

Dive from 1A

surface," Knabe said.

The debris recovered Saturday included an old refrigerator, a reclining chair, 12 tires, a toilet, a sink and assorted bottles, cans and discarded household items.

The hardest part of the process is often getting the debris to shore.

"We had to work really hard to get the refrigerator out," Knabe said. "It was buried pretty deep and the visibility down there is very limited."



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Experienced and new divers work together to locate, map and bring debris to the surface.

FEC from 1A

Rhodes joined the FEC staff in 1996, just months before the center opened its doors on Aug. 31, 1996.

"Opening the FEC was one of the highlights, or even the highlight, of my terms as

mayor. It's one of the things I'm most proud of," McCorkle said. "My congratulations to everyone who has worked on this thing for well over 20 years to make it successful.

"Lord willing, I hope to look forward to another 20 years here."

Dancing with Sea Lions was

conceived to celebrate the events center and its impact on the Florence area.

FEC Marketing Specialist Connor brought the event to the Florence City Council in April 2015.

Florence City Councilor Susy Lacer said, "I have to give huge props to Jennifer,

because it was an amazing project. She designed it from the get-go with a full spectrum of benefits for all kinds of parties. It was going to benefit our economy, the businesses in town, tourists and, of course, the artists, for they would get a front-row seat for displaying their talents. It was a very well-designed project."

Connor formed a committee to plan a timeline, create the logo, design the fiberglass sea lions and find artists and sponsors.

"I had a wonderful committee," Connor said. She went on to thank Calista Cates, Rhodes, Reynolds, City of Florence Public Works Director Mike Miller and his staff, the FEC staff, Friends of the FEC, the Florence Public Art Committee and volunteers.

"They really encouraged this project and gave me lots of support," she said. Lacer, who served on the Dancing with Sea Lions committee said, "It's been a wonderful project, and I am very pleased to be a part of it. Tonight, we are celebrating the end of this wonderful journey and finding permanent homes for the remaining eight sea lions."

Auctioneer Bob Sneddon

then auctioned off the sea lions. The other 12 full-sized sea lions had been bought before the auction.

All 20 sea lions, hand-painted and created by area artists, sold during the event.

Most will be available for public viewing. Porter Performs, by Colleen Goodwin-Chronister, and Rhody the sea lion pup, by Frances Rogers, will remain at the FEC.

Siuslaw Public Library and the Friends of the Library had one triumph of the evening: they were able to secure Eco and the Ecosystems of Oregon, by Benjamin Cahoon, to remain at the library's main location in Florence.

Connor thanked the artists and the original sponsors.

"We know that the beautiful art that was done would not be possible without you. Without you, this project would not be possible. It's incredible the work that you've done," she said.

Pavilion Catering provided hors d'oeuvres, beverages and cake for the event.

"This has been a wonderful evening," Reynolds said. "Most of all, we wouldn't be here if we didn't have this fabulous facility. We're very

grateful to have the opportunity to celebrate 20 years of the FEC and look forward to many more years in Florence."

Connor said the event raised \$68,000 for Friends of the FEC, the nonprofit group who fundraises, volunteers for and in many ways supports the events center.

"We give tours all the time, and people are just amazed at what a nice facility we have for a small town," Rhodes said. "They also think it's about four or five years old. That we attribute to the Friends of the FEC, who continue to support us."

The Friends also help the FEC pay for remodels and "recent enhancements," Rhodes said of the brand new dance floor and new video projectors.

"We need to remain state of the art. It not only is beneficial for our clients, but it is beneficial for our patrons. We ask that you continue to support us and buy tickets to our events. We just thank you for coming here tonight," he said.

Connor is working on a map of the finalized, public locations of the Dancing with Sea Lions. When completed it will be available at eventcenter.org and dancingwithsealions.com.

Land from 1A

The business park originally had 24 lots. If this deal closes, nine will be left unsold.

"He wants to build a factory here in Florence, starting with five employees that he thinks over time could grow to 20 employees," Henry said.

Reynolds said, "The exciting thing about this deal is that it has all the aspects that the council has been working toward. We have been able to sit down with this individual and work through some complex issues regarding the land use process and zoning. This is the kind of business the city wants to attract."

Henry added, "These will be the type of jobs we need in Florence. My goal since the get-go, and I'm a big supporter of youth, is that our kids can graduate from high school here, get an education, either here through LCC or elsewhere, but come back here, buy a home and raise a family. There is really no opportunity to do that today."

This exposes the need for the third element of the city's economic development plan, affordable housing.

"A month ago, there was not a single rental available in the city of Florence and pretty much everything in multiple listing under \$350,000 is under contract," Henry said. "We have a definite housing shortage."

Henry said the good news is that the city has had discussions with more developers and contractors within the past 60 days than it has had in the past two years.

"We have had discussions with developers on apartment buildings, affordable housing, condos and small houses all the way up to upscale," Henry said. "If one-third of the people we have talked to do what they said they were going to do, we will have a whole bunch of houses. Some are doing their due diligence as we speak."

"I personally believe if we had 50 houses for sale at \$250,000 they would sell immediately; if for no other reason than rentals, because there are no rentals available."

Henry said the city also has been working to improve relationships with Lane Community College (LCC) Florence Center and the Siuslaw School District to

facilitate courses conducive to higher paying jobs and college careers.

"LCC is now offering courses that were discontinued in the past, like culinary arts," he said.

The council also approved the purchase of a one-acre parcel adjacent to the north end of the Florence Events Center for \$180,000. Henry said the assessed value of the property was more than \$300,000.

"Part of our rationale to purchase is because the Friends of the FEC has offered to help raise funds to do something with that property," Henry said. "The city will also have to spend money on it. My own speculation is that we will pave that and use it as additional parking for the events center. We will have some nice additional parking that is not gravel and weeds."

Reynolds also said the new city public works building is expected to break ground at the Pacific View Business Park in January or February 2017.

"It is good to see some activity in the business park," Reynolds said. "We haven't seen that for a while."

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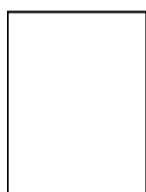
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