

Union from 1A

Between SEIU and ONA, Peace Harbor will be almost completely unionized. Marshall said, "We do not anticipate a deviation from the high level of service currently provided to the community." ONA has been negotiating

a new contract with Peace Harbor since December and, according to both sides, is close to a finalized contract. The next federally mediated negotiation session is scheduled for July 12. SEIU Local 503 did not respond to requests for comment by story deadline Friday.

Fireworks from 1A

The Olsons encourage attendees to arrive at the marina earlier to allow for traffic and crowds. The Olsons also suggest watching the display from other locations on the lake if possible. "Siltcoos Lake is a great place for viewing because of the wide-open expanse. There is, however, limited lake access so folks will need to find ways to access the viewing area. Parking at Darlings is going to be extremely limited," Lori said. "If you're within walking distance, you are encouraged to walk down, bring a chair or blanket, and find a spot on the grass to watch." Boats can also be launched

from the Lane County Boat Ramp in Westlake. Darlings' launch will be closed at noon for setup. The newly revitalized marina will more than likely be a busy location on Saturday, which is the outcome the Olsons were hoping for when they decided to spend the time and the money to legally present a fireworks show for their neighbors. "The fireworks display is our way of showing appreciation for this amazing community and we are grateful for the generous financial support from friends of Darlings," Rich said. "If you are boating, please respect our volunteers who will be on the water to ensure that boaters stay a safe distance away. We will also have the barbecue going and a bonfire if you want to bring



MARK BRENNAN/SUSLAW NEWS

Darlings Marina on Siltcoos Lake will feature an official fireworks show this year.

your own food to cook. Enjoy the show!" For those who miss the "Sparkle on the Siltcoos," the Florence Area Chamber of Commerce is presenting its annual fireworks display on

Tuesday, July 4, at the Port of Siuslaw Marina, beginning at dusk. Additional Independence Day activities will take place all day in Historic Old Town Florence.

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Helping from 1A

"So we've been using the United Methodist Church in the interim," said Lois Bass, a board member of Helping Hands. "They feed the hungry Tuesdays and Thursdays and provide a hot meal on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays." But the space is small, as described by board member Debe Hamilton. "We have three storage units right now full of our stuff. (The church) has been extremely generous, but it's just a small building for two organizations." Hamilton shops twice a week because there isn't enough freezer space. "We have a freezer in storage if we had a place to put it," said Hamilton. "We also have a huge refrigerator we could get to — but we are limited. It's like taking two families and putting them into a one-bedroom apartment." For nearly a year, members of Helping Hands have been

searching for a new location that would meet their needs and the needs of the hungry. They thought they found it on Highway 101 because of property owner Linda Westphal. "When they were over at Rhododendron, I donated canned goods and things that they used in preparing their soup. I think it should be there. Florence needs this," Westphal said. The belief that Helping Hands exclusively serves the homeless community is a common misconception, said volunteer Diane Erwin, who explained, "The vast majority of people who come here have homes." She said that while the summer brings "travelers," people passing through, "We see them once maybe, but not again. The vast majority are regulars who come simply to eat." Most of those who are greeted at the front door by Helping Hands volunteers are cordial in their demeanor, although there are a few who decidedly aren't. This is one of the major concerns of those opposed to the new location on Highway 101. An employee who works close to the proposed property, and who requested to remain anonymous, explained the issue from their point of view. "The program itself is awesome. I used to volunteer when it was down on Rhody. I think it's great," they said. "It also attracts some of the seedier people. In every place there are drug addicts, drunks and people who have those kinds of issues. And from volunteering

down there, I did see some of the issues that arose with people who were on methamphetamine — or people who would come in drunk." The individual went on to say they had witnessed more than one fight up front, which required police assistance. "I think I'm more concerned with that side of it," they said. The statistics bear this out. Between 2015 and '16, Florence police responded to 14 issues at the Rhododendron location, ranging from illegal camping, public urination/defecation and assault. These numbers do not include incidents in the surrounding area that could be attributed to the clientele. These public safety issues can contribute to another concern for residents: economics. "We want to see the 101 that is attractive to tourists and oriented toward retail for people who come to town," said Kristi Unruh, a homeowner that lives a few doors down from the Highway 101 location. "It's a free country and a free world, but I just don't know. I like them being a little bit further off the 101 and not next to the residential." Businesses nearby have concerns about their own economic survival. Some don't know what to expect, while others fear a complete loss of customers — and potentially finding themselves in the same situation that Helping Hands has found itself in. Helping Hands says it has a plan to combat these issues at

the new property. "We have absolutely no tolerance for using drugs, weapons, smoking or profanity," said Hamilton. "If we see them, we get rid of them and the people aren't allowed to come back. They know this, and that if we get in trouble, the whole place is shut down. "That is a big incentive for us." Those promises didn't seem to quell the concerns of those who live and work nearby. Unruh said she had seen Helping Hands when it was on Rhododendron, and the people hanging out on the street corners, "loitering all day long, running and screaming across the street." "Yes, food starts being served at 11:30 a.m., but they line up well before then," Unruh said. "They loiter long after. "I don't think that corner (on Highway 101) is the right place." Even Helping Hands admits that particular issue is out of their control. "How would we watch them? How would we police them? Once they leave the property, it's not our responsibility," said Hamilton. "They are adults, they are responsible for their own actions." She also pointed out an often overlooked but obvious fact: The homeless will just go somewhere else in town. "If we're not here it's not going away, you know? If they're not getting their meals with us they'll be dumpster diving," she added. Opponents of the location suggested other locations for Helping Hands, including a church north of town and an abandoned building south of the bridge. For Hamilton, this gets to the heart of the issue. "The first meeting we had (about this location), two people complained they had somebody living in their backyard. Someone else complained because there's an alleyway with trash and needles — we haven't even moved in there yet and are getting blamed for it. "Everybody got up and said, 'We support Helping Hands, we just don't want you in our neighborhood. Just go across town and do your own thing — but don't come here.' "They're stereotyping us." Westphal agreed. "I'm disappointed in our community. Helping Hands has been looking for a location where we could offer this service to people in need. Locations are pretty few and far between. It's pretty much the community saying, 'Not in my back yard, go somewhere else.'" The simple question to that, of course, is where? However, the more complicated question is what can be done to reduce the number of those who are in-need, and to what extent should they be responsible for meeting those needs themselves? Look for Part II of this special report in the Wednesday, July 5, issue of Siuslaw News.

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