

City snapshot

By Sue Stafford
Correspondent

• Wednesday, July 5, is the first official day on the job for Sisters' new city manager, Brant Kucera. Over the coming weeks, he will be meeting with staff and Sisters City Council, becoming familiar with City Hall and the city, and settling in. Outgoing City Manager Rick Allen will initially be available to help make a smooth transition. Kucera was hired from among three finalists in a nationwide search. He comes here from Cannon Beach.

• At last week's City Council meeting, Rick Allen was presented with several tokens of appreciation for the work he has done over the past year as city manager, cleaning up unfinished City business, securing new legal counsel for the City, providing for needed education for the City Council on their responsibilities and duties, and establishing protocols and procedures to aid in efficient running of the City. Officials noted that he helped to create a new culture at City Hall, making it a more enjoyable place to be.

The Chamber of Commerce and City Council presented Allen with Chamber gift certificates redeemable at businesses throughout town. The Council also presented him with a pottery bowl crafted by local Sisters potter Ken

Merrill of Canyon Creek Pottery. Council President Nancy Connolly told Allen that she hoped he would think of Sisters fondly each time he used the bowl, which was decorated with the Three Sisters. He said the bowl will go to his cabin in Camp Sherman. Allen offered his thanks and made a few comments.

"Sisters is a desired place to be. There's not another city in Oregon like it. Coming here was a once-in-a-lifetime chance. I couldn't pass it up even though I was already pretty busy. The job met my expectations with its challenges and also its opportunities. I would do it again tomorrow."

• Council approved several 2016/17 supplementary budget items before the June 30 end of the City's fiscal year. Additional legal fees of \$50,000 were necessary as a number of lingering legal issues were successfully addressed and settled. Going forward, barring any unexpected legal issues, the amount budgeted should remain fairly constant. An additional \$5,000 was approved for the salary offered to the new City senior planner. Due to the extraordinary amount of snow this past winter, expenses for snow removal and management required an additional \$25,000 for the Street Fund. The Water Fund required an additional \$18,000 for contracted services.

Legislature passes record education budget

By Kristena Hansen
Associated Press

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — A record-\$8.2 billion package to fund Oregon's K-12 public school system cleared the Legislature in a 31-28 vote after a lengthy debate in the Oregon House.

The package approved Tuesday is up 11 percent from the current biennium and now heads to Gov. Kate Brown. It provides public schools with the majority of their funds, about 70 percent, for the 2017-19 budget. The next budget cycle begins July 1, meaning educators may need to retroactively adjust their budgets for the upcoming school year accordingly.

For most of the state's 200 or so districts, it's enough money to keep current services going. But others like metro Portland's Beaverton School District say they needed at least another \$200 million to avoid scaling back staff and programs.

RAILROAD: Drought and depression killed homesteads

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be there at 4:30 p.m. will see the train go by.

Construction of the railroad in 1911 necessitated construction of a bridge over the Crooked River Gorge, with the river 860 feet below. At the time it was constructed, the bridge was the seventh highest structure of its kind in the world and the highest cantilevered arch in the United States. When the first train crossed the bridge on September 17, 1911, only half of the rivets were in place.

Nothing remains of Opal City, which was a community six miles south of Culver along the Oregon Trunk (Burlington Northern) railroad line. Named for the nearby Opal Springs located in the Crooked River Canyon, a post office was established in 1911 shortly after the

railroad arrived in Central Oregon.

The town served as the place to stockpile supplies for the construction of the nearby Crooked River Gorge bridge. A wild tent city grew up rapidly, providing space for saloons and bordellos.

Residents from surrounding homesteads would come to Opal Springs simply to watch passengers get off the train. Their winter wheat could be shipped out via rail. When a well was drilled and a water tower was built to service the trains, the railroad made water available to local homesteaders for a nominal fee.

As soon as the bridge was finished, so was Opal Springs, except for a few businesses that remained. Following a drought and the Great Depression, many of the homesteads failed, the land was declared marginal, with the government paying homesteaders to give up their land. Most remaining buildings were torn down.

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