

SKPS has no plans to suspend extracurricular activities

BY MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

Even with the exorbitant amount of COVID-19 cases in the state due to the omicron variant, Salem-Keizer Public Schools (SKPS) will continue to engage in sports and other extracurricular activities.

On Monday, Jan. 3, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE), along with Oregon Health Authority (OHA), released a new school health advisory that recommended that schools bring extracurricular activities to a halt, or ensure they follow the same layered mitigation safety protocols practiced during the school day (use of face coverings, screening and diagnostic testing, encourage vaccination, frequent hand washing, etc.).

“If schools and other organizations proceed with extracurricular activities, especially as these activities move indoors and individuals are unmasked, they should expect rapid transmission of COVID-19 that will prevent students from participating in in-person learning due to isolation for those that contract COVID-19 and lengthy quarantines for those that come into close contact with infected individuals,” the health advisory message says. “This risk should be clearly communicated to families participating in these extracurricular activities.”

The department said the advisory was “the most critical and urgent issued to date,” and came one day before the state set

a new record for COVID cases reported in a single day with 4,540 infections.

“As Oregon fully experiences the impacts of the omicron variant over the next several weeks, student access to in-person instruction is under serious threat,” the health advisory states. “While early data indicate that the Omicron variant may result in less severe disease than previous variants, it is increasingly clear that the omicron variant spreads much more quickly and easily than all previous variants.”

SKPS Director of High School Education Larry Ramirez said the district understands the risk that continuing sports and activities poses, but that they aren't willing to cancel extracurricular events for the second time in as many years.

“We're going to continue to give kids that opportunity. When we didn't have athletics, we felt the negative impact in different ways, including performance in the

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Evan Cornell tries to get to the hoop off the dribble. Sports in the Salem-Keizer School District will continue in spite of the large amount of COVID cases in the state.

Photo by MATT RAWLINGS of Keizertimes

New Laws coming to Oregon in 2022

No more selling catalytic converters



Theft of catalytic converters has skyrocketed in recent years. The average number of catalytic converters stolen in the US each month jumped from 108 in 2018 to 1,203 in 2020 according to the National Insurance Crime Bureau.

The reason so many catalytic converters are stolen is because the converters, which function to clean a car's emissions, contain precious metals such as palladium and rhodium. Rhodium is currently valued at around \$21,000 per ounce and palladium at \$2,500 an ounce.

Oregon's new Senate Bill 803 attempts to curb these thefts by making it illegal for scrap metal businesses to buy or receive converters except from commercial sellers or the vehicle's owner.

These businesses will also be required to obtain a photocopy of the seller's driver's license, a photo of the seller, the car's license plate number and more information pertaining to whom is selling the converter.

Remote meeting will continue



Some things are not going to return to how they were pre-COVID — and sometimes that's good.

When the pandemic hit in March of 2020, many government agencies were forced to begin conducting their public meetings remotely by video or audio. Thanks to House Bill 2560, that won't be changing. Government agencies will be required to continue providing remote access to public meetings for members of the public through telephone, video or other virtual means when possible. Additionally, these agencies will be required to give members of the public an opportunity to submit written or orally testimony electronically.

The city of Keizer has a deal with Keizer TV until at least the end of 2022 to broadcast all city council meetings, all planning commission meetings, all parks board meetings and all budget committee meetings

The new law will exclude executive sessions and other meetings not open to the public.

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