>> Sports, B1

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2020

Chronicle-Iribune

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Today's weather

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Scranbook: Last December 29: High: 62 Low: 51

Inside: More weather, Page A2



IDOH updates COVID-19 count

Grant County EMA Director Bob Jackson said 26 new COVID-19 cases were reported Monday, bringing the total number of county COVID cases to 5.416 since the start of the pandemic. A total of 92 Grant County COVID-19 deaths have been reported since the start of the pandemic.

A total of 300 COVID-19

Unsafe housing complaints remain steady

remedies, enforcement issues due to county's red status

By TIM TEDESCHI ttedeschi@chronicle-tribune.com

The COVID-19 pandem-

the Grant County Health De-Division has found one thing said. has remained the same.

Health board discusses stated from Oct. 14 to Dec. who filed the complaint, and for human habitation. 3, the division received 12 see if the problem has been fit housing.

remained the same, Brad-

While the complaints have needs to happen in."

ley said the pandemic has cember meeting, board maybe no electricity," Glick- down, and residents who are changed the division's ap- President Dr. Barbara Irhke field said. "If there's other removed from the residence proach to addressing them. asked what criteria is used to ic has caused nearly every Employees are not going determine whether a housing systems, potentially water, health department leaves aspect of life to change, but into houses and doing in- situation is bad enough that spections right now due to the health department will partment's Environmental the county being in red, she declare it uninhabitable and one of those issues by itself will not be returning. Moore close the residence.

According to Environmen- lord or whoever is respon- Glickfield said he has adtal Health Specialist Pegy sible for the property, and vised health department staff Bradley's December report letting them know we re- that statutory language alto the health board, housing ceived a complaint and what lows the health department there because it's jeopardiz- that we have going on with complaints for unsafe or un- needs to be done to rectify to declare a public health inhabitable structures have the problem." Bradley wrote emergency when needed, not slowed down during the in the December report. "We which he interprets to mean pandemic. Bradley's report get back with the person when a residence is unsafe

housing complaints for is-resolved. If the problem has tion is what is unsafe? much and lacks authority sues such as no water, trash not been resolved, we write Things like rodents in the to enforce such orders at or sewage and/or overall un- a letter outlining what has to house - this is stuff we've a certain point. He said on happen and the time frame it seen or heard of in the past various occasions the notice At the health board's De-house, no running water, uninhabitable has been taken issues, no waste disposal sometimes return after the mold coming in, those are or on weekends when they the things we look for. Any know the health department "We are calling the land- Board attorney David a combination makes it to ment is involved, most resiwhere we need to unfortu- dents will leave at that time, nately have those people ei- but they often return later. ther leave or get them out of ing their own health."

> William David Moore said unfortunately an added dif-

ficulty is that the health "And so the obvious ques- department can only do so years - animal waste in the on a residence declaring it may be enough, certainly said if the sheriff's depart-

"How in the midst of all COVID, cold weather com-County health officer Dr. ing up, with resources being

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Grant County Republicans sworn in at pared-down cor

Former

leap from that department to his current position in ASEC.

"Over the years, through my Extension work, I listened to so many employers saying, 'Your students know science, but we have problems with how they

1980s. In 2015, he made the has taken him beyond U.S. borders. In the early 2000s. the college challenged his department to provide an international trip for students, Russell began taking groups to places like China, Brazil, Hungary, Romania, Haiti and Peru.

BOARD

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taxed, how aggressive do we want to be?" Moore asked. "... You know we could go in and say you have to get out right now, bring the sheriff with us, but if they wait 'til we turn the corner, we don't really have very much to go. But there are houses that are in that condition in our county right now."

When there are issues with housing that deals both with building code violations and health risks, Moore said Area Plan and the health department have worked together in the past to address the various issues. However, due to COVID-19, he said that has not occurred recently.

Health board member Dr. Philip Renfroe said if some of these properties are rental properties, the focus should be on getting the landlords to fix the issues. Renfroe asked if it is possible to fine landlords for not keeping properties up to amenable standards.

Glickfield said the health department would not have standing to impose a fine on landlords or bring them to court, but tenants have the right and often take landlords to small claims court 15 at 5 p.m. in Grant County to receive damages when the Council chambers.

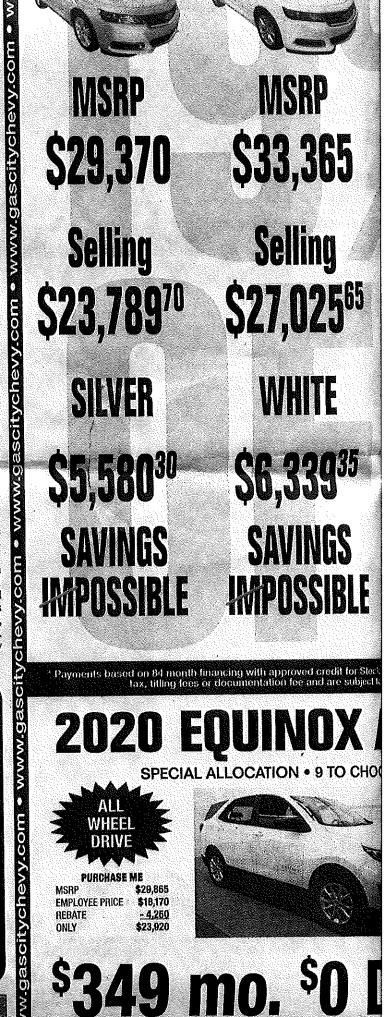
property is not up to standards. Ihrke said the health department could potentially encourage renters and in-form them of their right to go to court since the department cannot do so itself.

Health department Office Manager Tara Street said declaring a property uninhabitable in theory prevents the landlord from renting it to anyone else, but sometimes landlords will move new tenants in without the health department's knowledge.

Adult Protective Services is called upon to help aid residents that are removed from uninhabitable residences, but Moore said they have limited resources to help people find alternative housing.

Board members said although they lack the teeth to enforce things, often times permanent change occurs when there is a concerted effort from multiple agencies. With that in mind, board members suggested possibly getting other county departments and nonprofits involved to help remedy situations.

In other business, the health board approved its 2021 meeting schedule. The board will hold its regular meetings Jan. 25, March 15, May 17, July 19, Sept. 20 and Nov.



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