

## Pot council lays out OMMP rule adjustments

Timeline changes make applying easier; wildfire waivers will expire

Skyla Patton  
IVN contributing writer

The Oregon Cannabis Commission (OCC) held its first virtual meeting of the new year Jan. 27, hosting both Oregon Health Authority (OHA) and OCC members along with the public. The commission, established four years, hopes to continue to unify in the coming years and create a sustainable future for cannabis in Oregon.

The meeting began with updates from the Oregon Medical Marijuana Program (OMMP), including rule changes put in place to help reduce the hardships affecting those applying to the program at this time. Changes include accepting valid government IDs that expired in 2020, waiving notarization requirements and extensions on the timeframe for accepting attending physician statements (extended to 120 days, normally 90) and submitting additional or missing information (extended to 21 days, normally 14). These rules went into effect Jan. 18 and will be in place for the remainder of the year.

Rules in regards to Oregon wildfires went into place Oct. 22, 2020, and will expire April 19, 2021. These include waived replacement fees for registry cards lost or damaged in the fires, along with waived fees for patients who need to make changes to registration due to the wildfires.

SEE POT ON A-10

## City announces priorities for year

Downtown beautification and golf course are main projects

Laura Mancuso  
IVN editor

The Cave Junction City Council signed up for city projects in a Zoom workshop Jan. 25.

Council President Jean Ann Miles said she will take on a project with Josephine County by putting a disaster plan in place. She would like to get funds from Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to prepare for a disaster. "I want to establish a pre-disaster mitigation plan," said Miles, who also explained that the plan will be an ongoing process that entails grant application and guidance from the county.

Miles will also be working on a public safety emergency preparedness fair that she hopes to have in April or May with the focus being on helping the community become safer in case of another wildfire. Miles said she would be contacting Principal Tanner Smith from I.V. High School about scheduling the preparedness fair date and time.

Councilor Tina Casey Jones announced she would like to participate in the downtown beautification project as well as the downtown camera installation. Jones hopes to "loop in Monique Allen (Cavenet/ T C Computers) who is providing the cameras."

SEE CITY ON A-9

## County may buy 1,800 timber acres

CJ Schatza  
IVN copy editor

At a county administration workshop held Thursday, Jan. 28 over Zoom, Josephine County Forestry Director Dave Streeter briefed the JoCo Board of Commissioners on his intention to purchase 1,800 acres of forestland.

Streeter said that this property is adjacent to land the county already owns and that it will "fit into our ownership very well."

"My proposal would be to purchase those out of the reserve fund that's been set aside from the sale of other forestland," Streeter said. "Currently that fund is just shy of about \$500,000. This purchase, depending on where we land at, could be in the neighborhood of \$700,000 possibly. So we would probably have to pay a little bit of that back in the future."

Streeter would not disclose the exact location of the properties he is looking into, but said they are located north of Grants Pass.

SEE COUNTY ON A-9



(Photo by Tammie Pickens for the Illinois Valley News)

Delores Lavita, 88 (89 in 6 weeks), receiving the vaccine from Grants Pass retired nurse volunteer Cambrie Nelson Monday, Jan. 26, during a vaccination clinic at Illinois Valley High School.

## Snowy vaccine clinic goes viral

Josephine Co makes national news as event gets cut short and shots dispersed on Hayes Hill

CJ Schatza  
IVN copy editor

When they woke up the morning of Tuesday, Jan. 26, a small Josephine County vaccination team couldn't have known that their actions that day would lead to national attention and an appearance on a television program watched by millions. But that's exactly what happened.

According to the Josephine County Public Health Facebook page, the team, which included JoCo Public Health Director Michael Weber and JoCo Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Leah Swanson, was heading back to Grants Pass via Redwood Highway after carrying out a mass vaccination event at Illinois Valley High School. Due to hazardous conditions on Hayes Hill caused by the day's snowstorm, the team was forced to stop.

Knowing that the six leftover doses from the IVHS event would soon expire as a result of the delay, the health experts displayed ingenuity in the form of approaching other stranded motorists and offering the doses to them so that they would not go to waste.

SEE VACCINE ON A-10



(Photo courtesy of Josephine County Public Health)

Josephine County Public Health officials give a shot of COVID-19 vaccine on top of Hayes Hill. Public Health Director Michael Weber is holding the umbrella.

## IVHS takes the lead in grad rates

Illinois Valley High School earns top spot in district academics

Annette McGee Rasch  
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Illinois Valley High School's class of 2020 had the highest graduation rate in the entire Three Rivers School District - a first ever honor for IVHS - and Principal Tanner Smith is determined to keep that success alive, even through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The day after these kids graduated, we went right back to work on the class of 2021," Smith said. "We're laser focused on getting as many kids as we can well-



(Photo by Dan Mancuso for the Illinois Valley News)

Illinois Valley High School Principal Tanner Smith speaks at the school's 2020 graduation.

situated for their future."

While the Three Rivers School District's (TRSD) average graduation rate was 83.93 percent, IVHS topped that at 86.25 percent -- which is a remarkable achievement, considering how in 2016 the IVHS graduate rate was just 64 percent!

So what changed? Tanner Smith came

to town six years ago - and he brought an infectious enthusiasm, a keen sense of inclusiveness and a knee-jerk willingness to operate outside of the box along with him.

"It didn't happen overnight," Smith said. "Teachers were jumping ship all the time. But now, we're all on the same page. My teachers - they're amazing

- they bought into my vision. So our turnover has come to a screeching halt."

Smith said "openness" is key. "We have full transparency. Many schools have closed-door meetings, where people can wonder what's going on in there - but we're not into that. And, to enhance communication, I created a Principal Advisory Committee.

"We've all built relationships with students. We do whatever it takes," said office manager Sheri Larson. "Everybody goes above and beyond. Tanner's done a very good job of building relationships."

This inclusivity means students also help create new initiatives. It was former student Aarika Brooks who inspired Smith to replace the 'student of the month' award with honoring multiple kids simultaneously.

SEE IVHS ON A-8

# POT... Continued from A-1

Megan Lockwood, section manager for the OMMP, said OMMP users can expect a new survey to be included with applications and renewals in the next several months. “REALD” surveys, which stands for race, ethnicity, language and disability, collect data and enhance our ability to assess things like equity,” said Lockwood. “It will also be provided to the Office of Equity and Inclusion. Any data provided will be totally anonymous, and it’s also completely voluntary, so people do not have to fill this out if they don’t want to.”

An agency update came from André Ourso, OHA representative, who described updates from the governor’s request budget for 2021-23 as both “good and bad news.” Per the request budget, \$69,000 will be removed from OCC’s budget of about \$250,000, but Ourso says the commission doesn’t expect this cut to be an issue. “The good news is that the budget removed the state support for public health that was coming out of OMMP fees, which was about 1.5 million, and that’s super helpful for the sustainability of the program,” said Ourso and explained that funds suspended by the pandemic, such as those usually spent on travel reimbursement or the staff that supports the OCC, will help cover the cut. “I’m sure it won’t affect our operations as a commission and we’ll be able to absorb those costs as a program.”

He described the strain the OHA is under as “tremendous,” and touched on how despite the new year, the world is still responding to a pandemic, and credited the OMMP staff for volunteering and using an all-hands-on-deck approach.

Looking to the future, the OCC Cannabis Governance Chart for 2021 laid out the importance of cannabis not being managed in a “silo” and paved the way for industry collaboration. Rachel Knox and Anthony Taylor from the OCC reported that as of January 2021, the medical registry for the OMMP was stable at 25,000 registrants, and with public outreach to teach awareness of a sustainable program, the commission feels there’s potential to grow. The governance chart lays out a multitude of coalitions, each with its own unique stakeholders and governing responsibilities. Potential examples of these coalitions include the Department of Agriculture, the OLCC, OHA, Oregon Agencies Group, the Cannabis Equity Board, OMMP and more. For example, under contemplation the Department of Agriculture could oversee vast aspects of processing and licensing along with reporting and monitoring the agronomics of cannabis, both hemp and marijuana. It could also include aspects of the medical marijuana program, like providing education on growing at home, oversight for designated or cooperative grows, or creating patient care programs for medical licensees.

Moving forward in the plan, Knox touched on the potential future for a Cannabis Advisory Committee (formerly OCC) to include a wide range of diversity in the general body, including patients, processors, retailers, a lab tech, attending providers, traditional healers, ecologists, botanists and more. “Each committee would cover topics ranging from medicine/science, health equity, traditional medicine to sustainability,” said Knox.

The OMMP also has some minor changes coming up in the near future, such as a name change to the Oregon Medical Cannabis Program (OMCP) and an objective very similar to its current mission, with a heightened focus on patient care, accessibility and diversity for patients, caregivers, growers, attending providers and more.

A specific timeline of the projected plans for the 2021-23 OCC Cannabis Governance Chart and a legislative summary can be found on the OHA website at oregon.gov under the links provided for Jan. 27, 2021.



Photo by Tammie Pickens for the Illinois Valley News

**A total of 244 COVID-19 vaccinations were given at the vaccine clinic at Illinois Valley High School on Tuesday, Jan. 26, plus the six at the top of Hayes Hill after the clinic was cut short due to snow.**

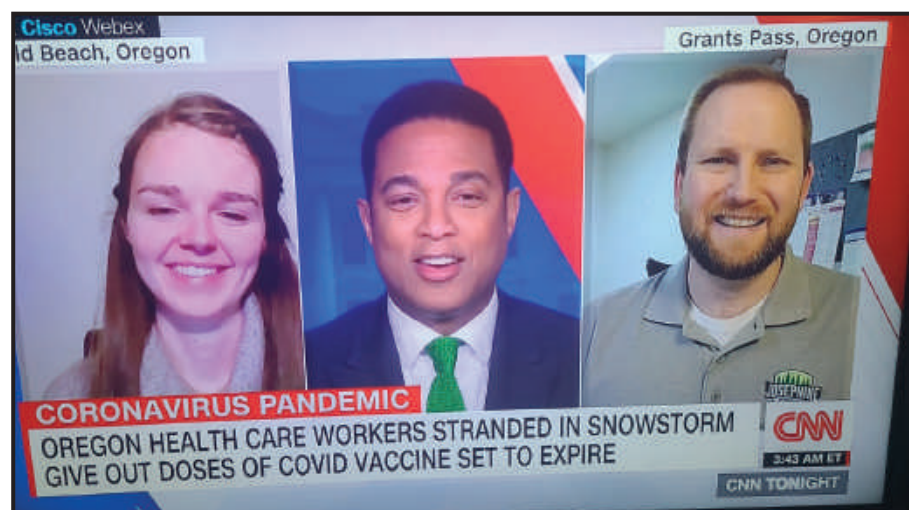
# VACCINE... Continued from A-1

All six doses were administered before the team got back on the road, including one to a JoCo Sheriff’s Office employee who was meant to receive a shot at the high school but did not arrive in time.

Perhaps the public health staff members thought that was the end of the story, but over the course of the coming days, news outlets throughout the country picked up the unusual but inspiring story. And on Friday, Jan. 29, CNN invited Weber and Swanson to do a live interview on the nightly news program “CNN Tonight with Don Lemon,” which is watched by households across the country.

Host Don Lemon asked what kind of reactions the team received from drivers stuck in the snow, to which Weber recounted, “There was a couple folks who waved us along, and I wouldn’t say everyone was thrilled, but not many were actually like that. Most folks were skeptical at first and then they found it kind of funny, and then they said, ‘Thanks, but no thanks.’”

Swanson, who administered all six vaccines on the highway, added, “This part of our county is more anti-vaxx than some other areas of our county and so there were definitely some individuals that were like, ‘No, we’re kind of hesitant to get the vaccine. We’re going to wait and see what happens for a little while.’ We were surprised only one person even asked for ID. Everybody else that was excited about



**CNN anchor Don Lemon (center) interviews JoCo Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Leah Swanson (left) and JoCo Public Health Director Michael Weber (right) about their effort to vaccinate motorists with expiring doses on snowy Redwood Highway on his nightly news program Friday, Jan. 29.**

[Photo credit: CNN]

it was excited.”

Where safety was concerned, Weber told Lemon that there was an ambulance on standby along with several physicians in case any vaccine recipients had an allergic reaction. “When I first made the decision to go this route,” Weber explained, “I had both the lead ambulance driver as well as the physician sign off on it.”

Swanson was asked if the vaccine recipients were instructed on how to get their second doses. She replied that the team did not have the CDC vaccination cards that are supposed to be handed out to those who get vaccinated, but that recipients’ personal information was

gathered so that this information could be provided later. “We are working on creating another mass vaccination in our county, and they would be more than welcome to come to that event for their second round of vaccines.”

Towards the end of the interview, Lemon joked, “Leah and Mike, if you guys ever get stranded in New York, I will say yes to getting the vaccine. Thank you guys. We needed to smile, and you guys are great for doing what you do.”

According to the JCPH Facebook page, Weber said that the snowstorm vaccination was one of the coolest operations he’d been a part of.

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