



First Quarter 2024
(January, February, March)

Issues and Programs
Compiler: Sam Scholl

The following pages are not a fully inclusive list of all the programming Combined Communications' stations broadcast to serve the needs of the local area but does represent the issues covered in our newscasts and PSA announcements.

BLS FREE MEALS

January 2, 2024

An estimated six-thousand additional Bend-La Pine students qualify for free breakfast and lunch, under expanded federal guidelines that take effect at 12 more schools starting today (Tu). The total number of Bend-La Pine schools serving free meals to all enrolled students is now 22. There is no need to sign up for the program at those 22 sites. Families at schools not included can check if their student is now eligible under the new guidelines, and apply individually.

JACKSTRAW UPDATE

January 4, 2024

Bend City Councilors approved a massive property tax break for the Jackstraw project, under construction near the Box Factory. Councilor Mike Riley opposed the application, saying the developer should have secured the exemption prior to breaking ground. Others agreed, but noted the project meets all city requirements. Plans include more than 300 housing units, space for childcare and a wrapped parking area.

ADD COMMISH PETITION

January 5, 2024

Deschutes County commissioner Phil Chang announced yesterday (Thu) he's running for re-election in the county's first non-partisan Commissioner race. There's now an effort underway to add two more Commissioners to the board. Petitioners need almost 66-hundred valid signatures by July 23rd to put the issue on the November ballot. If voters approve the proposal..the two new positions would be filled in the 2026 election.

BEND SNOW ROADS

January 10, 2024

Plow drivers have been busy across Central Oregon for the last 24 hours. In Bend, efforts are concentrated on arterials and collector roads. Streets Division Manager Chuck Swann asks for patience as about 30 pieces of equipment work to cover the entire city. Don't expect residential streets to see a plow anytime soon. Swann says they are the lowest priority. Bend plows are equipped with a new GPS system to help managers track their progress and coordinate the next shift.

RDM HOMELESS**January 11, 2024**

Redmond Mayor Ed Fitch says yesterday's (Wed) opening of Oasis Village is just the next step in the city's plan to address homelessness. He's hopeful state lawmakers will send more money to the region during next month's short session. And Fitch says he's working to secure an agreement with Deschutes County to open a managed camp on 21st Street, near Oasis Village, for people currently living in northeast Redmond and on county-owned land.

ODOT NEXT STORM**January 16, 2024**

While parts of the High Desert begin thawing out, other regions in Oregon deal with another round of wintry weather. Portland - not yet recovered from the weekend snowstorm, is under an Ice Storm Warning and Wind Advisory. ODOT is monitoring the Gorge, Cascades and Coast Range for freezing rain, ice and snow. And in Southwest Oregon, where temperatures already started warming, there's a concern river could overflow onto roads.

SNOW MELT PREP**January 17, 2024**

With warmer temperatures and rain in the forecast over the next several days... Central Oregon is preparing for another round of hazards. Redmond Street Operations worked in 24-hour shifts last weekend to clear roads. And they're ready to go around the clock again if needed. Along with freezing rain...another concern is rapidly melting snow, which could cause flooding. Residents and business owners can help by clearing storm drains.

AUTOMATED TRAFFIC**January 18, 2024**

Bend City Council gave the go-ahead last night (Wed) for the Police Department to look more deeply into installing red light cameras and photo radar. Police Chief Mike Krantz says the goal is to reduce the number of serious and deadly crashes by changing driving behaviors. If implemented, such a program would be funded by the tickets it issues. Councilors expressed concern that the system be equitable, spread across all parts of the city.

BEND STREETS**January 22, 2024**

Local street crews are shifting from sanding and plowing ... to clearing streets for draining the melting ice and snow. Bend Transportation Director David Abbas says they're concentrating on exposing curb drains. Along with common trouble spots... crews prioritize clearing main routes. The public's help is appreciated keeping drains clear and fire hydrants accessible.

BEND PARKS STORM**January 23, 2024**

Local parks fared much better in last week's winter storms than elsewhere in the state. We didn't receive the high winds that toppled trees in the Gorge and Valley. But Bend Parks and Rec's Julie Brown says dirt trails and dog parks are still a muddy, slushy mess. She suggests park visitors stick to paved trails, which were cleared by crews. Trails in Alpenglow and Pine Nursery parks currently have the most consistent terrain.

SCHOOL CLOSURES**January 24, 2024**

Bend-La Pine Schools lost three days this month, due to winter weather. The district is now considering adding days in June to make up for that lost instructional time. Jefferson County 509J Superintendent Jay Mathisen says his district is also considering extending the calendar, after students missed more than five days during the storm. Both districts will announce a decision soon. Redmond Schools lost just one day, plus two late starts.

STATE OF COCC**January 25, 2024**

COCC President Dr. Laurie Chesley presented the school's first ever "State of the College" address yesterday (Wed). She primarily focused on a new four-year strategic plan and said the goal is to serve all students, regardless of how prepared they are for college. COCC is expanding course offerings for inmates at Deer Ridge Prison. And this spring, crews will break ground on an 18-million-dollar expansion of the Madras campus.

SNOWPACK DECLINING**January 30, 2024**

After peaking last week, Oregon's snowpack is on the decline. NRCS Hydrologist Matt Warbritton says warmer temperatures are causing some early melting, but the bigger problem is the lack of new snow accumulation. He blames El Nino, which typically brings warmer than normal temps to the Pacific Northwest... and calls the storm that dumped snow in the mountains earlier this month "an anomaly."

BLS REACHES CONTRACT DEAL**January 31, 2024**

Bend-La Pine Schools reached a tentative deal Monday with the Bend Education Association. The four year agreement outlines a cost-of-living increase for certified employees, including teachers and nurses ... and increases the district's insurance premium contribution. Both sides agreed to reopen discussions in the spring of '25, to negotiate salary and insurance

BLS OSEA TALKS**February 1, 2024**

Now that Bend-La Pine Schools has a tentative contract deal with the teachers' union...they hope to soon have the same for their 900 classified employees. Custodial... cafeteria... transportation... health providers and clerical positions have worked without a contract since last June. Negotiations have been ongoing. A bargaining session was held last night (Wed) with another set for tomorrow (Fr).

DRUG BILL**February 7, 2024**

Bend State Representative Jason Kropf says classifying illegal drug possession as a Class C misdemeanor would deter public drug use and give law enforcement the ability to confiscate those drugs. He and other Democrats support a bill that also allows defendants to enter a deflection program to avoid trial. Republicans say it doesn't go far enough to improve public safety. A public hearing on the bill is scheduled for today (Wed)

BLS OSEA DEAL**February 9, 2024**

Bend - La Pine Schools has a tentative agreement for a four-year contract with the Oregon School Employees Association. It impacts 900 classified staff ... which includes maintenance ... cafeteria ... transportation ... nursing ... and clerical positions. The deal has a 10-and-a-half percent cost of living increase over two years. It still needs to be signed by the union members and approved by the school board.

APT AVAILS UP**February 13, 2024**

There are more apartments for rent in Deschutes County than in the past 10 years. Vacancy rates are up by more than three-percent ... and rising, thanks to new construction. Compass Commercial Vice President Dan Kemp says the uptick is good news for renters. More than 500 new units came online last year... and almost 700 are due this year... contributing to the higher rental availability.

RDM TERM LIMITS**February 15, 2024**

Redmond's City Council unanimously agreed to ask voters in May to consider changes to the city's charter. One ballot question would prevent members of the same household from serving on City Council together. A second would impose term limits on Councilors and the Mayor ... and starting in 2026, shift the Mayor's term from two years to four.

EBIKE BILL**February 19, 2024**

Children would face new rules for riding electric bikes, under a bill in the Oregon Legislature. Named "Trenton's Law," the bill is sponsored by Central Oregon Rep Emerson Levy and follows a fatal incident with a Bend teen. Kids under 16 would only be allowed to ride Class-1 e-bikes, where the motor only works when being pedaled... and stops assisting if the bike reaches 20 miles an hour. Opponents worry it would prevent kids from buying less expensive e-bikes.

BLS MAY LEVY**February 20, 2024**

Bend-La Pine Schools could decide next week to put a five-year local option levy on the May ballot that would raise about 23-million dollars in its first year. It would pay for Career and technical programs ... maintaining class sizes ... and helping struggling students... all issues identified in a recent public survey. Board Chair Melissa Barnes Dholakia says the levy is necessary because state funding falls short. It's separate from a bond for construction and building maintenance approved in 2022.

LANDFILL SITES**February 21, 2024**

Two areas east of Bend remain under consideration for the next Deschutes County Landfill. The Knott Landfill is expected to reach capacity in 2029. The Solid Waste Advisory Committee is looking at the Moon Pit mine, near the Badlands Wilderness...and a spot in the Millican Valley known as Roth East. Experts say siting a landfill at either location could impact wildlife, but more so at Roth East. Development and operation costs are also a concern. County Commissioners get the final say and may decide in June.

AFF HOUSING FUND**February 23, 2024**

Three upcoming housing projects will share 1.3-million dollars from Bend's affordable housing fund. The city sets aside a third of one percent collected from building permits and since 2006 has helped create more than a thousand deed-restricted affordable units. The latest recipients are Housing Works - for 59 rental units in northwest Bend... 30 townhomes for Thistle and Nest in southeast Bend ... and nine units for Bend-Redmond Habitat for Humanity.

BPRD CALENDAR**February 27, 2024**

Bend Parks and Rec is considering changes to its summer programming calendar, after Bend-La Pine Schools announced two make-up days ... pushing the last day of school to Tuesday, June 18th. Park and Rec's Julie Brown says it's now unclear when school gyms and other shared spaces will be available and there are summer camp staffing questions. She believes it'll all be worked out by the start of summer registration on March 18th.

CHINA HAT WORK**February 29, 2024**

Deschutes National Forest officials now say repaving three and a half miles of China Hat Road will not require the eviction of area homeless encampments. Work is expected to stretch from June until October. And while the road will close to vehicle traffic, camps will be allowed to remain. Forest Service staff plan to work with campers in advance, to make sure they don't get cut off. In the Cabin Butte Project area, ongoing hazardous fuels reduction efforts may force the relocation of camps in that section of forest over the next several years.

UPCOMING ODOT**March 5, 2024**

A nearly 14-million-dollar repaving project starts this week on Highway 126, between Redmond and Powell Butte. Over the next year, ODOT will also add signs and ADA-compliant curb ramps to the stretch ... as well as install a new Tripcheck camera. Also this week, work begins on a seven-million dollar roundabout on the east end of Sisters... at Highway 20 and Locust. That project is designed to make it easier for through traffic to get around downtown.

MONIHAN SENATE DQ**March 6, 2024**

The Republican hoping to replace Senator Tim Knopp has been disqualified. Shannon Monihan was endorsed by Knopp after a judge ruled he couldn't run for re-election due to last year's walkout. The Secretary of State's office now says Monihan moved into District 27 six weeks too late to run in 2024. That leaves Democrat Anthony Broadman as the only candidate, so far. The filing deadline is next Tuesday.

POSS GAS TAX**March 8, 2024**

The code imposing a transportation fee on Bend utility bills will also likely include a provision requiring a future City Council to discuss the possibility of a gas tax. Mayor Melanie Kebler says it's one way to make sure tourists and people living just outside the city pay into the maintenance fund. But she acknowledges the idea has not been popular with voters in the past, and could fail again. That discussion would take place prior to the third year-phase of the transportation fee.

DESCHUTES COMMISH RACE**March 13, 2024**

It's now a four-way race for Deschutes County Commissioner. This is the first election since voters approved changing to a nonpartisan Board. Commissioner Phil Chang is running for re-election ... but he faces three challengers in the May Primary: Judy Trego, the founder of the Sisters Community Foundation ... Small business owner Robert Imhoff ... and Brian Huntamer, an unemployed drug and alcohol counselor. If no candidate receives more than 50-percent of the vote in May, the top two move to the November election.

NE RDM HOUSING**March 15, 2024**

After years of planning, Redmond's Mayor hopes developers will break ground on a large mixed-income housing project later this year. The first phase of Northpoint Vista will be a cottage cluster from Rooted Homes. New action by City Council this week clears the path for Rooted Homes to apply for more state funding. Housing Works also plans a three-story affordable apartment complex. Market-rate homes will be built in future phases.

COCC DAYCARE**March 19, 2024**

Central Oregon is considered a childcare desert. But a partnership between COCC's Center for Business, Industry and Professional Development and NeighborImpact is helping fill the void. The Early Childcare Business Accelerator provides free business and licensing training to people hoping to open a daycare in their home or a larger facility. In the three years since it started, the program has helped create 500 new local childcare slots and about a thousand nationwide.

POWELL BUTTE RAB**March 20, 2024**

Construction begins soon on a new roundabout at Powell Butte Highway and Butler Market Road, near the Bend Airport. The 2.9-million dollar project also includes a dedicated left turn lane into the airport. Deschutes County's Road Department Director says the work is needed to improve safety on the rural road that has seen a big increase in commuter traffic in recent years. Construction is slated to start April first and is expected to last through September.

BEND TRANSP FEE**March 25, 2024**

Bend utility customers will start seeing a transportation fee on their July bill, which goes out in August... following recent City Council approval. City Manager Eric King says residential customers will pay five dollars a month in this first phase. It'll increase next year, in the second phase. After that, King says the ordinance includes a provision requiring Council to consider other potential revenue sources for road maintenance, including a gas tax - which would require voter approval.

UBER DRIVER UPDATE**March 27, 2024**

The Deschutes County District Attorney dropped all charges this month against the Bend Uber driver accused in February of taking a woman on a 30-minute ride instead of driving her home, as requested. D-A Steve Gunnels says the Grand Jury heard the case against Rocky Heath and chose not to return an indictment, based on insufficient evidence. Following his arrest, Uber said Heath's privileges with the company were suspended pending their own investigation. It's unclear whether he's been reinstated.