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HAPPY NEW YEAR

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SERVING WESTERN LANE COUNTY SINCE 1890

FLORENCE, OREGON

Florence City Hall to begin remodel in January

Updates include renovations to basement, ground floor and addition of council chamber

BY CHANTELE MEYER
Siuslaw News



COURTESY IMAGES
Above, HGE Inc. architects' rendering of the remodeled Florence City Hall building, though not the final colors. Right, Florence City Hall circa 1967.



emization except the bare necessities," said Florence Project Manager Megan Messmer.

The assessment made clear that the existing floor plan is inefficient and needs to be reconfigured to accommodate city staff.

"Per that assessment, the recommendation was to remodel the current structure, rather than build new somewhere else," Messmer said. "It was their conclusion that the current site of City Hall has sufficient size and could meet the estimated staffing and space requirements for a population increase of double or more our current size, if remodeled and with an addition added to the west."

According to the staff report, the cost per square foot for the remodel project is \$260 for the remodel of 9,100 square feet of the existing building and a 2,400-square-foot expansion, totaling 11,500 square feet. The total project should cost less than half of what it would cost to build a new city hall, which would require additional staff time, site analysis, a possible bond measure and take up to 18 months to construct.

See CITY HALL 8A

KXCR welcomes new board, station manager

KXCR, Florence's nonprofit community radio station, is in the process of expanding the opportunities for area residents to participate in the programming and technical production at the station. The station is approaching its fourth anniversary and is reaching out to the community to help keep the station on the air and connected to the listeners it serves.

Maggie Bagon has been involved at KXCR since its inception. She is currently a board member and host of a weekly Bluegrass show, "Montana Maggie."

Bagon is hopeful that recent additions to the board, and a more people-friendly attitude at the station, will translate into wider participation by local residents in the station's day to day operations.

"I am really excited that we have a new, more diverse board," Bagon said.

KXCR's board of directors now has four women.

"I think having a more inclusive board is a good thing. We've added new board members that are vibrant and have the time, the energy and the interest in growing community radio," Bagon said.

See RADIO 6A

Downtown Revitalization Team promotes Florence

Community invited to Small Business Revolution reception Jan. 3 at Florence Events Center

BY CHANTELE MEYER
Siuslaw News

The City of Florence may be featured on season three of Small Business Revolution's "Main Street" TV series. In order to increase Florence's chances beyond the top 10, the Downtown Revitalization Team (DRT) held a showing Thursday night at City Lights Cinemas, where people were encouraged to ask questions. DRT Chairwoman Ellen Huntingdon introduced the series to the nearly full Theater Four at City Lights.

"I was blown away by the energy and enthusiasm that I saw," Huntingdon said. "I did not expect a packed theater, and I am truly moved by the dedication of this

community."

DRT invited the public to attend the informational meeting one week before Small Business Revolution conducts a site visit next week. City Lights played two episodes of the web series, which is available to stream on Hulu.

"It was a very exciting event, and inspiring for me to see how far the word has spread and how energized our local community members and business owners are," Huntingdon said. "Last night I saw a packed theatre filled with local leaders eager to take their business to the next level. That hope and desire is a very powerful thing, and this is what could boost us into the top five."

Early in the selection process, local businesses were encouraged

to fill out a short survey about their business and Florence. Now, everyone in the community is invited to engage in a social media campaign to boost awareness of all that Florence has to offer.

"Get on any social media account and share what you love about working, living or owning a business in Florence, with the hashtag #MyFlorence and tagging @smallbizrev," Huntingdon said. "You just need to talk about the town you love."

During the site visit starting Jan. 3, representatives from the Deluxe Corporation and Small Business Revolution will tour Florence and interact with potential businesses.

Huntingdon said, "The main event to participate in will be the

welcome reception for Deluxe next Wednesday. The goal of this reception is to gather the town together so they can get a feel for the community. Since they are only here for a very short time with a packed schedule, they've found that these town gatherings are the most helpful portion of their visits to show them who we are."

The reception will be from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Florence Events Center, 715 Quince St. All are welcome to attend.

In addition, DRT is asking Florence business owners to be open and in their place of business during Deluxe's tour of Florence on Thursday, Jan. 4.

See MAIN STREET 6A

Western Lane board accepts resignation, questions overtime

Western Lane Ambulance District (WLAD), held its December board meeting at noon on Thursday at Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue (SVFR) Station No. 1.

All currently seated directors and a small group of EMTs attended the meeting. There were no members of the public in attendance.

The meeting began with Western Lane Administrative Assistant Karin Guy making a short statement sharing her appreciation for the work done by the district and the EMTs she works with at the office and in the field.

Guy then unexpectedly tendered her resignation, providing no details as to the reason or motivation. Guy is the second administrative employee of the SVFR or WLAD to resign in the past two months.

Reports from Chief Director Jim Langborg, who provides administrative oversight to both SVFR and WLAD, followed and

See DISTRICT 8A

OREGON RAISES AGE TO 21 FOR NICOTINE PRODUCTS JAN. 1

Local tobacco retailers have already seen the impact of the change, which took place in Lane County earlier this year

BY JARED ANDERSON
Siuslaw News

The legal age for tobacco products and inhalant delivery systems will be raised in the State of Oregon from 18 to 21 on Jan. 1, becoming only the fifth state to do so, along with California, Hawaii, Maine and New Jersey.

Tobacco is one of the biggest public health threats facing the world, according to the World Health Organization. It kills more than 7 million people per year, with 6 million of those deaths resulting in direct tobacco use. Each year,

890,000 people die as a result of non-smokers being exposed to secondhand smoke.

By raising the age to 21, tobacco use as a whole is expected to decline by 12 percent in the U.S. and prevent 223,000 deaths, according to a report by the Institute of Medicine.

The report stated that nearly 90 percent of smokers reported having tried a cigarette before the age of 19, and nearly all before the age of 26.

While the public health benefits of raising the minimum age are well documented, many Oregon retailers are bracing for a possible economic downturn due to the new law, but

Florence retailers aren't worried. In fact, they've already been restricting tobacco use to 21 and over throughout the year. In April, Lane County raised the legal age to 21.

"We haven't had any negative things come out of it," said Anthony Kimme, manager of the Mini-Pet Mart in Florence. "No fallout. I'm still ordering \$30,000 worth of cigarettes once a week. It hasn't affected my sales as much as people previously thought prior to the law."

One of the reasons for the soft decline in sales is there aren't too many people between the ages of 18 and 21 in Florence, Kimme noted.

"Obviously, there are younger people coming in here as well," he said. "But not much is going to change, being a community with so many people that are over the age of 50."

Another reason that Kimme isn't seeing a flood of complaints comes from national statistics. Teenage smoking has fallen drastically in the past few decades. In 1997, 25 percent of 12th graders smoked. In 2015, the rate dropped to six percent. And the rates continue to drop.

If there are complaints that Kimme sees, it's from the 20-year-old age group.

"I've had a few issues with people who say, 'So, I've been buying cigarettes for two years, and now I can't?' Well, the law changed. You have to abide by the law, otherwise you lose your license to sell," he said.

If there is one nicotine product that has seen negative impacts from the law, it's with electronic cigarettes, also called e-cigarettes. These are battery-operated devices that create a nicotine-infused vapor that is inhaled. The process is commonly referred to as "vaping."

See NICOTINE 8A