

## Virus leads to postponement of '12th Night'

BY BEN POUNDS  
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Oak Ridge High School Masquers drama program postponed last week's performances William Shakespeare's "12th Night" due to the high school's COVID-19 quarantine policy.

The performances will be rescheduled for a yet to be determined date in early December, according to a post on the ORHS Masquers' Facebook page.

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## 2 more virus deaths in AC, Roane County

BY DONNA SMITH  
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The Tennessee Department of Health website posted information Friday showing two additional COVID-19 deaths in both Anderson and Roane counties. The number of deaths in Anderson County totaled 21 on Friday; 13 in Roane County.

For the state of Tennessee, the death count increased by 64 on Friday for a total of 3,852 since the Health Department began keeping statistics on the pandemic. The number of active cases in the state grew by 3,733 for a cumulative total of 300,458.

In Anderson County, the number of active cases Friday was 332. In Roane County, active cases totaled 298.

As of Thursday, 59 Anderson County residents were hospitalized. Hospitalizations for Roane County virus patients totaled 47.

In Oak Ridge Schools, Superintendent Bruce Borchers sent out a letter to students' families on Friday that the system had been notified that day that 10 students and one school worker had tested positive for the novel coronavirus. The staff member was at Woodland Elementary. Three students were at Jefferson and three at Robertsville middle schools. Oak Ridge High School had four students test positive.

There were 32 active cases among quarantined Oak Ridge Schools students and staff as of Friday, the school system dashboard showed.

# Virus: OR middle school students return to alternating schedules

BY BEN POUNDS  
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Oak Ridge Schools Superintendent Bruce Borchers has decided to move Middle School students back to an alternating schedule due to the large numbers of them in quarantine starting Monday, Nov. 16.

This alternating schedule

marks a return to the system for Jefferson and Robertsville middle schools that was in place earlier this year. The school system tried having all the middle school students return to classes five days per week Nov. 2. However, Borchers said in a letter sent out on Friday, Nov. 13, that the number of students in quaran-

tine due to contact with individuals who tested positive had led to students still not being able to attend classes physically.

Borchers has repeatedly talked about the priority of having students be able to attend classes physically, calling it a "priority" in his recent letter.

"Our main priority will always

be the health and safety of our students, staff, and community," he stated. However, he added, "Face-to-face instruction cannot be fully replicated in distance learning, and returning to a traditional school schedule best serves our students and families."

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Robert Kennedy, center, chairman of Oak Ridge Environmental Quality Advisory Board, speaks to a crowd as they get ready to hike through the various natural areas in between Horizon Center parcels. To the right is Sandra Goss, Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning executive director.

Ben Pounds/The Oak Ridger

## Motorsports park developer hopes to start work this year; obstacles

BY BEN POUNDS  
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OAK RIDGE, Tenn. — The developer of a proposed motorsports park complex in west Oak Ridge has said he wants to start building before the end of the year, but he is reportedly still waiting on approval from a government agency and financial support.

The Oak Ridge Industrial Development Board manages The Horizon Center, including some, but not all of the land developer Hardin Valley Land Partners is planning on using for the track and adjacent developments. The board has agreed to sell the land, but its chairman, David Wilson, at a meeting earlier this month told the IDB that the company is still trying to secure funding.

He said Hardin Valley Land Partners had "some semi-commitments on financing" from banks and was working on writing a "financial and business plan." In an interview after the meeting, he said he possessed "no indication or list" of investors yet.

H.E. "Rusty" Bittle with Hardin Valley Land Partners has proposed the motorsports park on the west end of Oak Ridge, and in presentations he has described various planned features including a track to be used for events and by members, restaurants, a hotel, lodging, an RV park, a carting track and an amphitheater. He and others have also described plans to have facilities for research and development to be used by automotive companies, insurance companies and governmental departments of transportation. The development is planned for the Horizon Center and will include several areas at the Horizon Center while also crossing natural areas currently marked as off limits by the U.S. Department of Energy — if approved by DOE.

In an interview with The Oak Ridger, Bittle said the research facility will include its own test area, including a mock intersection separate from the track.

The Oak Ridge Industrial Development Board (IDB) has already agreed to sell Bittle the parcels it

manages in west Oak Ridge at the Horizon Center, although the sale has not gone forward yet.

Wilson said Hardin Valley Land Partners does not yet have permission from DOE to cross various natural areas between the parcels the IDB agreed to sell.

"We don't intend to sell anything until all this has been completed," he said.

Claire Sinclair, DOE public affairs and audit coordinator for the Oak Ridge National Laboratory site office, told The Oak Ridger last week that DOE has not made a decision yet. She said DOE is still looking at public comments collected during the official comment period, which is over.

Oak Ridge Mayor Warren Gooch has on several occasions said the project is beyond his and the rest of the Oak Ridge City Council's control at present, although Council will have to approve rezoning of the land for the project to go forward.

SEE DEVELOPER, PAGE 4A

## Virus: Elected officials resist mandates

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) — With the coronavirus coming back with a vengeance across the country and the U.S. facing a long, dark winter, governors and other elected officials are showing little appetite for imposing the kind of lockdowns and large-scale business closings seen last spring.

Many also continue to resist issuing statewide mask rules.

Among the reasons given: public fatigue, fear of doing more damage to already-crippled businesses, lack of support from Washington, and the way efforts to tame the virus have become ferociously politicized.

"I think that governors and mayors are, again, are in a really tough spot. The American population is emotionally and economically exhausted," Dr. Megan Ranney, an emergency physician and professor at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island.

"I think that there are some minimum things that governors and mayors could and should be doing right now. But the trouble is, without support from the federal government, it becomes very difficult to do these things," Ranney said, citing the need for a stimulus package from Washington to help businesses pull through.

Increasingly alarmed public health officials and medical experts say time is running out as hospitals buckle under the crush of cases and Americans approach Thanksgiving, a period of heavy travel and family gatherings that are all but certain to fuel the spread of the virus.

The coronavirus is blamed for 10.6 million confirmed infections and almost a quarter-million deaths in the U.S., with the closely watched University of Washington model projecting nearly 439,000 dead by March 1.

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### ONLY ONLINE

LAUREN DAIGLE: The Christian music singer joined worship leader Sean Feucht in New Orleans. Violates virus mandates.

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### COMING IN PRINT

MAIN STREET: Construction on several new stores may begin in a few weeks at Main Street Oak Ridge.

LATER THIS WEEK

### Weather



TODAY: Sunny, cooler  
High: 59, Low: 36

the brother, Angus. "Power Up" is dedicated to the elder brother and is shot through with his spirit and songwriting.

"We all felt Malcolm around us, he was there. We're not spiritual type people, but, boy, oh boy," lead singer Brian Johnson, 73, told The Associated Press in an interview via Zoom from his home in Sarasota, Florida. "Malcolm was a very strong character in real life, and him passing away wasn't gonna stop that. He was there, everywhere, and I think you can tell it on the record."

All 12 tracks are co-written by Malcolm and Angus Young, selected by the younger Young from a trove of unused songs that piled up during the band's long life.

"Malcolm and myself over the years, whenever we'd come to an album we always walked in with a lot of A-grade songs," the 65-year-old Angus Young said via Zoom from his home in Sydney. "We always had a stack full more left that were all great, great tracks."

Most of the songs came from a fruitful writing period in a long gap between albums from 2000 to 2008, and Angus Young chose those that most evoked his big brother.

"I concentrated on the ones I knew were Mal's favorites," Young said. "It's a fitting project for him. He

Brian Johnson, left, and Angus Young, of AC/DC, perform on the Rock or Bust Tour on Feb. 17, 2016, in Chicago. After 47 years, the band released its 17th studio album, "Power Up," last Friday. (Photo by Rob Grabowski/Invision/AP, File)

always liked being simple and direct, so I felt, what better than his music?"

"Power Up," their 17th studio album, whose first single and video, the blues-inflected "Shot in the Dark," were released in October, is overflowing with the same thundering chords and schoolboy sneers that made them legends with albums like "Highway to Hell" and "Back in Black." The latter was also dedicated to a recently deceased essential bandmate, original singer Bon Scott, who died in 1980.

"There is the similarity between Bon's tragedy and Mal's," Angus Young said.

With Malcolm Young suffering from the dementia that would lead to his death, his nephew Stevie Young stood in for him on 2014's "Rock or Bust," and did it again on "Power Up," though at 63 he's hardly the new kid.

"We've known Stevie forever and ever. He's been around us for decades," bassist Cliff Williams said via Zoom from his home in North Carolina. "So there was no trying to fit him into any

kind of thing."

After a tough tour in 2016 that Johnson couldn't finish because of hearing loss that had grown increasingly severe, it appeared the classic version of the band might never play together again.

He's since been equipped with state-of-the-art hearing-aid technology and had been anxious to get back on stage, especially after feeling how well it worked to rehearse with the band at full power.

"It was just a lot of fun to be with the boys, and I felt like I was equipped to actually go out and do something," Johnson said. "My ammunition belt was full. I was ready to go."

The album had been recorded in 2018 and early 2019, and the jam sessions came in prepara-

tion for the planned release date, early in 2020.

"We rehearsed quite a bit, because we were hoping to be able to maybe do some shows," Young said. "We'd done a couple of weeks of that, and then a few days later the world started to shut down."

When the coronavirus reached pandemic levels, the album was shelved and the band went dark, stuck across different continents as they isolated with families and friends.

After nearly a year passed, the band and Columbia Records opted to release it in November.

"We're doing a lot of promotional stuff to let people know, to get the message out that AC/DC's got a new album," Young said. "Hopefully to cheer you up."

## Country singer Doug Supernaw dies

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Country singer Doug Supernaw, 60, who had hits in the early '90s with "I Don't Call Him Daddy" and "Reno," died in Texas on Friday. The singer announced in February 2019 that he had lung and bladder cancer and he entered hospice care in October. After working on oil rigs and as a concert promoter in Texas, Supernaw moved to Nashville in the late '80s to work as a staff writer for a music publishing company, but moved back to Texas where he could perform more.

more regular recreational drivers on the track could sustain the facility.

### Opposition

While the Chamber of Commerce has voiced its support, some others have criticized the project for various reasons including concerns about noise and environmental impact. The recently formed group, Oak Ridgers for Responsible Development, has opposed the project on those grounds according to its website and its member Willem Blokland, who has given presentations on behalf of the group.

The group has also criticized the development for allegedly not providing quality jobs.

"This proposal has poor prospects for good, steady jobs that offer big economic payoffs," the group website states. A member of the group, Bernie Riemer, recently told City Council the city could create better paying jobs with the kind of industrial developments currently allowed on the Horizon Center parcels Bittle plans to use for the motorsports park. He said the city could add "real serious money and salaries and jobs for the future" with industry rather than a motorsports park.

The environmental group Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning has also cited those environmental, noise and jobs concerns on its official website.

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## DEVELOPER:

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

"City Council is in no position to negotiate about anything," he said at a recent Oak Ridge City Council meeting regarding DOE and its decision on natural areas. However, Gooch has said he has concerns about the lack of a list of investors for the project at this point. He told a virtual meeting of Altrusa International of Oak Ridge that he would prefer Hardin Valley Land Partners share the names of anyone with at least 5% interest.

Wilson also told The Oak Ridger that DOE may wait until after the City Council rezones the land to decide on allowing the track to cross the natural areas.

"We knew it, and Mr. Bittle knew it that this would not be a fast process," Wilson said. He said DOE has about a year to decide about whether to go ahead with the project.

### Chamber of Commerce

Bittle showed a map with his plans at a recent Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce event held via Zoom.

"People will come in from all over the United States to use this facility," Bittle told the Chamber.

The Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce's Board of Directors endorsed the motorsports complex plan on Oct. 7, stating it would "be the only facility of its kind in our region and will serve a pent up demand for

auto enthusiasts" and "the property identified for the Motorsports Park has been vacant for twenty-five years, and in order to be attractive for industrial use requires significant and expensive infrastructure improvements." It also encouraged Hardin Valley Land Partners "to be responsive to the environmental concerns expressed by citizens."

During the Zoom conference, Bittle gave a timeline of the upcoming project. He said he hoped to get part of track, paddocks and a few other aspects of the development complete by "the end of the year" and hopes to get hotels by "next year." However, he said this timeline depends on DOE approving his ability to cross certain areas that are currently not allowed to have development, in between the parcels he currently has permission to use.

In an earlier interview with The Oak Ridger, he stated he was still doing feasibility market studies on the project and they would determine whether he could go ahead with just the research and development facility or whether he needed the track, which would cross over all of the natural areas. However, when asked by The Oak Ridger at the Chamber Zoom conference, he said he could not succeed with the "concept" he currently had for the development with just the land granted by the IDB.

"We would have to reassess everything," he said.

Bittle has also told The Oak Ridger that sanctioned race events would only occur a few times per year, but he "absolutely" believed

in Spring City were also issued violations by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Howard Hall, director of the University of Tennessee's Institute for Nuclear Security, said the notice of violation to TVA points to "a systemic problem in management."

"As someone who has worked in this field essentially my entire life, I would have been appalled to receive such a letter," Hall said.

In a notice dated Nov. 6, regulators noted a "substantial safety culture issue" at Watts Bar at the time of the incident. They also found that "TVA senior management and staff failed to communicate with candor, clarity, and integrity during several interactions with the NRC during the course of the inspection and investigation."

According to NRC documents, on Nov. 11, 2015, a shift manager at Watts Bar directed the control room to begin heating up a reactor even though the plant's usual pressurizer system, which keeps the reactor water from turning to steam, was out of service. When trying to heat up with an alternate system, the pressurizer rapidly began to fill with water. Staff then had to "take actions outside of proper operating procedures" to bring the water level down.

The incident wasn't recorded in the plant's logbook and managers later misled NRC investigators about what had happened.

production and cost to override safety." "The problem is not so much the way TVA handled the startup — it wasn't like we were 30 minutes away from losing Knoxville, or something like that — it's that TVA managers misled or lied to the NRC investigator," said Dave Lochbaum, a nuclear engineer who has worked with both TVA and the NRC as well as the Union of Concerned Scientists.

The Tennessee Valley Authority serves 10 million people in parts of seven southeastern states, and the Nov. 6 fine is one of several recent actions against the utility by regulators. Last year, the NRC fined TVA \$145,000 for submitting incomplete and inaccurate information on a backup system at Watts Bar. Also last year, TVA was ordered to rehire and pay thousands of dollars in back pay and compensation to a whistleblower who raised concerns about nuclear safety. A utility executive who the NRC said played a significant role in that firing was banned from working in any activities that require licensing by the NRC for five years.

In its Nov. 6 letter, the NRC wrote that TVA took actions to address the causes of the 2015 violations but did not "articulate or document broad, comprehensive and substantive corrective actions."

However, TVA CEO Jeff Lyash said Friday that the problems identified by the NRC are "problems of the past."

## GOVERNMENT MEETINGS

### Land

The Oak Ridge Land Bank Corporation Board of Directors will meet at 8:30 a.m. Tuesday in the Municipal Building Courtroom.

### Council

The Oak Ridge City Council will have a work session at 6 p.m. Tuesday in the Municipal Building Courtroom.

### ORUD

The Oak Ridge Utility District Board of Commissioners will meet at 8:30 a.m. Wednesday in the Oak Ridge Utility District Board Room.

### Housing

The Oak Ridge Housing Authority will meet at noon Wednesday in the Community Room at 76 Honeysuckle Lane.

### Budget

The Oak Ridge Budget and Finance Committee will meet at 1 p.m. Wednesday in the Municipal Building Training Room.

### Youth

The Youth Advisory

Board will meet at 2 p.m. Wednesday in the Civic Center Social Room.

### Tourism

The Oak Ridge Convention and Visitors Bureau will meet at 3 p.m. Thursday at 1400 Oak Ridge Turnpike.

### Planning

The Oak Ridge Municipal Planning Commission will meet at 5:30 p.m. Thursday in the Municipal Building Courtroom.

### ANDERSON COUNTY Commission

The Anderson County Commission will meet at 6 p.m. Monday for presentations followed by a meeting at 6:30 p.m., virtually and in Room 312 of Anderson County Courthouse in Clinton.


### Trustees

The Anderson County Board of Trustees will meet at 11 a.m. Tuesday in Room 118A of the Courthouse in Clinton.

### Library

The Library Board will meet at 5 p.m. Thursday.

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