

Oregon tree shines bright at Capitol



Visitors photograph the U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree, a noble fir from Oregon, after a lighting ceremony on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., on Thursday.

SAUL LOEB, AFP/GETTY IMAGES



House Speaker Paul Ryan listens to Bridgette Harrington as she recites a poem before the lighting of the U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree.

ERIK S. LESSER/ EPA-EFE

Council

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Ninety-eight percent of those remaining ended up passing their medical exams, and they remain a tight-knit group, Neideigh said.

Her career path led from cardiology at Charleston Area Medical Center, to student health at Western Oregon University, to Kaiser Permanente in 2012, where she now works nights and weekends, seeing everything from “coughs and colds” to “broken bones, stitches and abscesses.”

Her husband, a firefighter, also works non-traditional hours. The couple returned to Silverton from Salem in 2013 and now happily shares child-rearing duties with Neideigh’s two sisters and their families, who also live in town.

She started attending council meetings when she grew concerned about the traffic and demands on city infrastructure she expects new homes in the Pioneer Subdivision will bring. She wanted to make sure the city is only allowing “controlled, smart” growth because “the decisions right now could significantly affect the future of Silver-



Dana Smith



Jim Sears

ton,” she said.

She also opposed the council’s proposal to change city code to allow for more homeless housing communities like the one envisioned by members of St. Edward’s Episcopal Church. Instead of changing language in the city’s code, she favored a narrow conditional-use permit allowing cottages for homeless women to be placed in the church’s parking lot.

“I really felt like there were a lot of solutions that were designed to bring the community together that were not taken advantage of,” she said. “There is no diversity on our council, and we need diversity to come to the best solution.”

Jim Sears

Returning council member Jim

Sears, 69, will begin his second term in January. He is a Colorado State University graduate with a degree in civil engineering. His 26-year career with Marion County included running solid waste management, as well as directing the Public Works Department for about six years. In that role, he oversaw waste management, planning, building inspection, the county’s fleet, animal control, code violations and more.

“When I retired 11 years ago, I had the unique opportunity to give back to the community,” he said. “I felt I understood most of the jobs the city does – except, perhaps, policing.”

Sears said he sees the world through an engineer’s lens – which is “a blessing and a curse” – and has made infrastructure his focus. On the city’s transportation plan committee, he’s now helping craft the matrix by which projects are ranked. He’s also on an advisory committee for Highways 213 and 99E to the Oregon Department of Transportation.

To him, Silverton’s most pressing infrastructure needs are a new water treatment plant, the installation of a pump station to get water there from Silver Creek in event of problems in Abiqua Creek, dredging of Silverton Reservoir to expand storage capacity, repairs to aging sewer pipes, and an overhaul of McClaine Street.

He’s expressed concern over the open-ditch storm drainage system in “Mill Town,” Silverton’s Northside Addition and repeatedly proposed expanding the Urban Renewal District to include parts of it so the neighborhood can get extra funding for projects there.

Dana Smith

Councilor Dana Smith, 59, also earned voters’ approval for a second term. She plans to continue chairing the Environmental Management Committee and working on affordable housing issues, as the council looks like to create two working groups that will address homelessness and affordable housing separately.

Trained as a civil engineer, she sees her familiarity with building practices and codes as one of her best assets, she said. She’s particularly interested in promoting accessory dwelling units, ADUs, as a “smaller solution with lower impact on infrastructure” to bring housing costs down for residents who can’t afford rent and purchase prices in Silverton.

“I think it’s an underutilized approach,” she said. “No one’s promoting

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Crystal Neideigh
Silverton city council member

ADUs. Bottom line, it’s not a corporate model. People aren’t going to make a lot of money by utilizing them, but it could be a nice help for communities such as ours.”

During her first term, Smith pushed for environmentally friendly changes, such as banning single-use plastic bags, Styrofoam and smoking in parks and the downtown core area. A council vote on the plastic bag ban is set to occur in January, and language on the Styrofoam ban is being crafted in committee.

On Facebook, Smith’s message to voters after the election was, “Thank you, Silverton voters. Now let’s get back to work,” a circumspect reference, also, to the resolution in 2017 of an ethics investigation regarding a 2016 conflict-of-interest complaint against her.

According to the Oregon Government Ethics Commission, the investigation settled with Smith’s payment of \$100 for failing to disclose she has an ownership interest in a small company seeking to build communal living cottages in town before she took part in a council discussion about its sewer connection.

She’d recused herself from a prior discussion about the cottage development and said later she thought the sewer project’s size and scope – affecting more than a dozen households – made it OK to for her to discuss.

“In the future, if something comes up where I have an obvious financial stake I will step down (from the conversation),” she said. “If it’s a bigger, citywide issue – as I feel the sewer thing was – I will participate. If I need to claim a possible conflict of interest, then I know what to say now.”

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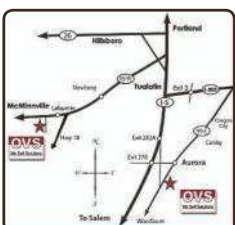
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Deadlines

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Published every Wednesday by the Statesman Journal, P.O. Box 13009, Salem, OR 97309.

USPS 469-860, Postmaster: Send address changes to Appeal Tribune, P.O. Box 13009, Salem, OR 97309.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID: Salem, OR and additional offices.

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