

Appeal Tribune

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10, 2020 | SILVERTONAPPEAL.COM

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Online government meetings increase scrutiny

Bill Poehler
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

In Aumsville, the mayor asked for a councilor's resignation after he called community members "lazy" and told one community member to "shove your comments where the sun does not shine" in an email.

In Gates, the mayor resigned, rescinded his resignation and resigned again in the span of a month.

At the Idanha-Detroit Fire District, an off-hand comment by the fire chief led to concern by community members.

In most times, those types of local political issues would be witnessed by a few and never be known to the

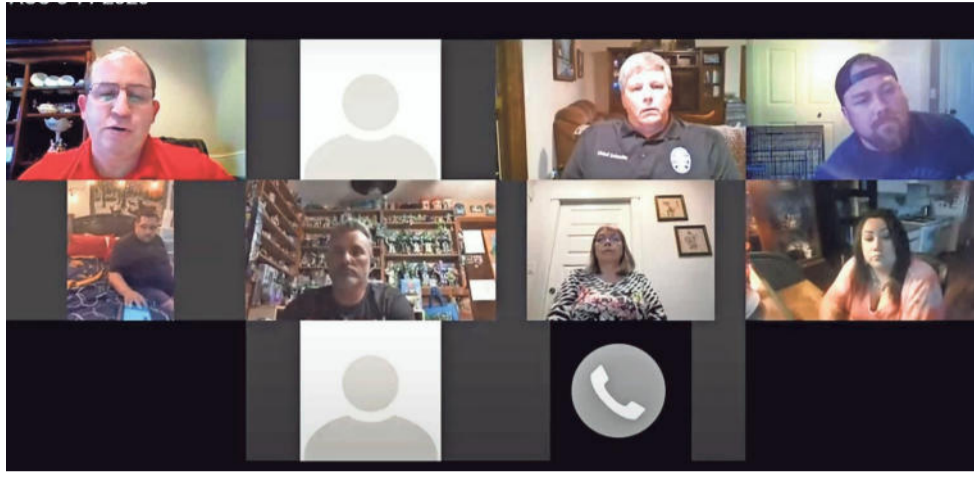
wider world.

In the two months following the COVID-19 pandemic hitting Oregon in March, local governments were forced to find new ways to conduct business without in-person meetings and still adhere to Oregon's public meeting laws.

People who rarely showed interest in local politics suddenly had nowhere to go and public meetings broadcast to them on Facebook, YouTube and Zoom.

"That's part of the reason I have advocated for video the entire time," Aumsville Mayor Derek Clevenger said. "This shows that yes, social media is a valid communications

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Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the Aumsville City Council has held its meetings online for the first time, and it led to Mayor Derek Clevenger calling for a councilor's resignation. SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

SITES PLANNING CUTBACKS



Agate Beach, like many reopened state parks sites, has seen overflowing garbage due to cutbacks within the state parks department. OREGON PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Oregon state parks are facing \$22M shortfall

Zach Urness Salem Statesman Journal |
USA TODAY NETWORK

It's going to be a difficult summer for Oregon's state parks system.

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department is facing a \$22 million shortfall caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and is planning a series of cost-saving measures including layoffs and reduced services.

In a normal summer, there would be roughly 700 rangers and staff working at the 260 state parks, recreation sites and campgrounds across Oregon.

This year, there will be less than 300 people in the field.

"We're already seeing the im-

pact, and on the most basic level, it's trash," Oregon State Parks spokesman Chris Havel said. "Trash cans are one of the biggest expenses and hardest to keep on top of with a reduced staff. We've already seen piles of trash sitting next to overflowing full trash cans as we've reopened.

"If the public could do any one thing to help us out, it's packing out their own trash."

Oregon's state parks aren't funded by income taxes. The shortfall is being fueled by a major drop in Oregon Lottery spending and in visitor revenue — the amount people pay for a campsite or yurt.

The state response to COVID-19 severely impacted both revenue

streams by shutting down places people play lottery and the fact that all state parks were closed for almost two months, which cost money but brought in zero revenue.

To balance its budget, the agency is planning layoffs, not hiring seasonal staff and suspending park improvement projects, Havel said.

"It's going to be a combination, but obviously the layoffs are what breaks our hearts the most," Havel said.

The short-term impact will mean a more scaled-down state park experience while in the long-term, important projects may be

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Silverton Community Center repairs coming soon

Christena Brooks
Special to Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Damaged by an accidental fire in February, Silverton Community Center will soon be repaired. The early-morning blaze that started inside the tent of a couple camped behind the center looks like it will only cost the City of Silverton its property insurance deductible and expended staff time.

"The net affect for us is about \$1,000, as insurance will pay everything else," said Silverton's Finance Director, Kathleen Zaragoza. "I also don't think this will affect our insurance rate in the grand scheme of things."

The man and woman living in the tent where the fire started have been charged with crimes, said Silverton Police Chief Jim Anglemier. Teresia Denora Terwilliger, 41, and Zachary Andrew Short, 27, were each charged with reckless burning and criminal mischief. A few days before the Feb. 22 fire, a Silverton police officer on nightshift found Terwilliger and Short camping under one of the center's outdoor staircases. Tucked away in a walled courtyard around the backside of the building, they couldn't be spotted by anyone passing by.

That night, Terwilliger and Short told the officer they'd gotten permission to set up camp, which consisted of a tent on wooden pallets. Then the fire occurred before dayshift staff investigated the claim, Anglemier said.

Afterward, staff at City Hall and Silverton Sheltering Services, the non-profit serving homeless clients from an office inside the community center, said they had no idea anyone was camping out back.

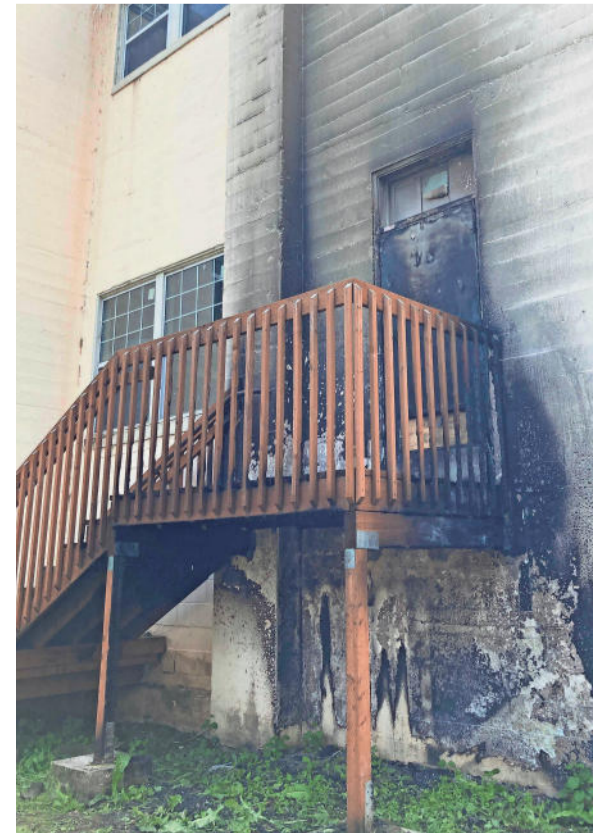
"The city has never allowed camping on that site," said Silverton City Manager Kristy Wurster. "Silverton Sheltering Services was also not aware someone was camping back there."

The fire was reported at 4:03 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 22 by a neighbor who saw smoke rising from the community center. Silverton Fire Department responded six minutes later, said Asst. Chief Ed Grambusch. Mt. Angel Fire also responded.

Firefighters found flames climbing the center's back wall and seconds away from burning through the bottom portion of the back door atop one set of back stairs.

"There was active heavy fire on the external part of the structure, in the rear area. There was extensive damage to the rear stairwell, and the fire was 30 sec-

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The Silverton Community Center is recovering from a fire. SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

OSU dismisses TE Carley for racist rant

Pete Martini and Bill Poehler
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Oregon State tight end Rocco Carley, a graduate of Kennedy High School in Mt. Angel, has been dismissed from the Beavers' football program after an audio recording surfaced Wednesday with Carley using insensitive language toward minorities.

In the recording, Carley used racist language to describe African

Americans, homosexuals and people of the Muslim faith.

"I became aware of the comments made by Rocco Carley earlier this evening. I immediately shared the audio with (athletic director) Scott Barnes," Oregon State head football coach Jonathan Smith said in a statement released on Twitter Wednesday. "We both agreed this language and attitude is entirely unacceptable, regardless of circumstances or environment. I spoke with Rocco and dis-

missed him from the team. I will not tolerate racism or hate speech."

Carley's name was removed from Oregon State's roster by Thursday morning.

Oregon State University sports information director Steve Fenk confirmed Carley's dismissal Thursday.

"We prohibit discrimination in any form," the college said in a statement posted to Twitter. "The

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Vol. 139, No. 25

Serving the Silverton Area Since 1880
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