

District from 1A

According to his report, the elementary and middle schools can be improved with adaptations. The high school has many more issues.

Pivot recommends the board seriously consider completely replacing the existing building.

Wilson and the team at Pivot have developed details to facilitate the implementation of the two possible routes necessary to make sure the schools are safe and modern.

His presentation also showed the mechanical and technological considerations that were identified as part of the assessment process, and that would need to be incorporated into any upgrades undertaken by the district. These include the use of propane, updating

inadequate kitchen facilities and conducting overdue structural reinforcement.

Wilson has made presentations at previous board meetings, but this time his firm has come up with specific suggestions that will need to be evaluated by the board and eventually decided upon and implemented.

The December board meeting will be the next important step in the process.

“The board will be presented with recommendations for improvements to be included in the bond, including the requested bond amount and scope,” Wilson said. “The board will also be presented with comments from stakeholder discussions to help substantiate the recommendations, and they will be presented with construction cost estimates for the proposed improvements.”

Bond financing is a type

of long-term borrowing that state and local governments frequently use to raise money, primarily for long-lived infrastructure assets.

Municipalities often use bonds to finance major capital outlay projects such as educational facilities, prisons, parks, water projects and office buildings.

This is done mainly because these facilities provide services over many years and high costs can be difficult to pay for all at once.

Additionally, different generations of taxpayers benefit from the facilities, which provides a rationale for spreading the costs of infrastructure over time, as bond repayments allow state and municipalities to do.

Siuslaw School District’s next board meeting is Dec. 13 at 6:30 p.m. at the district office, 2111 Oak St.



COURTESY PHOTO

Library features Stella Ault watercolors

Artist Stella Ault paints whimsical watercolors, such as these chickens. Her work will be on display at the Siuslaw Public Library, 1460 Ninth St., in December. Ault’s work is also on permanent display at the Purple Pelican Antique Mall in the Florence Antiques District on Highway 101.

Drowning from 1A

LCSO later found the man deceased, towards the back of the overturned boat.

Bradford had apparently become entangled in rope and

other equipment and drowned.

The Lane County Medical Examiner will make a final ruling on Bradford’s cause of death.

SVFR and WLAD Chief Director Jim Langborg said,

“The members of SVFR and WLAD send their heartfelt sympathies to the family of the deceased man. We also want to remind everyone to always wear a personal flotation device when you are on a boat or near water.”

Housing from 1A

She said people who do this are often people who lived in the area before, and then didn’t have a place. Anything could be the cause — foreclosures, the sale of their rental unit, a change in income, eviction — but it led to temporary housing that could last for months.

“A lot of people are in that situation. It wouldn’t take a lot to get into that situation,” she said.

She added that it was sometimes worse for people with pets, since many rental properties will not allow dogs or cats, making it that much harder for a person to find a new rental. People who require more than two bedrooms often struggle as well.

According to Farley Campbell, Florence was “booming” a decade and more ago, from the population to city services, until the economic recession hit.

“What I find interesting, and what I think the census will show, is that we’re having this housing crunch now, but we have more housing now than we had when our population numbers were up back in 2006. Where were people living then? That’s kind of what I’m wondering. Maybe it’s a different composition of households now, I don’t know,” she said.

At the time, City of Florence had a full staff in its Planning Department, including four planners, a planning technician and inspectors.

“The planners were busy every minute of the day,” FarleyCampbell said. “Now, it’s just Glen (Southerland) and I. ... We were so busy — crazy busy — and nobody was screaming about needing housing back then. So I don’t know what the difference is. I’m curious. Maybe our numbers were off, and our population estimates were off.”

In 2008, Florence conducted a Housing Needs Assessment based on figures from the 2000 census, in which it concluded: “Based on an up-to-date, accurate accounting of Florence incomes and the price of homes and rental rates, the average wage earner in town cannot afford to purchase a home at the median home price offered today and there are not enough dwellings having the amenities and acceptable level of condition in the price range that he or she can afford.”

The report went on to say that by 2025 or 2030, there would be a projected need for housing units of all types, especially for owner-occupied single-family detached units and multi-family apartments for renters.

FarleyCampbell agreed with that, saying the shortage is reaching a critical point.

“The stock is not going to be around. Next year, if someone hasn’t come in and got a subdivision approved, there won’t be house construction going on, unless it’s just infill,” she said.

She said that one “fix” is for

accessory dwelling units, or detached spaces that can be installed on people’s property and then used for renters.

It would tackle the problem of some of the people currently living in tents, and allow for “mother-in-law cottages” and other uses.

“Coming July 1, those will be allowed in the state. I think we’ll see a shift in permitting for those,” she said.

Unfortunately, the 2008 study did not lead to city code or policy changes, especially as the Planning Department remained short staffed.

“Our residential codes are from the 1980s,” Farley Campbell said. “Our commercial code is more up to date, and all of our developmental codes. The city has done a tremendous amount of work in the last 10-15 years on updating its code, a huge amount of work — but right as the economic downturn happened in 2006 and 2007, we had to cut our staff that was working on updating our housing code. Our housing code didn’t get updated, so we do have sections that go against state law.”

The codes that did get updated were funded through grants and focused on commercial or coastal aspects of the city. These occurred mainly in 2010 and 2012.

“We haven’t done a long-range planning effort for housing since 2003-04 for the Buildable Lands Inventory and 2007 for our Housing and Needs Analysis, which just showed what we need,” FarleyCampbell said.

Now, the city is bringing attention back to housing in an effort to boost the economy. A new city committee, the Housing & Economic Opportunities Project (HEOP), was formed in April to work on housing and jobs equally. It is set to have a final meeting in December so consultants from FCS Group can relay recommendations.

The project’s tasks include inventorying Florence’s buildable lands, identifying needed housing types and methods to encourage developers to build them, and determining cost effective economic development opportunities. The results of these studies could result in code and zone changes, public-private partnerships and implementation of strategies to support housing and economic growth.

“The code efforts should take place this spring,” FarleyCampbell said. “That’s the plan. The consultants should be finishing up their work in December/January, and then giving us our marching orders, or the will of the council will say what to work on first. I know accessory dwelling units is really high on our list to make sure that we’re ready for the roll-out July 1, or whenever someone can come in and start building them. We just want to make sure we’re protecting our neighborhoods for the most efficient use, and protecting people’s privacy.”

City code will need to be updated to accommodate future growth and allow for infill — higher density of residents, such as “plexes” or apartments for multi-family dwellings. Some of the required changes will involve rezoning areas in the city to allow for multi-family or mixed-use commercial and residential.

“With our current codes, we still allow a lot of stuff, and I can get to ‘yes’ with developers if they want to do something. They just may not like the path they have to do, which right now is a planned unit development. That’s what the state law says — you can’t make it this hard to do certain things. It needs to be allowed outright, and that’s what we need to change,” FarleyCampbell said.

At the HEOP work session on Oct. 10, FCS consultant Todd Chase spoke about preliminary findings of the group’s buildable lands inventory and housing needs analysis.

“In discussions with some of the property managers in Florence and some of the multi-family unit developers we talked to, they mentioned there’s very low vacancy rates and even a waiting list on some of the better units. That plays into our pent-up demand forecast,” he said.

He projected that by 2035, 1,218 housing units would be needed to accommodate current needs and a moderate population growth.

“Your current population is about 10,500 people within the urban growth boundary (UGB). At a moderate growth rate, it will go up to 12,500 in 2035. It’s not a significant change, but it is a healthy and sustainable change for the community,” Chase said.

He said the current demand for workforce housing is estimated at 100 needed units.

“Really, you could accommodate about 1,480 rental housing units over the next 20 years, and should plan to within your UGB,” he said.

FarleyCampbell said Florence is poised for some of that growth now — but there is a catch.

“You can talk with the contractors, but they can’t employ,” she said. “There’s no one here local to work. It’s a catch-22 as people can’t afford to live here now. ... That’s where we’re at with HEOP. Which cart comes first? Do you build the housing, or is it employment?”

Chase said the market will require additional housing near the town center and closer to transit, especially as the people who move to Florence for jobs seek workforce housing. The trend will be more for townhouses and apartments — affordable housing for young families.

“We found that the city is growing a little slower than it used to grow, which is more sustainable, probably. You’re still issuing 20-30 permits a year at the city. It’s still measurable, but it’s definitely more of an even pace than it used to be,” Chase said. “And you

could do more.”

FarleyCampbell said the city has seen some housing growth in recent years as people work on subdivision development projects and finish current construction. Many of these, however, will be for sale, rather than rent, and range from \$280,000 at the low end to \$500,000.

“Those are going to get some people out of the other subdivisions into housing within their means, and then make that affordable housing more available for people in that category,” she said.

As it stands, there is a mismatch in Florence between households of certain incomes and rental housing for their price range. Housing should only cost 30 percent of a family’s income.

Oregon Housing and Community Services released a report that showed that in 2015, there were not enough housing options for each income bracket

in Florence. This caused the households with the highest incomes to rent or buy units easily within their means while lower household incomes struggled to find homes in their income bracket, often renting beyond their means.

“Lane County is among the few areas in Oregon west of the Cascades that is in this situation. We have 31 to 38 percent of our renters that are paying more than 50 percent of their income for rent,” FarleyCampbell said. “There are a lot of outlying, rural areas where there are low paying jobs and high rent because of the lack of housing.”

HEOP next meets Tuesday, Dec. 5, from 2 to 4 p.m. at Florence Events Center, 715 Quince St.

There, the FCS Group will detail the policies the City of Florence can implement in order to achieve the goals the community has set forth, especially in regard to code and pol-

icy changes.

“This is an opportunity with some fresh staff and fresh perspectives in the community to rethink and reposition Florence for the types of growth you want to accommodate,” Chase said. “One of the things we are considering as part of this project, especially since the survey occurred, is the need for techniques and tools to encourage more affordable housing.”

City Manager Erin Reynolds said, “This is an important project to us. Housing and the economy are two very important topics to the City of Florence. It touches on all of the Florence City Council goals and many items on the work plan as we complete planning for the future operation of our city.”

Editor’s Note: Our series will continue next Wednesday, Nov. 29, with a look at the challenges faced by real estate agents and property managers, and the potential options within the Siuslaw region.

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