

NEWS BRIEFS

UO students seek input on Pettit Property

What could the City of Silverton do with the 80-acre lakeside property it owns next to the Oregon Garden? A University of Oregon professor and a group of landscape architecture students have spent their fall academic term coming up with some ideas. Through the Sustainable City Year Program, students will spend a total of nine months studying and designing for Silverton. They'll take on a variety of projects, but the first has been this 80-acre property, with its 18-acre lake. On Wednesday, Nov. 6, nine students will showcase their ideas and ask community members for their opinions, at an open house from 6:30 to 8 p.m., at Silverton Senior Center. The property in question was pur-

chased by the city for \$1.1 million in 2002, from the family of longtime local physician Dr. Virgil Pettit. Dubbed the Pettit Property, its future has been hazy since 2017, when the owner of Oregon Garden Resort sold back to the city the 2.28-acre property chunk he'd planned to develop into a lakeside pub. Community members unable to attend the Nov. 6 event at the Senior Center, at 115 Westfield St., can mark their calendars for a second presentation planned for Wednesday, Dec. 4. Then, in January, a new group of students will tackle another design assignment somewhere else in town.
October wraps up coat drive
As October came to a chilly end, Silverton's annual Coats for Kids Drive also wrapped up, with donations total-

ing 742 coats, 58 pairs of gloves, 703 hats and 205 scarves. Volunteers for Silverton Together began distributing the donated items at Silverton Community Seventh-Day Ad-

ventist Church last week. Nineteen businesses, nine churches, eight community groups and four schools participated in the drive to collect and distribute new and gently used winter clothes.

Wildfire

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Northrock Inc., a business whose property was burned by the fire, filed a tort claim notice for \$100,000 against the state for expenses caused by the flames. And, officials said, it was largely the result of someone calling the wrong phone number.

A plan to burn slash piles

The year before the Santiam Park Fire ignited, Robert Carver contracted with a logging company to cut trees on his property. After the logging, multiple slash piles of woody debris were left behind that the company tried and failed to burn. Carver wanted them gone. So, he sought the help of Kenny Schade, a former forestry technician and engine captain for the Forest Service. Carver agreed to pay him \$20 per hour. "Ken had past occupational experience with this kind of burning and offered to finish it for me," Carver wrote in the investigation report. Carver was granted a special burning permit from the Oregon Department of Forestry valid from March 13 to 27, 2019. The permit came with specific instructions, including: "No burning on windy days, remain on site while piles actively burn. Call before burning to get forecast. Mop up and patrol required to prevent escape," it said. Carver and Schade agreed to burn the piles on March 19. Carver was out of town but would return around midday. He left the permit on site, he said.

Failed phone call to check burn weather

On March 19, Schade traveled to Carver's property. Before lighting any piles, he called the "backyard burn advisory line," a hotline recorded daily that lets residents know if they can burn yard debris. The line indicated backyard burning was allowed, Schade told investigators. One problem: slash piles are not considered "backyard burns." The permit Carver obtained specifically required calling Forestry offices for burning approval. "Schade indicated that he did know Robert Carver had a burn permit but did not know the permit ... required calling the ODF office prior to burning each day," the report said. If Schade had called the correct number, the request to burn slash piles would have been denied due in part to elevated fire escape risk caused by high east winds, according to Blake Ellis, Santiam Unit Protection Supervisor for the Oregon Department of Forestry.
The burn starts and problems follow
Under the assumption burning was allowed, Schade arrived at Carver's property, near North Santiam State Recreation Area, south of Highway 22. He used a drip torch to light the first pile at 11:15 a.m. Schade figured winds were 2 to 4 mph, with gusts up to 6 mph, he told investigators. Then he lighted three more piles. About an hour after he lighted the first pile, Schade noticed fire from the fourth pile had escaped and was spot-

ting toward the west. "Several small spot (fires) in receptive fuels had ignited," the report said. In Schade's words, "One nearest northwest corner began to creep through leaf litter and moss on maple tree. I had secured all troublesome spots with shovel." Schade told investigators he believed he contained the fire to only the piles. But, he told investigators, he was "concerned about lighting more piles and decided he would not light more piles because fire risk was beyond what he was comfortable with."

Numerous backyard burns escape across canyon

A look back at March 19 shows Schade was right to be concerned. High winds and a landscape dry for March led to numerous burns escaping and turning into small fires. Even though snow had fallen in Mill City just weeks earlier, the weather had turned dry and much of the vegetation was still in a dormant stage. Add winds that picked up during the day, often in excess of 10 mph — with gusts up to 22 mph — and the chances of a fire escape were high. Indeed, investigators calculated a 70% probability of a new fire start from a loose ember in the area. "The combination of those strong winds with the low relative humidity and low live fuel moisture, and you have the perfect recipe for fire growth," Steve Wilson, district forester for ODF's North Cascade District, said last March.

The Santiam Park Fire is born

Firefighters from Mill City and the Oregon Department of Forestry responded to the blaze between 1:35 and 1:40 p.m., according to records. Although initially estimated at 1.5 acres, the blaze soon grew to 5 to 10 acres. "In the early stages of the fire there was no defined fire front," the report says. "The fire was spotting from tree to tree in the moss" and winds "were 10-15 mph but gusting to 30 mph." By 3:18 p.m., the situation was getting worse. "Wasn't able to hold need to order helicopter," the communications log says. At 3:32 p.m., fire teams had named the blaze — the Santiam Park Fire — and were still wondering about a helicopter. "(The fire) is actively down canyon with the wind," the radio log says. "If cannot get a helicopter will have to look at other ways."

Who pays for cost of fire, cleanup?

In the past, the people blamed for igniting wildfires have faced steep penalties. That hasn't happened in this case yet. Carver was cited for burning without a permit, a class D violation that carries a \$115 fine. Schade was not cited because the permit and land were under Carver's name. All totaled, the Santiam Park Fire cost \$332,000 to fight, and officials said the cost recovery process is currently taking place. *Zach Urness has been an outdoors reporter, photographer and videographer in Oregon for 11 years. He can be reached at zurness@StatesmanJournal.com or (503) 399-6801. Find him on Twitter at @ZachsORoutdoors.*

Appeal Tribune

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Obituaries

Sandra Lee Waldron

(December 23, 1935 – October 01, 2019)
 Sandra "Sandi" L. Waldron, 83, passed away on October 01, 2019 at St. Vincent Providence Hospital of natural causes. She was born in Portland, Oregon, December 23, 1935 to James Walter Hunter and Velma May Hunter. She grew up in Camas, WA with her younger brother, James "Jim" C. Hunter. During her childhood she spent many memorable times with family and friends vacationing at the Oregon Coast. In particular, Seaside was her favorite. After graduating from Camas High School in 1954 she attended University of Washington before transferring to Lewis & Clark College where she earned her Business Administration Accounting degree in 1958. Upon graduation she worked for Van Waters & Rogers where she met her future husband, John "Jack" S. Waldron. Sandra and Jack were married at St. John's Presbyterian Church, Camas, WA on March 27, 1960. Over the years Sandra and Jack lived in various parts of Oregon; SW Portland, Silverton, Lake Oswego, Seaside and then eventually back to Beaverton. Along the way Sandra could be found volunteering countless hours of her time to many community, civic and non-profit organizations. Notably she was a past President of Selectra Club, a prestigious philanthropic society of Portland Women. In Silverton she was a two term President of Silverton Junior Women's Club, and also honored as Silverton's First Citizen of the Year. Other organizations she served in various capacities were; Silverton Library Board, Silverton Hospital Auxiliary, Silverton Christian Women, Silverton Chamber of Commerce, United Good Neighbors and March of Dimes. Her dedication to community service started when she became president of a neighborhood junior garden club in the third grade. Her love of family and the care of others will always be remembered. Sandra is survived by her husband of 59 years and their two children; Scott S. Waldron and Susan M. Hansen (Waldron); five grandchildren; Jeffrey Waldron, Timothy Waldron, Kaitlyn Waldron, Mitchell Hansen and Myles Hansen. A private family funeral was held at Fisher Funeral Home, Albany, Oregon. Please plan to attend Sandra Waldron's celebration of life open house on December 07, 2019. For more details about the Celebration of Life for Sandi, please visit www.fisherfuneralhome.com.



Allen Aubrey Ritchey

Allen Aubrey Ritchey died Friday, October 25, 2019 surrounded by family and friends at the Providence Benedictine Nursing Center in Mt. Angel, Oregon. He was born in Montevista, Colorado on October 9, 1943 and was raised in Hacienda Heights, California, where he lettered in high school baseball. He served four years in the Army Air National Guard. The family moved to Dallas, Oregon when he was a young man. He worked as an auto body technician at Acme/Holland Collision Service in Silverton from 1986 to his retirement in 2006. He worked another 20 years in his shop at his home on South Abiqua.

As a young man Allen aspired to be a veterinarian. Life had other plans, but his lifelong love for animals was expressed in many pets over the years, including pygmy goats and guinea pigs. He had an extensive knowledge of tropical fish, for which he held a special affection, tending as many as 20 aquariums in his home at one point. Allen enjoyed traveling across Oregon in search of some particular species to add to his collection. On the several trips he and wife Sandi took to warmer climates, Allen loved to snorkel and take in the beauty of exotic fish in their natural environment. He enjoyed the ocean and was fond of ocean cruises and many travels shared with family and friends.

He was a member of the Elks Lodge in Silverton and served as Exalted Ruler from 1999-2000. He also served as chairman of the board of trustees and was active and valued for his many insightful contributions to Elks events. For many years Allen served as coach and umpire in the Silverton Little League system.

He was a quiet, creative man who valued hard work, high standards, and actions over words. He loved yardwork and was always busy around the home with any number of projects.

He spent countless hours in his shop, where his craft was also his art. An exacting perfectionist with a keen eye and sure hand at detail, he was always ready to help out family members with car crunches or other auto needs. For many years he was in constant demand through the community for his skill, work ethic, honesty, and absolute dedication to excellence in his work.

Allen was a master at car restoration. He had a particular love for classic cars and restored many, including a 1928 Model T, a 1932 Model A, and several older model Volkswagons.

Allen was a man of large heart and generous spirit, completely dedicated to his family and an unwavering friend to many.

He is survived by wife Sandi; sons Kyle (Lisa) in Silverton, Todd in Silverton, Sean (Laura) in Salem, and Jeff in Silverton; brother Charles (Elaine) in Medford; eight grandchildren.

He is preceded in death by parents Gilbert and Alice; brother Paul; son Brian; grandson Jeffrey.

A memorial service will be held Saturday, November 9, 1 P.M at the Silverton Elks Lodge.

Donations may be made to the Providence Benedictine Nursing Center or the Willamette Humane Society. Arrangements are by Unger Funeral Chapel, Silverton.