



Gervais Middle School students sit spaced apart during lunch. The district is one of the first to use a pager-like device for contact tracing. ABIGAIL DOLLINS / STATESMAN JOURNAL

Election

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vais, Aurora and Donald will decide in the election.

Sublimity fluoride ballot measure

The Sublimity City Council was holding a work session to decide what goals they wanted to pursue in January 2020.

A resident, Larry Etzel, asked if the council had discussed that the city puts fluoride in its drinking water. They hadn't.

Sublimity is one of 29 – Dallas, Independence, Keizer, Monmouth, Salem, Silverton and Turner among them – out of Oregon's 241 incorporated cities that provides fluoride to its citizens through its drinking water.

It equates to about 22% of the state's population (902,000) who receive fluoride, according to the Oregon Health Authority. That ranks the state 48th among the United States.

Fluoride, a naturally occurring mineral, protects teeth from decay that can lead to cavities. Communities that add fluoride to their water decrease cavities in children by 15%, according to a study by the Community Preventive Services Task Force

"And currently, we're adding .6 parts per million is how much fluoride is in our water. Not a huge amount and there's a very minimal amount that's naturally occurring," Sublimity Mayor Jim Kingsbury said.

Etzel, 68, moved to the city from a family farm about eight years ago. He's a retired pilot who is involved in community organizations, including one that teaches disabled people to ski.

He said of the 74 water districts in Marion County, six have fluoride in the water.

"My question is, what do these other 68 water districts know that we don't?" Etzel said. "That's kind of why I presented this to the city council, just to see if they would be interested in this."

According to the Fluoride Action Network, there have been 83 studies about the links between intelligence and fluoride and 74 have shown that elevated fluoride exposure is associated with reduced IQ.

"My goal in pursuing this is to get people to do a little bit of research so that they can make an informed decision," Etzel said.

"You're going to run into dental professionals who say this is absolutely necessary. My dentist tells me the same thing. It may help reduce cavities in kids. But what are the other effects of this? The studies that show the lower IQ's in kids. Do I want them to put something in my water that's going to cause negative effects in kids?"

Kingsbury said adding fluoride costs the city \$5,000 per year.

Sublimity uses well water for drinking water. It has four wells and adds fluoride in each one, he said.

The city has been adding fluoride into its drinking water since 1955, when it was a city with a population of about 400 people.

Kingsbury said the city never asked its citizens in a ballot measure if they wanted it, though.

The city asked its residents in its newsletter to tell it if they wanted fluoride in the water. There was a lot of feedback. It was mixed.

"Generally, you know when something comes up, generally it's pretty well either one side or another," said Kingsbury, in his fourth year as mayor. "And this item was significantly different in the fact that there was a lot of people who were for and a lot of people against and it was something we couldn't in good faith make a decision one way or another."

After nine months of input, the city decided to put it to the citizens as a ballot measure.

Kingsbury said it's important for the city to let the citizens decide whether they want fluoride or not.

"Just from my own personal standpoint, I think that's important," he said. "I think it's important for persons to make up their own mind about what they feel they want in their water. If there is a benefit to fluoride, if there isn't a benefit to fluoride, if you could get fluoride another way."

Sublimity has a new ballot drop box in front of its city hall at 245 NW Johnson Street.

Aurora municipal bond

When the ice storms hit in February 2021, the shortcoming of Aurora's water infrastructure was exposed.

The city's wells were idled when power was knocked out, and without emergency power sources like generators, the city was within a day of running out of water to supply to citizens.

Other cities brought Aurora water, which kept it going until power was restored, but it's trying to prevent that situation from happening again.

The city is asking voters to approve a \$7.1 million bond, paid for increasing property taxes by \$2.90 per \$1,000 of assessed value over the next 21 years to pay for large municipal improvements.

It would pay for improvements to the water systems including a pump station on the north side of Mill Creek and emergency generators for the city's wells.

It also would pay for a new city hall, community center and library. That also would include an emergency management hub and shelter for use during extreme weather conditions.

It would fund improvements to the city's wastewater and stormwater systems, including replacing tank liners and chemical storage facilities.

Gervais school district bond

The Gervais School District is one of two in the Willamette Valley that doesn't have a bond to improve its facilities. It has not passed a bond since 1990.

The district received a \$4 million grant from the state to fund improvements to facilities, but it only gets the money to spend if it passes a bond.

The Gervais School District is asking taxpayers to approve a \$31 million bond for construction of new buildings and improvements and repairs on existing buildings in the district.

The bond is estimated to cost property tax owners \$2.21 per \$1,000 of assessed value. For the average homeowner in the district with a property valued at \$210,000, it would cost them \$37 per month.

Gervais High School would receive \$10.2 million in additions and upgrades to the existing building. It would also pay to construct new classrooms, restrooms, a covered walkway and vestibule.

The middle school would receive \$18 million in renovations and upgrades, and add a new STEM classroom and a multipurpose building. It also would add parking and walkways.

The elementary school would receive \$3 million in additions and upgrades to the existing building. It also would add a covered play area.

In addition, the district's sports fields would receive new lighting and bleachers, a concessions stand, and locker rooms. The district has received an \$800,000 grant to pay for turf for the fields, and may use bond money to pay the rest of the \$350,000 it needs to pay for the rest of that improvement.

Donald police levy

Donald is asking voters to fund police services with an operational levy.

The city is asking voters to approve a \$2.07 per \$1,000 of assessed value increase in property taxes for the next five years.

The taxes would raise \$254,000 each year for five years and raise a total of \$1,065,414.44.

That money would be used to contract with the Marion County Sheriff's office to provide a police officer exclusively for the city. Cities in the county including Jefferson and Sublimity have similar arrangements with the county.

Donald city manager Eric Underwood said the city would contract for 40 hours per week for the deputy, though the specific hours the officer works have not been determined.

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Help your business thrive with a focus on retention



Angela Owen

Chemeketa Small Business Development Center

Did you know that 57% of your employees are looking for a new job? It's a startling statistic.

Consider your own team. Roughly half of them are planning to leave when the right opportunity presents itself. Did your throat just close a little bit?

If you've seen the news this year, you know that there are more open jobs than employees to fill them. Waits at restaurants are longer than ever, customer patience is waning and the yelp reviews are pouring in. The public doesn't like the new landscape that defines today's workforce.

Guess what? Neither do your employees, according to the latest reports.

Maybe you just lost somebody on your team and you're facing the prospect of hiring. IF and that's just IF you happen to get the right person hired, it will cost you about a third of their annual salary to train them, and there is a 33% chance they will leave in their first six months.

These are the realities of hiring today. It isn't fun! How do you fight back? You focus on retention.

Let's look at some ways you KEEP the great employees you have.

Why do your employees stay with you? Is it money? Probably not.

Today's employees look at the money as a vehicle to fuel their lifestyles. Work is a secondary priority to them, and it honestly should be. Work-life balance is more important than ever so rethink that mandatory overtime. Rethink the mindset that your staff gets a paycheck so what else could they possibly ex-

pect.

They want to be *part* of something. They want to feel like they are making a difference with the work they are doing.

What motivates your team? Try asking them.

A stay interview is a tool to take your team's pulse. It is nothing more than a simple conversation about why your employee loves working for you, and maybe why they don't. The benefits are tremendous, and it will be illuminating to you as an owner or a manager if done correctly. Here are some tips for successful stay interviews:

- Consider doing them off site. Lunch, coffee or a quick glass of wine after work are all great options that communicate a less formal conversation.

- Give them permission to be honest. If you want a truthful answer, they must trust you not to respond reactively.

- Use a growth mindset. This isn't the time to focus on "but this is how we've always done it."

- LISTEN. Read that again. Listen carefully. Take the time to hear what they say.

- Commit to changing things to keep them happy and engaged.

Hiring is a huge pain point for most owners and managers today. With a laser focus on employee retention, your teams become more stable, enabling your business to thrive. Be proactive about finding ways to incentivize them to stay with your company. It gives you more time to focus on other areas of your business and develops a positive, healthy culture among your staff members.

Angela Owen is a business adviser at the Chemeketa Small Business Development Center. The Small Business Adviser column is produced by the center. Questions can be submitted to sbdc@chemeketa.edu or call (503) 399-5088.

Sheds

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she was gifted a shed constructed by local volunteers and members of the Associated General Contractors Oregon-Columbia chapter.

The shed is one of 65 given to people who lost their homes in the fire.

The shed build project began in February 2021 with a local church intending to build 10 sheds.

But as the need increased and more groups got involved, the effort flourished. So far 65 sheds have been built with the goal to reach 80 by the end of May. Work will restart later this year.

Bill Smith, with Parker, Smith and Feek and AGC, said the building picked up after Blazer Industries donated warehouse space in Stayton to assemble and paint the structures. On Saturday, volunteers hammered, built and painted inside the warehouse.

Smith said supply chain issues have meant that each shed, which once cost \$1,400 to build, now costs \$4,000. Funded by donations and volunteer work, the sheds are given to wildfire survivors.

McGuire's shed now rests where her husband's garage and machine shop once was. She had it painted in the same mint green shade with bright green trim that she wants to paint her house.

On her property, the sounds of clucking chickens and the rushing river fill the air. Some of the trees are regrowing. Pots house the plants for her future garden. Her new home is being built to accommodate her many kids, grandkids and, as of recently, one great-grandkid.

She said the shed has been vital for helping her re-establish her sense of ownership and peace at home.

"It instills hope," she said.

The shed also keeps her belongings safe from would-be thieves who've taken to frequenting wildfire victims' homes in the canyon.

McGuire said she was grateful for the volunteers and said the need for the sheds remained in the community.

"It's a godsend," she said. "I don't know what I would have done without it."

For questions, comments and news tips, email reporter Whitney Woodworth at wwoodworth@statesmanjournal.com, call 503-910-6616 or follow on Twitter @wwoodworth