

Port from 1A

This led to a greater discussion as to the role of the port in the overall direction of Old Town and the City of Florence. Some members of the public stated the port had become bogged down, focusing strictly on moorage and its campground. The port was missing opportunities to expand into greater commercial and tourist ventures. Beer and wine tasting came up multiple times in the meeting as a possible entry-way into that arena. City of Florence Public Arts Committee member Harlen Springer stated that multiple parties in Florence have been attempting to bring a craft brewery to the area, but had little success for various reasons. "There's a small group of people who are trying to get this done," he said. "You need to get with them and say, 'We will take the lead on this as a port.' You could find a space for a winery down here. That would be a major coup for everybody." Pat Sapp, who runs the Vintage Blue Warehouse Estate Sales on port property, said she had thought about having a

microbrewery in the building. Sapp leases the building from the port. One of the reasons her brewery plan didn't come to fruition was that the lease restricted her activities to estate sales only. "Changes can be made," Commissioner Nancy Rickard said about the lease. "We are up for discussion with a new lease for you," Duman added. "I'm glad you came tonight, it's good to have you as a tenant." One of the overriding sentiments during the meeting was the need for the port to work with other public entities. Siuslaw Watershed Council member Megan Gerber thanked Rickard for always attending the council's meetings, and said she could foresee the port working more closely with the council. She recommended the two entities could partner on noxious weed control, and also work toward greater collaboration on tourism prospects like kayak trips. Working with the City of Florence was frequently brought up, with the hope that the port would work hand in hand with the city in building a broader economic vision for the community. Ideas included hotels on the waterfront,

interactive museums on the past, building a visitor center extension on port property and fostering recreational activities, such as a fishing dock and upriver boating excursions. The two storage facilities located on the port campground were also discussed. While the commission stated the buildings have a lot of life left to them, the sparrow population that has moved into the facility is creating problems for the renters. "I rented space in there for a number of years," Commissioner Bill Meyer said. "But the droppings from the sparrows can ruin a boat. I had to pull it out of there." While one member of the public suggested upgrading the buildings to accommodate more storage and discourage the sparrows from coming back, another member of the public said it may be an economic boon for the port to tear the buildings down altogether. National Forest Service campground manager Larry Ferguson, whose last duty station was around the McKenzie River area, felt that the space would be better used for RV pull through sites or a

place to store a boat overnight. "There are 30 sites at \$38 dollars a day," he said. "That's \$1,000 a day in revenue that we're passing up." But ultimately, Ferguson wondered if the port should even be in the business of running a campground. Instead, the port could privatize the facility, as many National Forest Service sites already do. "You eliminate the need for in-house people that really don't know anything about a campground," he said. While the port would hold oversight of the private company and take in fees, it could ultimately save money by eliminating the need for constant upkeep and upgrades, as those responsibilities would fall to the private company. The overwhelming feeling of the evening was that of support for the Port of Siuslaw. Longtime moorage resident Michelle Culwell wanted to see a sign at the entrance of port property, an idea that had been suggested earlier in the month by McClure. "I want the port to get credit for the good that it's done," Culwell said. It was suggested that the artwork

located near the boardwalk be a place for the sign. Springer gave the history of that piece of art, "Florence Scenic Column" by Kat Cunningham, in relation to public art in the area. "When we came down here three or four years ago, we just wanted to put up some art," he said. "We came to the port, and the port said it would give you the space. Whatever happens with public art in the community started right here. And I want to acknowledge that. The first piece of public art started here." At the end of the night, the commission thanked the audience for giving their support to the port, and giving helpful suggestions. "You've got some great ideas, but you also need to come back and help us," Commissioner Mike Buckwald said. "There's only five of us on our staff. We're going to need people with the energy and the foresight to help move forward and accomplish these things." Duman added, "Come to every meeting." The Port of Siuslaw's next public input meeting will be held on Wednesday, Jan. 6.

Ambulance from 1A

address an unusual issue that had surfaced earlier in the month. Langborg detailed an incident the SVFR had involving a complaint made to the Florence Police Department. The complaint, suggesting that fiscal improprieties were taking place at WLAD, was made anonymously. Langborg was adamant in his response to the complaint, stating that there was no basis for the concern. He cited recent reports from outside audits. "I advised (Florence Police) Chief Turner that both WLAD and SVFR are in the process of our annual audits and onsite reviews of our administrative processes. Our finance practices were recently completed. During the on-site portion of the audit process, I spoke with the auditors and

have not been informed of any detected findings or suspicion of fraud, theft or misappropriation of funds," Langborg said. "I also advised Turner that the two consultants who visited our districts to conduct the reviews did not report any findings of illegal, unethical or inappropriate practices." Langborg continued his defense of the departments by announcing the hiring of a new employee. This will assist in clarifying and eventually eliminating the confusion surrounding the accounting practices for both districts. "I am bringing in a very experienced interim administrator with a strong background in government finance and administration to serve as our interim office manager," Langborg said. "Another consultant will be here to review our payroll in more

detail, to ensure we have not missed anything and to verify the accuracy of our payroll calculations." The chief then introduced Interim Manager Ross Schultz to the board. Schultz made a short presentation, noting for the record he had only been onsite for two days and had made a perfunctory examination of the records. This examination has turned up no irregularities. Langborg went on to emphasize to the board that these steps were not being taken because he felt there was any illegal or unethical conduct, but as a way of validating the districts' accounting and payroll procedures. "I have requested that our auditor prepare a written statement that indicates they have not detected any illegal activity during this year's audit in either organization," he said.

Langborg then went on to acknowledge problems that have been brought to his attention and stressed the proactive approach he has taken to eliminate any further issues of this type. "I have mandated our management team to have a new time keeping process in place by Jan. 1. Our current system is problematic and adds to the probability of payroll errors. This is an obvious and easy fix for some of our errors, and you will be hearing more about this in the weeks to come," Langborg said. The board had few questions for Langborg, noting his willingness to address issues and problems as they arose. The directors also applauded his willingness to institute any changes that would improve district procedures.

Sea lions from 1A

Rice continued, "I don't think it's necessarily a concern that the Stellar sea lions are going to suddenly get sick with it. It's been in the California sea lion population for decades. It's nothing new. It's just a recurring disease process that happens every few years." The general window for the outbreaks is between September and December, and Rice has seen a decline in reported cases in the past two weeks. "We haven't had nearly as many reports than we have had in the previous eight to 10 weeks," Rice said. "Part of that might be the weather is getting rainier on the beaches, and there may be animals that aren't being reported because people aren't seeing them." "But I also suspect that as time goes on, this disease process does run its course. And those animals that have become ill will pass. And those that are able to fight it off will most likely be able to make it through the season." For those concerned about the disease spreading to pets, Rice encouraged vaccinations. "I've talked to my own veterinarian about it and others, and they support vaccinations for dogs," he said. "I've had my own dog vaccinated. I think it's a good idea in general." But the best way to prevent the spread of leptospirosis to pets is to

just stay away from the sea lions all together. "If you see a sea lion on the beach, just use common sense," Rice said. "Just keep your dog on a leash and away from the lions. These animals can spread other diseases as well. Leptospirosis is just one thing that they potentially have, just like all wildlife. You wouldn't want your dog playing with a raccoon." The disease is spread through direct contact of urine or other bodily fluids. "Unless a dog gets up close to an alive, dead or affected sea lion and ingests some of its urine, it's not likely to get infected," Rice said. Not only is it safer to stay away from the sea lions to prevent disease, Rice believed, it's better for the sea lions as well. "When you see a sea lion on the beach, if it's alive, it's often there because it wants to get out of the water and get some rest," Rice said. "Its body is telling it to take some time away from the water. And we need to respect that. We need to give them a chance to recover their strength when they get on shore. And if people are constantly coming up to them and approaching them, it's just going to stress them out and make their job just that more difficult." Anyone who observes a sick sea lion should stay at least 50 feet away from the animal and call Oregon State police dispatchers at 1-800-452-7888.

Squad from 1A

"The Nerd Squad has gone through a variety of activities and interests over the years," Mielke said. "This includes the making of a movie, 'Robotapocalypse,' in 2015, which was written, directed, acted and edited entirely by the Nerd Squad."

He said that students envisioned an apocalyptic scenario at Siuslaw Middle School, where rogue robots attacked until student heroes defeated them with science. "Another common staple throughout the years is the filming of our morning announcements, where students present a newscast announcing that day's events," Mielke said. Marohl has fairly high expect-

tations for the school district's teams, and thinks the experience gained by the students is valuable. "My expectations for the Lego Robotics tournament is to provide a fun and competitive experience for our students," he said. Siuslaw is sending three teams to the Lego tournament this year. Each team will compete three times at the

Challenge table. "The teams' Core Values presentation will demonstrate how they are a team; how they work to find solutions with guidance from adults; that they learn together; they honor the spirit of friendly competition; how it's more import to discover and learn than it is to win and that the shared experience is quite valuable," Marohl said.

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