

Master plan from 1A

“These parks are vital to the quality of life of our residents, and Lane County needs to understand what our residents’ value in order to be the best possible steward of those parks,” Elsea said. Parks and

Animal Services Manager Mike Russell moderated the meeting, which had approximately 50 attendees.

County staff said the Florence meeting had the largest turnout for the series so far.

Members of the Parks Master Plan Task Force also

contributed to the discussion. One of those members, Florence resident Mike Allen, has been involved in the task force since it began just over a year ago.

“It started when I became interested in our local Harbor Vista Park and I was a host there with my wife. At the time, the county parks system was doing a revisioning of their master plan and they were looking for people to represent districts across the whole county,” Allen said. “They were looking for someone from the coast to give input. I responded and they choose myself and two others from the area to represent the coastal community interests.”

Allen and the task force spent much of the past year getting familiar with the previous incarnations of the county’s plan and learning of the need for public input on the project moving forward.

“We met four or five times at the park offices in Eugene and ... we did a lot of visioning activities,” Allen said. “There was a broad spectrum of people, not just from the coastal areas but from across the county, and some members of the parks advisory committee joined us as well.”

Public input provided at the park meetings has provided

Elsea’s department with many new ideas and issues to consider while formulating the plan moving forward.

“So far, this process has reaffirmed how much people value their parks, and it is honestly energizing to us to hear how Lane County Parks improves quality of life for the residents we serve. We have also heard a strong desire for greater involvement by ‘Friends of’ groups and for additional investment in park facilities,” Elsea said.

He also said that most residents believe it will take many different approaches, coalitions and partnerships to maintain the resources currently available while planning for the improvements needed to serve the community in the future.

Allen added an important element to the discussion by suggesting an increase in one area that the county should consider when finalizing the master plan.

“I wanted to bring to these meetings my interest in having the county park system provide more educational opportunities, and I found that I wasn’t alone in that desire,” Allen said.

County residents are encouraged to participate in the development of the master plan by going online and completing a survey about the issues being considered.

There will also be additional public meetings held in Oakridge and Springfield.

For more information, visit www.lanecounty.org/parks.



MARK BRENNAN/SUUSLAW NEWS

On May 2, Zoila Jimenez finally realized her dream to become a U.S. citizen.

Citizen from 1A

“But after Castro, we couldn’t say what we really thought and we couldn’t say anything we wanted,” Sanchez explained.

Jimenez was glad her son had made it to the United States and over the years applied on four different occasions for a temporary visa to visit Enrique in America — but was turned down each time.

It was during the intervening years that Enrique moved to Oregon.

Seven years ago, on her fifth attempt, Jimenez was granted a temporary visa to visit her son. She has never returned to Cuba.

With the help of her nephew, his wife, Marsala, who is originally from Argentina, and her sons, Jimenez decided to apply for citizenship.

The decision was made easier after Luis and his wife became citizens during the last five years of Jimenez’s “visit.” Luis and Marsala were famil-

iar with the necessary paperwork and the process which they undertook on their Tia’s behalf.

The family eventually made a trip north to the office of the Citizen Immigration Services in Portland. That was where they ran into a glitch; Jimenez doesn’t speak English.

The law currently requires that applicants for citizenship take the test for citizenship in English. Jimenez’s application was denied, but with some accompanying advice suggesting she write a letter explaining the circumstances of the situation to the Department of Immigration and Naturalization and petition for an exemption.

The family returned to their homes in Eugene and Florence and wrote the recommended letters.

Six months later, they received a letter scheduling an appointment in Portland — and on May 2, the family gathered once again in a large official conference room in the Federal building.

After a series of short interviews, the family waited for a couple of hours before being given the good news: Zoila Esperanza Alfonso Jimenez would indeed be allowed to become a U.S. citizen.

The ceremony was scheduled for later that day; Jimenez is now a proud American.

Luis was appreciative of the professionals that assisted his aunt during the citizenship process.

“They were very respectful, there was no feeling that anyone was being unhelpful. Everyone there was very friendly and they were really trying to help us,” Sanchez said.

He is also optimistic about the future relationship between his country of birth and his adopted home.

“We are making a little progress. It is a process and this will take time. It is my hope and my dream to see our country a democracy again. And I think this is the first step in that direction,” Sanchez said.

The family will be having a combination Citizenship and Mothers Day celebration this week in Eugene.

“I am so happy to be an American. Now I just want my family to all be together here,” Jimenez said, smiling. “I have one son still in Cuba and I hope he can come here so we can all be together again.”

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