

School district plans furloughs to meet expected budget cuts

BY MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

With a 6-1 vote, the Salem-Keizer Public Schools (SKPS) Board of Directors approved a memorandum of understanding with the Salem-Keizer Education Association that outlines furlough days for educators and some school administrators.

The decision is expected to affect more than 4,000 local school employees and SKPS is estimating they will save \$8 million by the end of July.

Starting on Friday, May 22, educators and teacher aides will be taking one unpaid furlough day per week until mid-June. A number of administrators, including Superintendent Christy Perry, are scheduled to have their furloughs last until the

end of July.

Days will be staggered to maintain the services being offered by the district through the end of the school year, such as child care and meal distribution — those workers will take their furlough days on Monday.

“Every employee has to furlough 20 percent,” Perry said.

It’s the beginning of a likely number of cuts coming to the district budget amid the COVID-19 pandemic. During a district budget meeting last week, Perry shared that she is expecting the district to be \$48 million short of what was expected due to cuts in the state school fund.

Although the motion nearly passed unanimously — with the only opposing vote coming from Paul Kylo — there were

board members who were less than thrilled about the decision.

“My personal opinion is that it’s the wrong way to go. It’s going to have a horrible impact on the community and what we’re doing,” Kathy Goss said. “But I really don’t have much choice but for the good of the order to vote along with the majority.”

Danielle Bethell approached the vote with some skepticism.

“It’s a tool in a toolbox that we are being asked to use as school board members, making sure our kids receive the best education in the long term. The only reason I’ll will be supporting it is because I believe in the efforts our teachers are doing and I know that our kids are going to need every ounce of attention from every body we

can fit in a building starting in September,” Bethell said. “I believe that voting yes to support this furlough to save money now going into the future is a critical tool and really the only tool we have available to us.”

Fortunately for SKPS employees, the district is accessing a state program called the CARES Act, which will protect as many instructional days and staff positions as possible for next school year, while providing current benefits for employees.

Under the CARES Act, dis-

trict staff would get \$600 per week in addition to unemployment — meaning that many staff members, by being furloughed, will make more than their yearly salary.

The additional money won’t come from the district, which means that this will be a money-saving strategy for SKPS. The plan also doesn’t effect employee health insurance or retirement contributions.

Towards the end of the meeting, Jesse Lippold was vocal about why he thought this was the right decision for the

district, even though it may have some negative impacts down the road.

“To say that there’s no repercussions would be a lie and I think to say that there would be other alternatives also wouldn’t be true. There are definitely going to be long-term impacts on this,” Lippold said. “We’re going to have to end up paying for this over time as taxpayers. All of us are. For me personally, I’m willing to take on that burden ... I think it’s really important for teachers and students have stability for next year.”

MCFD1 levy failing, Keizer women dominate election results

Voters were unconvinced when it came to a local option levy that would have bolstered the personnel serving Marion County Fire District No. 1 in the early results from voter ballots Wednesday, May 20.

The district sought the tax increase from voters to help cover a steady increase in call volume during the past several years. The additional cost would have been roughly \$4.67 per month (or \$56 per year) for the owner of a home assessed at \$200,000.

The measure was failing with 54 percent of voters casting ballots against it at press time.

In other elections, voters threw a huge amount of support behind Keizer women in primaries.

• Keizer resident Danielle Bethell will face off against Ashley Carson Cottingham in the race for position 3 on the Marion County Board of Commissioners. Bethell, a Republican, ran unopposed in the primary. Cottingham, a Democrat, appeared to have scored

a resounding victory over Dan Norton in the primary. Cottingham had 74 percent of the vote at press time.

• Keizerite Kim Thatcher won the Republican primary to become Oregon’s Secretary of State. She will face off against Democrat state Sen. Mark Hass, who appeared to have narrowly edged out two opponents.

• Keizerite Amy Ryan Courser easily won the Republican primary to square off against Rep. Kurt Schrader in the general election to represent Oregon’s 5th District in the U.S. House of Representatives. Courser was winning with 52 percent of the vote

in a crowded field. Schrader, a Democrat, easily fended off two challengers capturing 70 percent of the votes.

• Republican Bill Post and Democrat Ramiro “RJ” Navarro will vie to represent Keizer in the Oregon House of Representatives. Both ran unopposed.

• Former Vice President Joe Biden scored a walk-off win in the Democratic presidential primary. At press time, he had the support of 67 percent of Democratic voters. Sen. Bernie Sanders, who is no longer running for the office, came in second with 19 percent of the vote.

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By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

A Salem man was convicted on three counts of first-degree manslaughter and sentenced to 25 years for a collision on the Salem Parkway that resulted in the deaths of three area teens.

Juan Rodriguez-Palacios, 26, was convicted in a bench trial that ended Wednesday, May 6. Rodriguez waived his right to a jury trial in favor of a verdict rendered by Judge Thomas Hart. Hart issued a sentence of 25 years in prison Thursday, May 14, and Rodriguez-Palacios will not be eligible for early release or alternative programs during his sentence.

Rodriguez Palacios had left Tequila Nights, a Keizer bar, on the evening of June 2, 2019. He reportedly had consumed multiple beers and used marijuana and cocaine before getting behind the wheel. He ran a red light going 85 mph at the intersection of Cherry Avenue Northeast and the Salem Parkway. His vehicle collided with a Toyota Camry carrying three teens — Trinity Watt, 19, of Salem, Madison Capobianco, 19, of Salem, and

Makayla Tryon, 18, of Keizer — killing all of them.

Rodriguez-Palacios was also convicted of driving under the influence and two counts of third-degree assault. His blood-alcohol level after the accident was .15, nearly twice the legal limit.

Video played during closing arguments showed Palacios being questioned by a member of the Salem Police Department. Prior to the start of the questioning, Palacios was unaware the three girls had been killed as a result of the accident. Once he was informed of the deaths, he put his head on the table and wept. When officers left the room, he continued to sob and began praying.

Rodriguez-Palacios has been previously convicted of reckless driving and failure to perform the duties of a driver when property was damaged in 2015. In that incident, Rodriguez-Palacios hit a trailer — while driving with a blood-alcohol level of .17 — and fled the scene.

Three charges of recklessly endangering others and driving under the influence were dropped after he completed a diversionary program.

puzzle answers

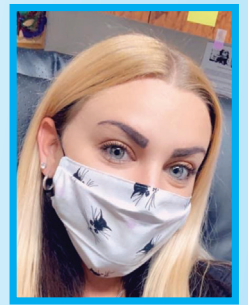
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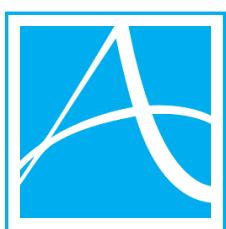


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