



## BUILDING A BOND

**SPORTS:** THE PORTLAND FIRE'S ROSTER HAS ONLY BEEN TOGETHER A COUPLE WEEKS, BUT TEAM CHEMISTRY AND BUY-IN TO COACH ALEX SARAMA'S SYSTEM APPEARS STRONG. **B1**

### MEDICAL RESEARCH

## Sanctuary plan for controversial primate center faces uphill battle



**OHSU and federal officials have opened six-month negotiations that could turn the Oregon National Primate Research Center into a sanctuary, but the plan hinges on winning major federal funding and has rattled researchers.** *Photos by Mark Graves, staff*

*OHSU has kicked off formal negotiations with the National Institutes of Health on the future of the Oregon National Primate Research Center.*

**Kristine de Leon**  
*The Oregonian/OregonLive*

OHSU has begun formal talks about turning the nation's largest publicly funded primate research center into a sanctuary for its experimental subjects but it's not clear if that leading idea for the controversial facility's future can make the cut.

Oregon Health & Science University and the National Institutes of Health, the largest public funder of biomedical research, opened formal negotiations last week over the fate of the Oregon National Primate Research Center.

The ramped-up talks follow a February vote by the OHSU board directing President Dr. Shereef Elnahal to explore converting the primate center into a sanctuary for



**The negotiations put OHSU's controversial primate center at the center of a fight over animal research, federal spending and the future of biomedical science in Oregon.**

monkeys.

But during a recent OHSU Faculty Senate meeting, Elnahal told staff that such a shift would happen only if fully funded — something he said now appears unlikely without an act of Congress.

"There will be no deal," he said, unless

federal money covers the estimated \$220 million to \$290 million cost. He added that the purpose of the talks is to head off a forced closure of the primate center.

It's not clear what that means, given the confidentiality of the negotiations, but observers close to the issue believe that any path forward will involve a much-reduced scientific footprint.

Researchers at the center have told university leaders that the talks themselves pose an existential threat to their work and careers.

The primate center in Hillsboro houses nearly 5,000 monkeys and employs 267 people, most of them animal care staff. It's the largest of seven federally supported primate research centers and receives tens of millions of dollars annually from the National Institutes of Health, its biggest benefactor by far.

Animal welfare groups have long pushed to shut it down, and that pressure intensified during OHSU's now-abandoned merger talks with Legacy Health, drawing in Gov. Tina Kotek and state lawmakers who urged OHSU to make a plan to wind down primate research and ultimately close the center.

**SEE MEDICAL RESEARCH, A5**

### EDUCATION

## Oregon lags as record number of 4-year-olds attend preschool

*Nationally, California's surge led the way for state-funded early education last year.*

### Staff and wire reports

The number of 4-year-olds attending state-funded preschools reached record highs last school year, driven by states embracing universal access and an unprecedented \$14.4 billion in spending.

State-funded preschool enrollment in the U.S. rose to 1.8 million kids, reaching 37% of 4-year-olds and about 10% of 3-year-olds, according to an annual report published last month by the National Institute of Early Education Research. In total, states added 44,000 students to their preschool enrollment.

But the report's authors noted that the gains were smaller than the year prior and said preschool access remains wildly uneven from state to state.

Oregon's state-paid preschool programs held enrollment essentially flat, serving nearly 12,700 children.

The state provided free preschool to children from low-income families through two programs: Oregon Prenatal to Kindergarten program, shorthanded as OPK, and its newer Preschool Promise program, which it launched in 2016.

Those programs together enrolled 29% of the state's 4-year-olds, ranking the state No. 36 among the 50 states for providing access to free pre-K.

California, by contrast, served half its 4-year-olds in 2024-25, ranking it No. 14 for access. And it increased access this school year, opening its free "transitional kindergarten" program at every public school to all 4-year-olds.

"If providing high-quality preschool education to all 3- and 4-year-olds were a race," the annual report's authors wrote, "some states are nearing the finish line, others have stumbled and fallen behind, and a few have yet to leave the starting line."

**SEE EDUCATION, A2**



**Georgia preschool students listen to a teacher read a book at the Capitol Hill Child Enrichment Center in Atlanta.**  
*Alyssa Pointer, Associated Press*

### PORTLAND CITY COUNCIL

## Ethics report: Retreat did not break public meetings law

*Oregon ethics investigators recommend dismissing the complaint against 6 progressive councilors who held a private gathering last summer.*

**Shane Dixon Kavanaugh**  
*The Oregonian/OregonLive*

A group of six progressive Portland city councilors did not violate public meetings law when they met for a private retreat last

summer, Oregon ethics officials have found. Investigators are therefore recommending that the Oregon Government Ethics Commission this week dismiss a case that had focused on Councilors Candace Avalos, Jamie Dunphy, Mitch Green, Sameer Kanal, Tiffany Koyama Lane and Angelita Morillo, documents show.

Commissioners are scheduled to hold a meeting on the case Friday where they could vote on whether to dismiss the cases.

In December, the ethics commission had voted to look into whether the left-leaning council bloc — which calls itself Peacock, shorthand for "progressive caucus" — broke state transparency rules at a retreat it held on Aug. 6. The decision was prompted by a

complaint filed by Ciatta Thompson, a former Portland City Council candidate and outspoken Peacock critic.

Under Oregon public meetings law, members of legislative bodies are prohibited from privately discussing legislative matters among a quorum — the minimum number of members required to hold a vote.

At the time of the retreat, the progressive councilors comprised a quorum on four separate council committees. Thompson had alleged that because a quorum of the committees met without proper public notice, they had violated public meetings law.

**SEE CITY COUNCIL, A2**

### NATION & WORLD

## Cruise ship outbreak

The ship is waiting for help off the coast of Cape Verde after three deaths are linked to the rare hantavirus. **A9**

### LIFE

## Met's fashion exhibit

The Met Gala fashion exhibit launched Monday seeks to "reclaim" body types that art history has ignored. **A15**