



Fourth Quarter 2023
(October, November, December)

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.

SCHS PACIFIC AGREEMENT

October 2, 2023

St Charles and Pacific Source officials are praising a new deal for coverage through 2024. The health system announced in August it would reevaluate its participation in Medicare Advantage contracts because of administrative delays and denials. This new agreement will reportedly streamline care for cancer patients and those eligible for Medicare. St Charles believes it could also guide talks with other insurance providers. The goal is to have more agreements in place when Medicare Open Enrollment begins October 15th.

COURTHOUSE UPDATE

October 3, 2023

Deschutes County will take on more debt to cover the cost of the courthouse expansion project. County Commissioner Tony DeBone says it's necessary to make sure there's enough capacity for future needs. The three-story addition will double the square footage of the courthouse and create two new courtrooms, with room for two more. Half of the 40-million dollar cost will be financed. Construction is slated to begin next spring.

OASIS GROUNDBREAKING (MT)

Dignitaries and volunteers were on hand in Redmond yesterday (Tu) for the groundbreaking of Oasis Village. The low-barrier homeless shelter off Highway 126 northeast of the airport...is set to open by January. Various organizations are credited for helping fund ... and build the facility that will house 20 adult residents ... the site will also include a community building, and other amenities. There are plans to further expand the three-acre site in future phases.

CROOK COURT REPLACEMENT

October 5, 2023

The Crook County Court has 90 days to appoint a replacement for Commissioner Jerry Brummer, who resigned last week, citing health issues. Judge Seth Crawford and Commissioner Brian Barney said they want to interview as many candidates as possible ... but will determine the exact selection process at a later meeting. A discussion to change the county's governing structure has been tabled for now.

SCHS NO MEDICARE

October 6, 2023

St Charles Health System will not be an in-network provider for Medicare Advantage plans offered by Humana... HealthNet... and WellCare in 2024. The hospital has been re-evaluating its agreements with insurance providers since August. Last week, it came to what it termed a 'groundbreaking' agreement with Pacific Source to accept its Medicare Advantage and other plans... and had hoped to use that deal as a model for other providers. In 2024, St. Charles will also accept plans from Providence... Moda... and Regence Blue Cross Blue Shield.

RAB DEATH ARREST

October 9, 2023

After a nearly one-year investigation, Bend Police have arrested a suspect in connection with what was first thought to be a hit and run. 76-year-old Walter Lane was found lying in the roundabout at 14th and Newport last October. He later died at the hospital. His son-in-law, Todd Brown, faces drunk driving and other misdemeanor charges. He's not charged with Lane's death because investigators say they don't know how he got from inside Brown's SUV - where he was seen on surveillance footage earlier in the night - to outside on the street.

CCSD SURVEY

October 10, 2023

Results of a survey given to Crook County School District staff are making the rounds on social media ... much of it negative of the current administration. At last night's (Mon) meeting, several parents criticized the board for not setting aside time to discuss the staff feedback. Board Chair Jessica Brumble said the board did not authorize the survey nor approve the questions. Board Member Scott Cooper said it was issued by the former assistant superintendent before he resigned in August.

JUNIPER RIDGE UPDATE

October 11, 2023

Contractors continue to clean up Juniper Ridge, as part of a Deschutes County plan to address code violations in an area prone to unsanctioned camping. County Commissioners and Bend City Councilors got an update on the work during a joint meeting yesterday (Tu). So far, around 225-thousand pounds of waste and trash has been collected. An estimated 200 people continue to live in the area, utilizing drinking water stations and portable toilets provided by the county.

TRANSP FEE RTD

October 12, 2023

Bend's proposed transportation fee was again discussed at a third roundtable meeting yesterday (Wed). Topics raised include assuring the public the fee is paying for intended projects... it's equitable...and they looked at creating long-term funding. More meetings and listening sessions are planned. If the transportation fee is approved, it could start showing up on residential and business utility bills sometime next year.

PET SURGERY SCAM

October 13, 2023

Local pet owners are the targets of a new scam. Someone posing as an employee of the Humane Society of Central Oregon has called at least five pet owners this week, claiming their lost animal was found injured and is having emergency surgery at the shelter. The scammer says the owner must pay for the care over the phone. Bend Police reminds everyone that reputable organizations won't demand payment with gift cards or online apps like Zelle. And HSCO doesn't ask for payment over the phone.

ODOT CUTS PLOWING

October 16, 2023

ODOT budget cuts due to declining gas tax revenue will mean less snow removal and winter maintenance. High volume roads including Highways 97... and 26 will still get plowed. But low volume roads, like Cascade Lakes Highway to Mt Bachelor, will see fewer snow plows. City of Bend and Deschutes County officials say they may ask the state to get involved to fill ODOT's funding gap.

FBI HAMAS

October 17, 2023

Law enforcement across Oregon are in a heightened state of vigilance, due to the bombings in Israel and Gaza. FBI Portland Field Office Special Agent in Charge Kieran Ramsey says Israel - and everyone - was caught off guard by Hamas... and efforts are now underway to make sure surprise attacks don't happen here. He says agents are talking with faith communities around the state, specifically working to protect Jewish and Muslim communities from violent extremists.

WINTER DRIVING

October 18, 2023

Drivers need to be even more prepared for winter conditions this season, following budget cuts announced by the Oregon Department of Transportation. ODOT suggests keeping an emergency kit in your car, including blankets, snacks and an ice scraper ... practice chaining up, so your first time isn't on the side of the road in the snow ... and use the yellow centerline as a guide in low visibility conditions because the white fogline may be too faded on less maintained roads.

CC COMMISH LATEST

October 19, 2023

The Crook County Court will interview candidates for County Commissioner the week of December 4th. Judge Seth Crawford and Commissioner Brian Barney need to appoint a replacement for Jerry Brummer who resigned a few weeks ago. County Administrator Andy Parks told the court at yesterday's (Wed) meeting, they should aim for December 20th to make their decision. Three people have applied so far. The application deadline is November 9th.

CARAWAY MASTER PLAN

October 20, 2023

The Caraway Master Plan received final approval this week from the Bend City Council. It's a mixed-use development planned for the north end of town, between Highways 97 and 20 ... just east of where the new Costco will be built. Both projects are inside what the city calls the Golden Triangle, which was included in the 2016 urban growth boundary expansion. Another UGB expansion is underway now, to bring in the Stevens Ranch area.

PORTLAND MAN ARRESTED

October 23, 2023

A Portland man believed to have been planning a violent attack on rock climbers was arrested in Deschutes County. According to the Sheriff's Office, Portland Police contacted local detectives after learning of 39-year-old Samson Garner's plans. Several days later, deputies found him in Central Oregon and took him into custody, with the help of SWAT. They say a search of his car turned up evidence of his plans, including several firearms. His arrest came one day before climbers converged on Smith Rock for the Craggin' Classic, this past weekend.

BEND STABBING

October 24, 2023

A 45-year-old Bend man is recovering from a Friday night stabbing. Bend Police say the victim reported he'd been stabbed by someone he didn't know, near Second and Franklin. Witnesses and video surveillance indicate there was a fight between the victim and two men prior to the stabbing. The suspect, described as white, with long blonde hair ... is believed to have used a four-inch blade in the assault.

HOMELESS COLD WX

October 25, 2023

As cold weather hits Central Oregon... efforts are underway to make sure the homeless population can be warm and dry. Bend's Houselessness Services manager says city-run homeless shelters are already at or near capacity. Shepherd's House Ministries, which manages several area shelters, is still accepting monetary donations for winter gear. The forecast isn't for extreme cold which triggers temporary warming shelters to open... but officials will prepare for that possibility this winter.

COMMISH PAROLE HOUSING

October 26, 2023

The process of creating transitional housing for men on parole or probation is underway, after Deschutes County Commissioners yesterday (Wed) chose a non-profit to build and operate the property set to open by January... within the Governor's timeline for the 1-million-dollar grant. The next step - following a two-week comment period - will be to negotiate a contract with 'Free on the Outside' ...which will work with the county to find a location for the shelter.

SMITH ROCK THREAT FOLO

October 27, 2023

The Portland man accused of plotting a violent attack on rock climbers at Smith Rock is due in court this afternoon (Fr). Samson Garner was arrested last week in Deschutes County. He faces multiple counts of attempted murder, among other charges. Central Oregon Daily News reports prosecutors have emails between Garner and an ex-girlfriend, where he first describes a plan to attack Mt Hood Meadows on opening day ... and then a shooting at the Smith Rock Craggin' Classic.

RDM BETH INN

October 30, 2023

Bethlehem Inn stopped offering shelter services in Redmond earlier this month, due to a lack of demand for high-barrier shelter services. Executive Director Gwenn Wysling says about a dozen residents were moved to the Bend shelter... the downtown Redmond facility's capacity was 88. The nonprofit is now hoping to create a rapid-rehousing program at the site, which Wysling sees as a missing piece in the housing continuum.

BLPS CONTRACT RALLY

October 31, 2023

The union representing teachers in Bend-La Pine Schools held a rally outside the district office last night (Mon), in support of ongoing labor talks. They've been without a contract since summer. Teachers say they want smaller class sizes and workloads, improved safety, adequate planning time and a fair cost of living adjustment. One union official told Central Oregon Daily News there is progress, after both sides spent significant time Monday at the bargaining table.

CONSULTANT ARRESTED (HR)

November 1, 2023

A Portland man hired by the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office has been indicted on theft and other charges in Multnomah County. The accusations stem from Kevin Dahlgren's work as a homeless services specialist for the city of Gresham. He resigned from that job in March, a week after the investigation began. DCSO signed a nearly 19-thousand dollar contract with Dahlgren in July. The agency says it was terminated in late August, after they were contacted by Multnomah County investigators ... Although DCSO confirms he was paid the full amount.

BEND WS MTG

November 2, 2023

Bend City Councilors met for the first time yesterday (Wed) with the Warm Springs Tribal Council. They discussed shared issues like water usage...economic development...and housing. Tribal leaders asked the City Council to consider Warm Springs when making land and water-use decisions. Bend Mayor Melanie Kebler expressed interest in holding a joint meeting annually... with the next one in Warm Springs.

DRUG COURT

November 3, 2023

A month after Deschutes County's Drug Court graduated its last participants, the Bend City Council is asking how it can help bring the diversion program back. District Attorney Steve Gunnels told the Council this week he hopes it will return. Despite more than 20 years of what he calls successful work helping addicts turn their lives around, the problem now is staffing. He says there is no longer a qualified coordinator nor a suitable treatment provider in the area.

RDM EXP DESIGN

November 6, 2023

The Redmond Airport has revealed the latest design plans for its terminal expansion. Work should begin on phase one of three next summer. A second-floor concourse with jet bridges, so passengers can move indoors directly to their plane...along with more seating, shopping and dining options are included in the first phase. Airport Director Zach Bass says major passenger impacts will be felt in the summer of 2025.

FIRE LEVIES

November 7, 2023

Fire departments in Redmond and Crooked River Ranch plan to hire more staff if voters approve tax levies in today's election (Tu). They say more firefighter-paramedics are needed to keep up with call volumes that are outpacing population growth. Both fire chiefs say they understand the challenge of asking to raise property taxes right now but feel it's important to maintain community safety. Ballots must be in drop sites or postmarked by 8 p-m tonight (Tu). As of yesterday (Mon) 25-percent of Deschutes County ballots had been turned in.

BEND STREET RACING

November 8, 2023

Two Redmond men are accused of a series of street racing incidents in Bend. Police launched an investigation in August after receiving a traffic complaint from a witness. Bend PD later discovered videos of the incidents publicly available on Instagram, showing vehicle license plates and the faces of some involved. Videos show cars racing around the 18th and Cooley roundabout and other locations. Mason Price and Tyler Fox were cited for reckless driving, and more citations may be issued.

TRINITY PLACE

November 9, 2023

A workforce housing project planned for the west side of Sisters just received a nearly 10-million grant from the state. The lead developer for Trinity Place says it will feature one, two and three-bedroom apartments for people earning between 50 and 80-percent of the area median income. Work is still in the very early stages. Construction is expected to begin in early 2025 ... if all goes smoothly, the 40 units would be filled in 2026.

COMMISH PUSH CODE

November 10, 2023

Deschutes County Commissioners voted this week to push enforcement of the new camping code to the end of March ... because there is still no identified location for a managed homeless camp. Enforcement was supposed to begin November 21st. Commissioners continue to work with the governor's office and the cities of Bend and Redmond to establish an authorized camping space for outdoor shelter and safe parking.

ELECTION LETTERS

November 13, 2023

The FBI is investigating numerous incidents of suspicious mail sent to elections offices, including several in Oregon. Although none appeared in Deschutes County, County Clerk Steve Dennison tells Central Oregon Daily News his office is exploring ways to maintain safety... including evaluating procedures around who touches mail, when and where. Dennison also says more local people want to get involved, despite an increase in threats towards election workers in recent years.

COMMISH CAMPGROUND STUDY

November 14, 2023

Drafter Road in La Pine could be the site of a new campground, to attract more tourists to the area. Deschutes County Commissioners looked at a study on three potential sites for tent and RV Camping yesterday (Mo). Commissioners want to build a campground on county property in order to keep up with growing recreational demands in Central Oregon...and add to overnight-stay tax revenue.

BLS CONTRACT UPDATE

November 15, 2023

Teachers in Bend-La Pine Schools have been without a contract since summer, while the Bend Education Association continues to negotiate with district administrators. The district is also in talks with the other primary union, the Oregon School Employees Association. Superintendent Dr. Steve Cook told the school board last night (tu) he's optimistic they'll all come to an agreement soon, saying talks are going well. Cook admits the next big step is to discuss compensation.

CCSD BOARD COMPLAINT

November 16, 2023

The Crook County School Board will hold a special meeting tonight (Th) to continue discussion of a complaint made against Board Chair Jessica Brumble. The allegation...which was not made public... was first raised at Monday's meeting. The board decided to investigate in an executive session set for December 18th. Tonight's (Th) meeting is at 6 p-m at the district office.

BACHELOR SEASON PREP

November 17, 2023

Mount Bachelor is fielding lots of questions from skiers concerned about opening day, scheduled for the day after Thanksgiving. They're right to be worried. Mount Bachelor's Lauren Burke says there is not even close to enough snow yet, and it's too warm for snow-making machines. She says they'll re-evaluate Monday after the revised forecast comes out for the week.

LA PINE POPULARITY

November 20, 2023

La Pine expects a big influx in visitors this week. According to Triple-A's annual list of popular regional Thanksgiving destinations, the South County city cracked the top ten for the first time. Marie Dodds says travelers realize it's less expensive than its more famous neighbors, while still close to recreation and attractions. Of course, Bend tops the regional list for this Thanksgiving... followed by Seattle, Lincoln City and Redmond. Boise rounds out the top five.

RDM TO DFW

November 21, 2023

American Airlines will begin nonstop service between Redmond and Dallas, Texas this summer. Flights will run seasonally, from May sixth through October sixth. Dallas-Fort Worth is the largest hub for American, where the airline offers around 800 departing flights every day. Redmond Airport Director Zach Bass says it took several years to secure the route. It's the farthest eastbound direct flight offered at RDM.

CHINA HAT SWAT

November 27, 2023

A 34-year-old transient was arrested near China Hat Road Friday after allegedly threatening a group of UTV riders. Deschutes County deputies say Nathaniel Bennett fired a gun near a young girl during the confrontation. SWAT responded with an armored vehicle and tried to negotiate his surrender but authorities say he was uncooperative. Eventually, two K-9s were deployed and captured Bennett. He was evaluated at the hospital prior to booking.

SAFE PARKING UPDATE

November 28, 2023

Deschutes County Commissioners again discussed what changes need to be made to the county's code to allow development of more shelter sites in unincorporated areas. However, they noted much of the land in rural areas is zoned "exclusive farm use" ... which ... under *state* land use laws, isn't allowed to be used for emergency shelter. Health Services Director Janice Garceau also asked leaders not to focus on what she calls horror stories because she says the vast majority of the homeless are not violent criminals.

RSD SUES SOCIALS

November 29, 2023

A Central Oregon school district has joined a nationwide lawsuit against social media giants. Redmond Schools Superintendent Dr. Charan Cline says the goal is to hold companies like TikTok, Snapchat and Instagram responsible for the damage they cause to young minds. He estimates his district has spent 10-million dollars in the past three years on student mental health supports and he blames social media for a rise in depression, anxiety and social isolation.

BACHELOR OPENING

November 30, 2023

Mt. Bachelor is counting on a significant atmospheric river predicted for the Cascades ... the resort plans to open for the winter season this weekend, eight days later than originally planned. Weather permitting, Little Pine and Sunrise lifts will open Saturday morning, along with the Nordic Center. In preparation, the mountain is now closed (Th) to all uphill travel until the resort opens Saturday. At that time, a new uphill policy takes effect. Bachelor officials say they'll expand available terrain as conditions allow.

MHS LOCKDOWN THREAT

December 1, 2023

Classes resume today (Fr) at Madras High, after a threat led to the school's evacuation yesterday. School district officials say it started with a call to Jefferson County dispatch, although the details of the threat are unclear. Students were bussed to the county fairgrounds, where most were picked up by parents. The campus re-opened at around 1:30 following several searches by law enforcement. After-school activities and athletics were held as normal. Trained staff will be at Madras High for any students who need to talk about the incident.

ODOT LOWER BRIDGE

December 4, 2023

ODOT hosts an open house tonight (Mon) to share plans for highway 97 in Terrebonne. Improvements include a new interchange at Lower Bridge Way, along with upgrades on local roads like Smith Rock Way and 11th Street. Several years ago, following an outcry from local businesses, ODOT scrapped plans to split north and southbound traffic, which would have increased highway capacity. The open house starts at 5 at Terrebonne Community School.

NEIGHBORIMPACT FOOD NEEDS

December 5, 2023

Neighborimpact is seeing more demand for food assistance than ever before. Food insecurity in Crook and Deschutes counties is right around the national average of 12.8-percent. Rates are even higher in Jefferson County. More than a third of those receiving food from Neighborimpact are children. The food pantry receives state funding but they also rely on private donations to make bulk food purchases. Fundraising events, like a Christmas Eve open house at Maragas Winery, help keep shelves stocked.

BEND REVISED SDCs

December 8, 2023

The Bend City Council received more information this week about proposals to update development codes and fees ... in an effort to manage growth. Councilors want to streamline contracts with utility companies that use city infrastructure. A vote to update the code could come next month. Also in January, Council will hold a public hearing on new methodology for System Development Charges.

NEFF PURCELL OPEN

December 11, 2023

Neff Road and Purcell Boulevard reopens today (Mon) at noon ... after a 10-month closure. Work to update the northeast Bend intersection took three months longer than expected because crews had to deal with old, unmapped utility lines. In addition to work at Neff... Purcell north from Full Moon Drive to Courtney Drive was widened...and now has sidewalks and bike lanes. The so-called Purcell extension should open later this month... connecting Purcell from Neff to Butler Market Road.

RV THEFT, FIRE, SHOOTING

December 12, 2023

Three people face numerous charges after the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office says they tried to steal an R-V from a transient camp off China Hat Road over the weekend. It belonged to a man who had recently died and was unoccupied. The R-V got stuck, and investigators say that's when two other campers tried to stop the trio by jumping into the bed of the pickup. A woman broke out the rear window, but was allegedly shot in the shoulder. The trailer was lit on fire as the suspects unhitched and drove off. The woman shot was treated and released at the hospital, and the three suspects were arrested in La Pine.

BIG POT BUST

December 15, 2023

Nearly a dozen local, state and federal agencies and divisions took part in a large drug bust in Bend this week. Detectives searched three properties early Tuesday morning and seized 330 marijuana plants, about 100 pounds of processed pot, 50 grams of psilocybin mushrooms and a firearm. Among those involved: The Deschutes County Sheriff's Office Illegal Marijuana Market Enforcement Team ... Redmond and Bend Police, the DEA, Oregon Army National Guard and SWAT. 39-year-old Kelly King was arrested for manufacturing marijuana within a thousand feet of a school. Authorities say they also found dangerous electrical wiring, an infestation of black mold and marijuana mites ... and groundwater contaminated by pesticides and fertilizers.

HWY 97 FATAL

December 18, 2023

Two people were killed in a collision south of Redmond that shut down Highway 97 for several hours Saturday evening. According to State Police, a 23-year-old Redmond man was northbound when, for an unknown reason, his van drove onto the shoulder, then veered across the highway into oncoming traffic, where he collided with an SUV. The van's driver and a passenger from the SUV died at the scene. During the investigation, a Bend man was arrested for DUII after crashing into an ODOT vehicle blocking the highway. Another woman accused of causing another crash in the area at the same time, was also arrested for DUII.

CCSD COMPLAINT

December 19, 2023

The Crook County School Board voted at a special meeting last night (Mo) for Chair Jessica Brumble to receive training on board member roles and responsibilities. ... following a complaint filed against her last month. A redacted version will be released to the public at a later date. Brumble and Cheyenne Edgerly did not participate in the vote. Board member Scott Cooper called it a 'regrettable incident' that caused various people 'pain'. He told the board he hopes that everyone can learn from what happened.

HERMRECK SWORN IN

December 20, 2023

Susan Hermreck was sworn-in as Crook County's newest commissioner yesterday (Tu). After taking the oath of office... the former Planning Commission member got down to business, leading approval of the community development strategic plan. During the meeting's public comment portion, the County Court was asked whether appropriate appointment procedures were followed. Judge Seth Crawford said they would provide a written response.

RHS BOND

December 21, 2023

The Redmond School District is considering a controversial idea to consolidate Redmond and Ridgeview high schools... because major renovations are needed at RHS on Rimrock Way. That consolidation could be just a year or permanent. Superintendent Dr. Charan Cline says the proposal is in the very early stages and community input will be taken into consideration. Voters will get the final say next November if a bond committee and the school board move forward with the idea.

CFA EXPLAINER

December 22, 2023

A recently completed study of potential Climate Friendly Areas for Bend will be sent to the state next week. Cities over 50-thousand people are required by the state to study and designate CFAs. Those are areas where people can live, work and recreate without a vehicle. Bend officials say residential neighborhoods won't see much impact, since they're intended to be urban centers with a mix of business and housing. Official designations are at least a couple years away.

BEND HOMICIDE

December 27, 2023

Bend Police are investigating the city's third homicide of the year. A Bend man has been arrested in the stabbing death of his mother. Tuesday morning, officers responded to a report of a domestic dispute on Southeast Lee Lane. Officials say they were on-scene within one minute of the call and attempted to render aid to the victim, 60-year-old Rene Lynn Carlson, died at the scene. The suspect is her son, 37-year-old Theodore John Bowser, was taken into custody without further incident. Bowser was taken to the hospital and from there to the Deschutes County Jail. Detectives, along with the OSP crime lab, continue to investigate.

QUADRUPLE FATAL ARREST

December 28, 2023

The driver believed to be responsible for a Highway 97 crash that killed a Troutdale family in October ... is now in custody. Oregon State Police say Jesse Ross crossed into oncoming traffic, north of Redmond, sideswiped a semi then collided with an SUV. That vehicle caught fire and four members of the Rutledge family died. Ross was treated for serious injuries. He appeared in Deschutes County Court yesterday (Wed) on multiple charges of Manslaughter, Reckless Driving and DUII.

CCSO OCHOCOS SAR

December 29, 2023

Two people were rescued Wednesday after spending a very cold and wet night in the Ochoco Mountains. According to the Crook County Sheriff's Office, one person hiked three miles in bad weather to find cell service, so they could call 911. A small Search and Rescue team responded and found the pair wet, cold and dehydrated in their disabled vehicle. SAR says conditions deteriorated rapidly during the operation, but they were able to bring the two back to Prineville. They'll make arrangements later to recover their vehicle.