

DeVos' McMinnville visit met with protest, praise

By ROB MANNING

Oregon Public Broadcasting

Protesters and teachers met U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos on her visit to McMinnville High School Wednesday.

DeVos said she wanted to visit the school because of its high achievement rates. She emerged from an Advanced Placement class toward the end of the high school day, smiling.

"I have thoroughly enjoyed the experience of observing the classrooms with the students actively engaged, and all of them also focused on learning 21st century skills as they anticipate entering the adult world," DeVos said. "I've been extremely impressed with how [teachers] have embraced this."

On the sidewalk along the sprawling high school campus, about 200 people lined up to protest DeVos' visit. They held signs accusing her of prioritizing school choice options, such as private school vouchers and charter schools, rather than supporting public schools like McMinnville High.

Leaders of Oregon's statewide teachers' union and the Portland Association of Teachers were among the demonstrators. Chair of the Yamhill County Democrats Stephanie Findley said she had mixed feelings about DeVos' visit, and the publicity it would bring to the local high school.



Education secretary Betsy DeVos discusses a poetry passage with students at McMinnville High School on Wednesday. DeVos visited McMinnville High School to see first-hand "the innovative initiatives present in the McMinnville school district, particularly its STEM programs and teacher development techniques."

Rockne Roll/News-Register via AP

"Absolutely, [the school] should be recognized nationally for the work they're doing," Findley said. But she disagreed with other messages DeVos champions from her position as education secretary.

"We shouldn't be talking about vouchers or charter

schools, when we're doing such good work in our public school system right now," Findley argued.

A handful of Trump administration supporters stood on a corner near the high school cheering on DeVos' visit. Several local police officers stood on yet

another.

Inside, DeVos visited a teacher planning meeting, where administrators and teachers discussed what specific steps are working to help students. They talked about using "Socratic" techniques to get students to think about what they're

learning, and they shared a list of "2020 skills" that push beyond subjects like math and social studies, to include "negotiation" and "emotional intelligence."

DeVos visited three classrooms inside the high school, including an AP literature class of about 30 students.

She listened as students discussed poetry in small groups, each teenager with a laptop on their desk.

After her tour, DeVos attempted to answer critics, including the people gathered on the sidewalk outside. She disagreed with protesters who said she doesn't support public education.

"I support great schools, great education and I want to see every single child in this country get an equal opportunity," DeVos said.

But she also defended her belief that students and families should be allowed to choose the school situation that best suits them.

"Let's talk more broadly about giving parents choices. The hope is that choices would be afforded to all parents so that they could have a school that would work for them," DeVos said.

She said she viewed education as an "investment," and that policy makers should focus more on what works for individual children, and less on supporting a specific type of school system.

DeVos disagreed that funding for school options would deprive public schools, like McMinnville High School.

"It would not impact a school like this," DeVos said.

DeVos next heads to Milpitas, California, to visit a middle school Thursday. On Friday, she is scheduled to visit the Seattle area, where she has a fundraiser scheduled.

WIND: Turbines will be 292 to 394 feet high

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power producer in 2009, and today owns 24 generation facilities in North America with a total of 4,500 megawatts — including a mixture of wind, coal, gas and biomass power plants.

Capital Power took over the Nolin Hills Wind Power Project after acquiring the original developer, Element Power of Portland, in 2014. Wendelgass said wind resources in Eastern Oregon are not as robust as down the Columbia River Gorge, but decent considering the advances in wind energy technology.

The size and number of turbines will largely depend on what type of turbine the company decides to install, and will likely range from 292 to 394 feet high. Leases have already been arranged with the private landowners, Wendelgass said, though he did not provide details.

Until the project receives a site

certificate from the Energy Facility Siting Council, Wendelgass said they do not have a buyer of the electricity on the hook.

"Without finishing the EFSC process, you can't build a project," he said.

According to the Notice of Intent, the project will connect to a yet-to-be-built Bonneville Power Administration substation near Stanfield. Wendelgass said he is aware of the amount of irrigated cropland in the area, and "that is certainly something they will have to take into account."

Transmission line impacts on high-value farmland has been a concern in Umatilla and Morrow counties, given the proposed Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line owned by Idaho Power and the Wheatridge Wind Energy Project owned by Florida-based NextEra Energy.

The Department of Energy recently approved a site certificate for the 500-megawatt Wheatridge

wind farm, while the 500-kilovolt B2H line could receive its record of decision as early as this month. Local farmers and officials have discussed implementing a pilot project that would designate a single transmission corridor in Morrow County, allowing energy facilities to tap into the grid without resulting in a spiderweb of power lines disrupting farm activities.

The concept has even garnered the interest of Gov. Kate Brown, who established an advisory committee in October 2015 to brainstorm possible balances between energy and agriculture. That committee issued its final report in February, and Brown has instructed the Department of Land Conservation and Development to work with Morrow County on crafting temporary rules for development.

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NOOR: State graduation rates ticked upward to 75 percent

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"Governor Brown asked Salam Noor to resign because she was not satisfied with his ability to execute her vision for Oregon's education system," the governor's spokesman, Chris Pair, said in an email.

Brown appointed Noor to the position in May 2015, just three months after taking over as governor. Her statement did not include any highlights from Noor's tenure, simply stating: "I thank Salam for his service to the state of Oregon."

In addition to sluggish test scores, Oregon has also been plagued with chronically low graduation rates. Though the rate ticked upward to 75 percent on Noor's watch, it's still well below the national average of 83 percent.

Oregon has in recent years set a goal of a 100 percent graduation rate by 2025, something no state has achieved. Brown, in a letter dated Wednesday to Gill and other top education officials, said boosting graduation rates remains a top priority, though she backs away from

the 100 percent target, settling for the still-ambitious goal of 90 percent.

In addition to improving the graduation rate, she asked education leaders to:

- Establish a unified education budget for 2019-2021 that ensures more students meet key education benchmarks and improves school readiness and attendance.
- Develop a state-wide early learning plan that serves all Oregon communities
- Expand career pathways aligned by collaborating with workforce, business, and industry partners.

Gill, a former superintendent of the Bethel School District in Eugene, was named the state's education innovation officer in 2016, charged with increasing the number of students completing high school.

"As education innovation officer, Colt has cultivated strong partnerships with rural and urban school districts, communities and students, recommending policies that will improve student success in every corner of the state," Brown said.



Salam Noor

DUGGAN: Out of the 30,000 Oregon sex offenders, fewer than 75 qualify as sexually violent, dangerous

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September and opened a Facebook page as Max Duggan. He was with family in Washington, he posted, but was heading for Pendleton to try to live a quiet life.

Because he is a sex offender, Duggan, 52, has to report where he lives with Oregon State Police. The agency's Sex Offender Registration Section reported Duggan provided an address on the 400 block of Northwest 15th Street, a few blocks from Pendleton High School. However, the living arrangement didn't last long.

That's the apartment of Rose McDonald. She said she has been friends with Duggan since he was 15, and she allowed him to stay with her and use the address to register with the state. Then the landlord found out he was living there and kicked him out, and McDonald said she put Duggan on a bus to live with his sister in Washington.

"He doesn't want trouble," McDonald said. "He just wants to get on with his life."

Rick Partlow is in charge of parole and probation officers for Umatilla County Community Justice and confirmed Duggan is not under any supervision.

"He's all done with both Oregon and Washington, but still has to register his residence for life," Partlow said, barring, for example, a successful court appeal to overturn the requirement.

Most convicts coming out of Oregon prisons receive at least a year of supervision, Partlow said, and that can help curb recidivism. But Washington, he said, allows inmates to do their time and be done with corrections.

Just going to jail or prison, Partlow said, does not make an offender a better person, and sex offenders under supervision have access to programs

"For the sex offender, the most important component to learning is to understand empathy. They need to learn their impact on other people's lives."

— Rick Partlow, in charge of parole and probation officers for Umatilla County Community Justice and treatment.

"For the sex offender, the most important component to learning is to understand empathy," Partlow said. "They need to learn their impact on other people's lives."

No supervision means Duggan has no requirement for treatment. Logman said he found Duggan's situation stunning. He said he felt the need to warn his community about Duggan.

Rather than hand out flyers, Logman used Facebook.

On Sept. 13 he posted about Duggan and included a link to his webpage from Oregon's online Sex Offender Inquiry System. Some 4,000 Facebook users have since shared Logman's warning.

Logman also said he provided that information to Facebook, which took down Duggan's page.

Oregon State Police runs the sex offender inquiry website, which recently removed the information about Duggan. State police in an email explained the website is for certain offenders who meet certain criteria.

"OSP has not yet been provided the information necessary to determine if Duggan meets the criteria needed to authorize us to post him to the website," according to the email. "We

have requests out for this information, and our staff is diligently working to acquire the required information to complete this determination."

State Police Sgt. Steve Payne works with the registration division and explained the Oregon parole board and psychiatric review board determine which offenders meet the criteria, and state police has to wait for their reports. Oregon has 30,000 sex offenders, he said, and the state in 2015 moved to the federal classifications of level 1, 2 or 3, as well as predatory or sexually violent dangerous offenders. The reclassification created a backlog, and the division is working through it as quickly as it can.

The website only shows level 3, predatory and the sexually violent dangerous offenders. Out of the 30,000, fewer than 75 qualify as sexually violent dangerous, Payne said, and Duggan was a level 3 predatory offender.

Logman also expressed his frustration with the state police registration section, which can provide individuals with information about where sex offenders live.

"I left four messages since last Wednesday," Logman said. "I have yet to get a call back. And I'm very specific about who I'm calling about."

Payne said he understands Logman's concern with protecting his family and informing the community, but state police gave Logman the 15th Street address. Payne said if Duggan moved, he has 10 days to provide his new address. McDonald said Duggan was within that period.

That clock is ticking. And Dan Logman said he wants to know where Duggan ends up.

Editor's note: The East Oregonian was not able to find current contact information for Duggan.

FIRE: 2017 fire season has cost an estimated \$38.9M

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fire issues, Daugherty said.

Brown has convened a council to hasten the economic recovery from wildfires that scorched communities from Mosier to Brookings.

Fire protection makes up a good share of the agency's costs.

The Oregon Department of Forestry estimates that to-date, the 2017 fire season has cost it \$38.9 million.

Recent fire seasons have also put a strain on employees — a problem that was documented by state auditors last year.

When fire season hits, all divisions of the department help handle the workload.

"We were in all-hands-on-deck mode from the eclipse (Aug. 21) until just recently," Daugherty said.

Harsh fire seasons and low timber revenues have plagued the agency's state forests division and, as of April, that division of the agency was expected to go into the red in 2022.

Daugherty noted that the agency could also work to "strengthen" relationships with landowners, cooperation with other government agencies and

remind the public of the link between forest management and fire.

Board member Cindy Deacon Williams, of Medford, argued that the wildfire situation may require more proactive measures to increase "resilience" on forestlands.

"If we don't figure out a way to engage with it pro-actively ahead of the time, we will as an agency do nothing but rob Peter to pay fire," said Williams, "With both funding and people, and energy, and effort, and talent, and the way the trends are going, there's no way we can win that battle if that's all we do."

Daugherty expressed concern that this year's fire season could stir up old tensions about fire policy and forest management.

"I think our real challenge will be to redirect these divisive conversations to a more productive conversation, where we can actually make progress by finding common ground," Daugherty said.

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