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## On the Rogue Valley's horizon for 2024: A look ahead

By NICK MORGAN Rogue Valley Times  
Dec 29, 2023



Rogue X's new competitive pool contains 13 lanes, including 11 lanes that are a depth of 7 feet. The entire pool contains 405,000 gallons according to Medford Parks, Recreation and Facilities Director Rich Rosenthal. The facility holds its grand opening Jan. 6.

Jamie Lusch / Rogue Valley Times

**From local government shakeups in the 2024 election to the hotly anticipated grand opening of Medford's massive new aquatic and event center, here's a look at the stories we'll be watching in the year ahead.**

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## Rogue X

Medford's hotly anticipated [140,000-square-foot aquatic, recreation and event center](#) is a week away from welcoming athletes and residents alike. The two indoor pools and 75,000-square-foot gymnasium will debut to the public during the "First Splash" fundraiser on Saturday, Jan. 6, and it'll be business as usual starting Monday, Jan. 8. For the latest information, see [roguexmedford.com](#).



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Hank Cardosa, left, Asante project manager, and Jennifer Ryen, Asante director of development, take in the view from the public lobby of the Olsrud Family Women's and Children's Hospital at the Asante patient pavilion in Medford in September. Rogue Credit Union pledged \$3 million toward the project, the largest corporate gift Asante has ever received.

Jamie Lusch / Rogue Valley Times

## Asante Rogue Regional Medical Center patient pavilion

Construction is nearly complete on a new [323,595-square-foot pavilion connected to the north end of Asante Rogue Regional Medical Center](#). It will house a host of state-of-the-art clinics and patient services featuring advanced surgeons, cardiac specialists and the Olsrud Family Women's and Children's Hospital. According to Asante spokeswoman Lauren Van Sickle, patients should start moving in the first week of February.

## Klamath dam removals

Three remaining dams along the Klamath River are slated to be removed by the end of this year, with the process starting next week. The slow draining or drawdown of Copco 1, Iron Gate and J.C. Boyle dams will begin Jan. 4, and the last three dams on the Klamath River are expected to be completely removed by November 2024. A fourth dam, [Copco 2, was removed near Hornbrook, California earlier this fall](#), but Copco 2's powerhouse and other remnants will remain for the goal of eventually becoming a visitor interpretive center.

## Lithia Lift at Mt. Ashland

Construction of the first new chairlift at Mt. Ashland since 1988 could potentially begin as soon as this summer, although longer projections push construction into 2025. The Lithia Lift project, largely funded thanks to a [\\$500,000 donation to the nonprofit ski area from Sid and Karen DeBoer and another \\$2 million from the DeBoers' foundation](#), is designed to open up beginner and intermediate terrain inaccessible since the 1980s and to expand night skiing on the mountain. For the latest mountain conditions, see [mtashland.com](#).

Politics, public administration and 2024 elections

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## New Jackson County Commissioner on the horizon

Jackson County Commissioner Dave Dotterer will not run for reelection in 2024, and [Medford Mayor Randy Sparacino is running to be the GOP nominee for the Republican commissioner's vacated seat](#). Jackson County elections records as of this week show no Democrats and no other Republicans have yet filed for the May primary, but candidates have until March 12.

## Proposed restructuring of the Board of Commissioners

Jackson County is currently among nine of Oregon's 36 counties in which county commissioner is a partisan elected position, but that could change if the group [Jackson County For All gets a trio of proposed measures on the ballot and voters approve](#). The group is also gathering signatures for measures that would expand the board to five seats and reduce commissioner salaries by splitting the county's current budget for commissioner salaries five ways.

The group is still gathering signatures to get the measures on the ballot. According to an email from Jackson County for All organizer Denise Krause of Ashland, the group has gathered 7,522 signatures as of Dec. 23, 72% of the required 10,500 signatures needed to qualify for the November 2024 ballot. For more information, see [jacksoncountyforall.org](http://jacksoncountyforall.org).

## Shakeups in Rogue Valley city management

Medford City Manager [Brian Sjothun announced plans earlier this year to retire by the end of 2024](#)

- , concluding a career in public service that spans the better part of four decades, including eight years in the city's top slot. City officials have not yet decided how it will proceed with a city manager search, or whether it will look to hire from within its ranks.
- Ashland plans to begin its search for a permanent city manager in early 2024 to replace

Joe Lessard, who resigned in October  
after

less than two years on the job

. Deputy City Manager Sabrina Cotta is serving as acting city manager in the meantime, and the city touted in a

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Dec. 18 press release

- that aside from the city manager position, its 12-member leadership team is complete.
- Lily Morgan resigned in December from her seat as state representative for Grants Pass District 3 and

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started a new role as Gold Hill's city manager

- . How she utilizes her legislative experience to run a small city government is certainly a story we'll be watching in the new year. As for the Republican's vacated legislative seat, the only GOP candidate who has filed for District 3 in the May 2024 primary is current Grants Pass City Councilor Dwayne Yunker. Two candidates have filed for the Democrat primary, Mark Seligman of Selma and Dustin Watkins of Grants Pass.



Elections and voter initiative proposals in Jackson County in 2024 include a proposed restructuring of the Board of Commissioners, filling the seat of Commissioner Dave Dotterer who is not seeking reelection, plus races for Circuit Court judge, Jackson County district attorney and Oregon House and U.S. House seats.

Jamie Lusch / Rogue Valley Times

## Election 2024

- **Jackson County Circuit Court Judge:** Six candidates have filed for one of five seats in the May 2024 primary election, according to state election records. Five incumbent judges are currently registered: Jeremy Markiewicz, Laura Cromwell, Benjamin Bloom, Sara Collins and David Orr. The race to watch will be Orr's seat, as he'll be challenged by Johan Pietilla, a former prosecutor who currently works as Jackson County's Senior Assistant County Counsel.

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- **Jackson County District Attorney:** With Beth Heckert not seeking another term, Chief Deputy District Attorney Patrick Green is currently the only candidate who has filed to fill her shoes. Green is a graduate of Lewis & Clark Law School, and he worked his way up the ranks at the Jackson County DA's office over the past seven years. For more information, see [patrickgreen4da.com](http://patrickgreen4da.com)
  - .
  - **Shakeups in Oregon House District 4:** Rep. Christine Goodwin, R-Canyonville, who currently represents a section of Jackson County in Oregon House District 4, is one of two Republicans vying for state Senate District 2. She's running against self-employed chemist Noah Robinson of Cave Junction, son of outgoing state Sen. Art Robinson, R-Cave Junction, who is ineligible to run again after participating in the 2023 Senate walkouts earlier this year. The only candidate to apply for Goodwin's vacated House District 4 seat is Alek Skarlatos of Winston seeking the GOP nomination in the primary election.
  - **House District 5:** Rep. Pam Marsh, D-Ashland, is currently unopposed in the race for House District 5, with no challengers in the Democrat primary and no Republicans yet to file in the GOP primary.
  - **House District 6:** Two Democrats, John Holm of Medford and Lillia Caballero of Medford, the latter who has yet to file but has launched a campaign, are vying to be the Democrat challenger seeking to unseat incumbent Rep. Kim Wallan, R-Medford.
  - **U.S. House District 2:** Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, will be challenged in the Republican primary by Prineville Mayor Jason Beebe.

## Fixing Measure 110

Despite [local governments](#) in the Rogue Valley issuing proclamations seeking to repeal Measure 110, local lawmakers are planning legislative changes this February and March during the 2024 short session aimed to salvage Oregon's troubled drug decriminalization law. Lawmakers such as state Sen. Jeff Golden, D-Ashland, and Rep. Kim Wallan said earlier this year that talks are in their infancy, but [discussions include banning public use of narcotics](#), expanding addiction treatment access and penalizing those caught with drugs for refusing to go to treatment.

## Ashland schools superintendent retiring

After three years as Ashland School District's superintendent and a more than three-decade career in education, Samuel Bogdanove will [retire in June 2024](#). The school district has hired a [national recruiting firm to fill the position at a cost of \\$26,400](#), plus expenses such as travel, advertising and a background check.

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Nick Morgan

Reporter

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Reporter Nick Morgan has been covering the Rogue Valley since 2015.

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