in outpatient behavioral health services.

That's more than half the employees Lifeways has said would be laid off this fall, according to a Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification — or WARN — sent to the county board of commissioners and the Oregon Employment Department's Dislocated Worker Unit on Aug. 13.

The WARN notice stated layoffs "may come in stages" between Oct. 13 and Nov. 30, adding "layoffs may be earlier or later in that time frame, again depending on the transition to the new provider."

Lindsay said it's unclear whether this means employees could be without work prior to joining CCS on Dec. 1. She said Lifeways officials previously told her employees in the county wouldn't be laid off until Nov. 30.

"If I were an employee of Lifeways, and I knew I was going to be picked up by CCS Dec. 1, and I read that, I would wonder if I was going to be laid off work for six weeks or seven weeks," she said.

When asked about the gap, Lifeways Chief Executive Officer Tim Hoekstra said in an email the provider planned to send the WARN notice in July, but "at that time CCS had not had substantive

conversations with Lifeways employees in Umatilla County for the purpose of providing an intent for employment."

He then added Lifeways sent the notice in mid-August "as we still did not have a comfortable level of confirmation that CCS had committed to a sufficient number of employees."

"We are very pleased that CCS has responded positively to our recommendations to shore up staff through those letters of employment intent and accompany us at our facilities to conduct meet and greets," he said.

The Ontario-based provider, officials have said, employed more than 120 people in the county, most of whom are county residents.

Hoekstra said Lifeways plans to retain some of its facilities, including Aspen Springs in Hermiston, McNary Place in Umatilla, and Westgate House in Pendleton.

"Lifeways continues to be invested in the well-being of the whole of Umatilla County," he said.

As for Lifeways' eight other facilities in Umatilla County, Lindsay said CCS will acquire some of them and will possibly lease some facilities owned by Lifeways.

However, Hoekstra said: "There are no specific plans for any of those buildings as of yet."

Among those facilities is the old St. Anthony Medical Office Building in Pendleton and some of the surrounding land near 1601 S.E. Court Ave. Lifeways acquired that property in October 2019 for \$1 million, according to news reports.

Lifeways, which served the county for more than 16 years, lost its contract in May when the county went out for a request for a proposal, seeking a new provider that would cover both mental health and substance abuse services. The county awarded that contract to CCS in late May.

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