

BOARD: District will get new school buses through grant

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greatly reduced price through grants, including from the Volkswagen Environmental Mitigation grant and the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act which encourages the replacement of old “dirty-fuel” buses with more efficient and cleaner new buses. “In essence,” said Superintendent Curt Scholl, “we are getting three buses for the price of some finance charges.”

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The federal government reimburses school districts for about 70 percent of the cost of student transportation, and these grants help cover the rest of the cost for these three buses.

Board Chairman Wilkins thanked Ryan Stock for his work on helping to obtain the grants.

The ground for the new bus transportation center being built near the SPRD property is cleared and construction should be underway soon, according to Scholl.

Students from Rima Givot’s biology class made a presentation on the Trout Creek Conservation Area (TCCA) in lieu of a regular report from high school Principal Joe Hosang, who was out of town. The TCCA is 160 protected, forested acres behind Sisters High School owned and managed by the Sisters School District. The property came to belong to the school via a land swap around 2003 and is used for educational purposes. The students shared a slide presentation depicting the studies that have been taking place on the TCCA over the past decade or more. The

area is home to some rare and protected species including Peck’s penstemon, the white-headed woodpecker and the flammulated owl.

Over the years students have accumulated data on plant, animal and insect species living in the conservation area. Students expressed heightened concerns about protecting the area given the Hayden Homes project that features the construction of hundreds of homes directly adjacent to the property.

Joan Warburg, Sisters Elementary School principal, used her time to highlight the music program led by teacher Sara Miller, who orchestrated the annual Veteran’s Day assembly along with December’s holiday performance called “An Americana Christmas.” Miller is now working full-time at the elementary school after her position was expanded from half-time.

“We even had grandparents come from out-of-town and many visitors expressed how touched they were by the way our school honored them,” she said.

Superintendent Scholl officially acknowledged “School Board Appreciation Week” before giving a report on enrollment and an update on the Mission/Vision project. Enrollment is up from what the District had projected, so adjustment in the report to the state is being made. Given that school funding is largely based on enrollment, increased numbers of students equate to more money in the District’s budget.

Scholl also gave a brief update on the Student Investment Account (SIA), which refers to the funding under Oregon’s Student Success Act (SSA), which amounts to about \$200 million statewide for helping schools in four areas, including expansion of instructional time, addressing student health and safety (including mental health, social emotional well-being and behavioral health), reduction of class sizes and caseloads, and ensuring a well-rounded educational experience from kindergarten through 12th grade.

School districts acquire money from this fund through a grant process. Estimates for Sisters School District expected funding under SIA/SSA are not finalized yet, but may be upwards of \$750,000. How this money will be distributed in the District is under discussion among teachers and administration.

The remainder of the meeting consisted of second readings of 12 board policies that have been modified or updated for adoption on topics including nondiscrimination, equal employment opportunity, workplace harassment, license requirements, personal electronic devices/social media, reporting suspected abuse of a child, public complaints, and hazing/harassment/intimidation/bullying/menacing/cyberbullying.

The next School Board meeting is set for Wednesday, February 5 at 5:00 p.m. at the Sisters School District Administration building.

TAIKO: Drumming event is set at The Lodge in Sisters

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January 19 at The Lodge in Sisters, 411 E. Carpenter Ln., just opposite the post office. At noon, participants will gather for refreshments. The workshop itself takes place from 1 to 3 p.m. To register, email maesie.speer@calderaarts.org or call 503-937-3075.

Local schools and kids throughout Central Oregon, including Sisters, are served by Caldera programs. The

arts center also provides artist residencies, bringing a diverse array of artistic and literary voices to Sisters Country. They share their work at AiR (Artist in Residence) open studio events, free to the public. Details are available at www.calderaarts.org.

Speer noted that all the presenting organizations involved with the taiko workshop are working to reduce isolation and build bridges.

“Drumming and storytelling will get us into our bodies and hearts, where real connection happens,” she said.



PHOTO BY ED SCHMIDT

The Lodge in Sisters will host a taiko drumming workshop next weekend.

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