

PORT FIRES STEVEN LESKIN 'WITH CAUSE'

The Port of Siuslaw commission unanimously voted to terminate the employment of Port Manager Steven Leskin with cause. The decision comes after allegations of insubordination and inappropriate behavior, followed by a three-month paid administrative leave due to an investigation over a sexual harassment claim.

In a statement regarding the dismissal, Port Attorney Jim Brewer stated, "The port has a policy not to discuss personnel matters, but it is fair to say that the port was unable to substantiate the sexual harassment complaint."

FLORENCE BECOMES COAST GUARD CITY

The City of Florence officially became the 24th American Coast Guard City on Aug. 16 in a ceremony at Florence Events Center.

"This is a really exciting day for the City of Florence," Florence Mayor Joe Henry said. "I'm very proud and humbled by all the attention we've gotten and the support of our local Coast Guard station, not just for this recognition but for the things they do on our river and miles of coastline."

U.S. Coast Guard 13th District Commander Rear Admiral David Throop was the presiding official and dedicated Florence as the 24th Coast Guard City.

THREE RIVERS TERMINATES TOP MANAGEMENT

Three top employees of Three Rivers Casino Resort were fired on Wednesday, Aug. 9, including casino Chief Operating Officer Michael Rose, Assistant General Manager Bob Garcia and Chief Finance Officer Jim Herman. The decision was made by the Tribal Council of the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians.

"The Tribal Council earlier this summer determined it was time to change the management team," a statement from the Tribal Council read. "The change in direction, however, is in no way associated with any security matter."

Jerry West will take over as CEO.

SPECIAL 3-PART SERIES: ARE THE KIDS STILL ALRIGHT? EXAMINING TEEN ALCOHOL USE IN FLORENCE

The community is taking part in the Healthy Directions initiative — an area prevention and health promotion coalition that was formed through Lane County Public Health.

The goal of Healthy Directions is to bring about awareness of, and attempt to lower, teen alcohol use in the Siuslaw region.

FRIENDS OF THE FEC RECEIVES \$30,800 GRANT

Oregon Cultural Trust announced this week that Friends of the Florence Events Center (FEC) received a Cultural Development Capacity Grant totaling \$30,800. The facility will get new LED stage lighting and an upgraded sound system.

MAYOR REBECCA RUEDE PASSES AWAY

Dunes City is in mourning as Mayor Rebecca "Becky" Robinson Ruede passed away on Aug. 17 after losing a year-long battle with cancer. She was 61.

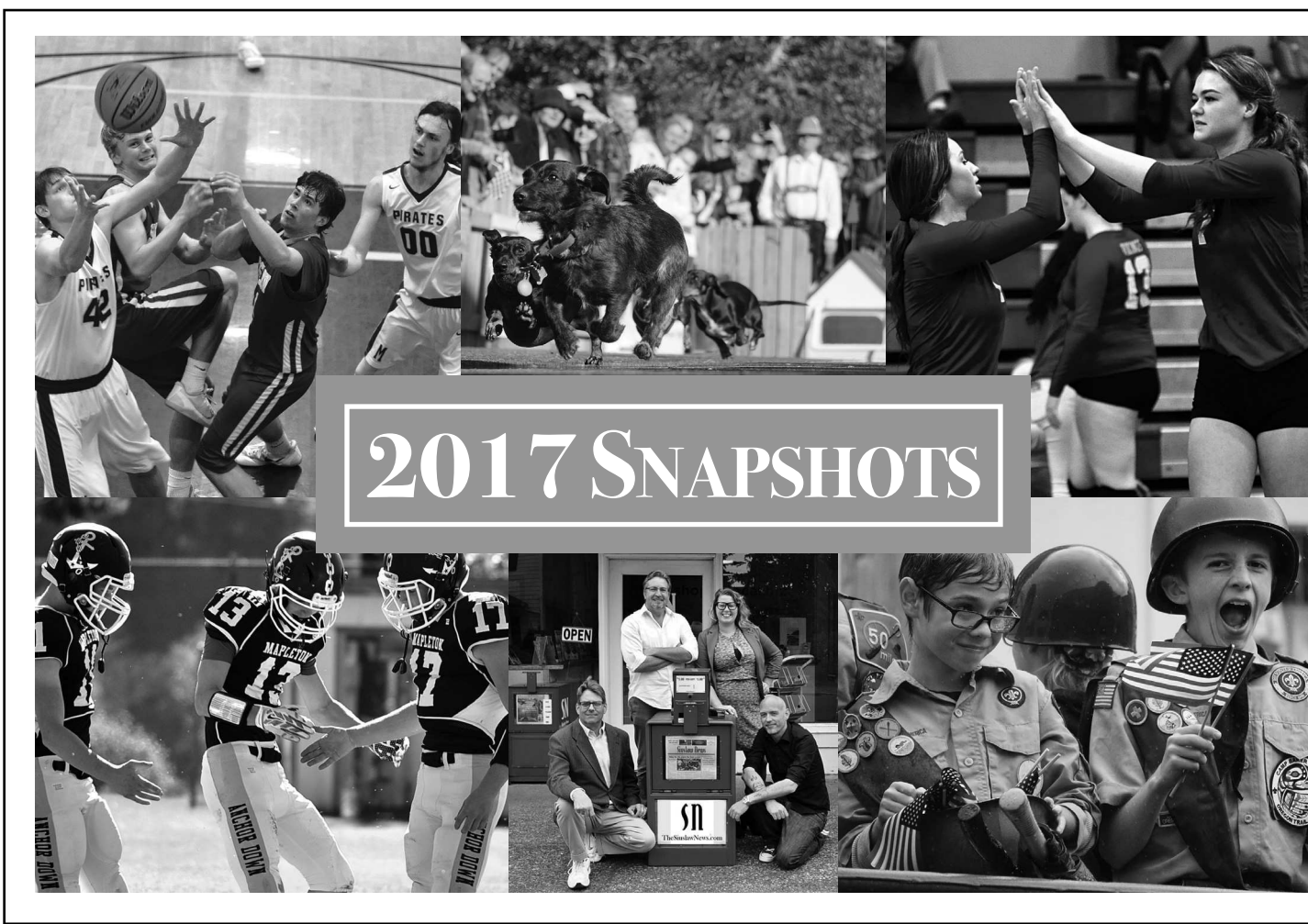
A tribute from Dunes City read; "Becky's compassion for mankind, her level head and her kind heart made her a perfect mayor for our city during a time when healing was necessary and strong leadership a must. Her presence will be greatly missed as the city faces the new challenges presented to it every day."

On Aug. 25, Dunes City Council appointed Councilor Bob Forsythe as mayor.

SEPTEMBER**SUMMER REMODELS FOR MAPLETON ELEMENTARY**

Mapleton Elementary School went through a cornucopia of remodeling projects, including updates to the classrooms, the gym, bathrooms and the outside grounds.

Mapleton School District, which obtained more than \$10 million in funding through bonds and grants, has also undergone a slew of safety changes

**2017 SNAPSHOTS**

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including asbestos removal and drastic improvements in water lead levels.

"I like this place because it's new and it's not as old. It's much better than our old school," said third-grader Lucie Burrus.

SPECIAL 3-PART SERIES: A DREAM THAT WON'T BE DEFERRED

After President Donald Trump ordered a six month phase out of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) on Sept. 5, America — and Florence — has been grappling with the issues that surround Dreamers, those who were brought here illegally when they were children, and illegal immigration as a whole.

Much of the debate has been centered around the need for border security, and the role immigrants play in the American workforce.

DUNES CITY VOTES TO BAN FUTURE MARIJUANA GROWS, KEEP EXISTING ONES

On Sept 13, Dunes City Council voted unanimously to temporarily ban any future medical grow sites in the city, but allow existing grow operations to remain. Ordinance 245, originally proposed in August, would have banned all processing sites, producers, dispensaries, processors and wholesalers from opening within city limits, including those facilities which are currently being built.

PEACEHEALTH ANNOUNCES LEADERSHIP CHANGE

PeaceHealth Florence has announced the hiring of a new Chief Administrative Officer for Peace Harbor Medical Center.

Jason Hawkins will take over for current CAO Rick Yecny on Oct. 30.

COOS BAY RAIL LINK HONORS MAPLETON SCHOOLS WITH CUSTOM TRAIN

Students and faculty from Mapleton School District gathered with representatives from the Coos Bay Rail (CBR) for a special dedication. Students arrived to find a full-sized train engine parked next to the recently painted CBR utility shed that now welcomes visitors to Mapleton and proudly proclaims the town as "Home of the Sailors."

CBR representatives revealed the latest addition to Mapleton's proclamation of Sailor pride — an engine adorned with the Sailors' logo, which will run between Coquille and Eugene.

CITY WORKS TO BRING 'HOPE FOR HOUSING'

From August to mid-September, the City of Florence and its new Housing and Economic Opportunities Project (HEOP) ran a survey asking residents for input on housing needs in the community. Questions ranged from home ownership costs, rental rates and development expenses — all tied in with current city code regarding the permitting process and building codes.

Planning Director Wendy FarleyCampbell presented on "Hope for Housing" at the Florence Area Chamber of Commerce.

"Rent is too high, and home

payments are too high," she said. "When people cannot afford to live where they work, the entire community suffers."

OCTOBER**SPECIAL 3-PART SERIES: MILLENNIALS IN SIUSLAW**

Millennials are typically defined as adults between the ages of 18 to 35, with technological advancements and poverty from the Great Recession of 2009 defining their career choices.

Millennials aren't the first thing that come to mind when the Siuslaw region is discussed. With a median age of 57, Florence is the Oregon coast's "retirement community."

Because of that, the millennial population in the region is often ignored. While they own businesses, volunteer in the community and form a major part of the workforce, they're somewhat silent in community leadership positions.

MOMENTUM CONTINUES WITH RAIN, DEVELOPMENT

Florence continues with its "City in Motion" theme this October, with increased programs from Regional Accelerator and Innovation Network (RAIN), continued success with economic development partnerships and even the sale of two commercial lots of land in the Pacific View Business Park.

"The City of Florence is thrilled that our town has become a place of year-round entrepreneurial activity and enthusiasm," said Florence City Manager Erin Reynolds. "Our rural coastal region is now connected with resources more commonly found in metro areas that are essential to any startup business."

SPECIAL TWO-PART SERIES: BEYOND LABELS

With no visibly active community centers or major organizations in the community except for PFLAG, a high school gay/straight alliance and small groups of meetups with friends, it seems that the old battle cry has come to fruition; LGBTQ is here, they're queer and people have pretty much gotten used to it. An in-depth look into the area's LGBTQ community and its many facets.

OCHS INSPECTION SHOWS NO ABUSE OR NEGLECT

The ongoing controversy surrounding the Oregon Coast Humane Society has advanced significantly, with two important new developments happening this month.

An on-site inspection conducted by Florence Code Enforcement Officer Dan Frazier on Oct. 6 found no signs of animal abuse or neglect at the Oregon Coast Humane Society.

The inspection was prompted by an Oregon Department of Justice inquiry generated at the Portland office of the DOJ.

PORT LOOKS TO PUBLIC TO PLAN FUTURE

It's time to reach out to the community to move forward in planning the future, Port of Siuslaw Commissioners concluded during their Oct. 18, public meeting.

"I think it's time to bring the public in and get some ideas. I

believe there are a lot of people in the community, within this district, that have good ideas that we can listen to," Port Commissioner Mike Buckwald said.

NEW RECYCLING RULES

Residents of Florence are in the process of adjusting to major changes in the rules and materials that can be recycled in curbside pick-up, and most seem to be responding well to these changes.

New rules have been adopted by waste haulers in town that prohibit consumers from putting any kind of plastic in their recycling and by reducing the materials that the companies will accept from consumers. Lane County has also announced that the only plastic that will be accepted at county landfill sites and at transfer locations, including Florence, will be clear plastic milk jugs.

DUNES CITY'S MARIJUANA DEBATE RAISES QUESTIONS OF THE CITY'S FUTURE

As Dunes City Councilors sat in a special work session on Oct. 17 to discuss the future of current marijuana grow operations in the city, newly appointed Mayor Robert Forsythe posed a question to the council.

"I think the question is, do we want to act like a city, do we want to become a county again or 'Florence south?'" he asked

Through a complex combination of vague laws, coupled with an inability to reasonably enforce them, slim city coffers and miscommunication between city officials, the recent marijuana debate made the city's problems starkly clear.

NOVEMBER**FOOD SHARE IN CRISIS**

"We are strapped for cash," Florence Food Share Executive Director Norma Barton said in reference to the current fiscal health of the 37-year-old program.

Food share's financial concerns come from a variety of problems, from unexpected changes and reduction in corporate donations of food, to a sizeable decline in general cash donations from the public this year. It found itself faced with an uphill battle, trying to figure out how it can provide Thanksgiving dinners to the public, keep the lights on, pay its employees and continue to provide full pantries for the coming years.

COMMUNITY RALLIES AROUND FOOD SHARE

New corporate programs and a slew of donations help the local program

After Florence Food Share's financial difficulties were brought to light last week following a dearth of cash donations and changing corporate sponsorships, the nonprofit has seen a rash of donations and support from local corporations.

"Since then, people have stepped up and the donations have been pouring in all week," Florence Food Share Executive Director Norma Barton said. "Thank you, Florence community."

VOTERS PASS LOCAL OPTION LEVY BY WIDE MARGIN

Florence voters had only one ballot measure to consider in the

special election — the renewal of a local option levy for the Siuslaw School District, Measure 20-281.

The funds generated by the passage of 20-281 will provide the money needed to fill in the fiscal gaps in a number of district programs.

SPECIAL 10-WEEK SERIES: IS COASTAL LIVING IN JEOPARDY?

While Social Security is supposed to help sustain shelter and basic necessities for the elderly, people in several age demographics are finding themselves driven to sell donated items of clothing or panhandle just to pay the utility bills.

These are symptoms that many, including city officials, private business owners and nonprofit organizations in the Siuslaw region, are calling a housing and employment crisis; it crosses all ages and socioeconomic barriers and impacts residents of the region in different ways.

LEAVING A LEGACY TO BE PROUD OF

Wesley Voth, long-time correspondent/columnist for Siuslaw News, died suddenly and left a permanent void in the fields and woods and alongside the beautiful river that served as the church and classroom for a son of the natural world.

SVFR SENDS HISTORIC 'STRIKEFORCE 1'

Firefighters Tony Miller and Kyle Orozco presented a short video and report to the Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue Board of Directors. The two men, along with firefighter Blair Campbell, were part of the first-ever SVFR deployments to California.

The group from Florence, Strikeforce 1, was part of a contingent of firefighters and equipment sent from around the state to assist with suppression efforts in northern California.

18TH ANNUAL POUNDING BRINGS IN RECORD HAUL

Hundreds of area residents help fill the pantry of Florence Food Share before the holidays

The 18th Annual Pounding broke records this past Saturday as Siuslaw area residents donated 13,088 pounds to be given to Florence Food Share. The event broke the all-time record by almost 2,000 pounds, set last year.

"I couldn't be happier," said Florence Food Share Executive Director Norma Barton. "We are incredibly grateful to this amazing community."

JASON HAWKINS TRANSITIONS INTO LEAD ROLE

PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Medical Center (PHPH) of Florence has installed a new Chief Administrative Officer. Jason Hawkins recently arrived in town to take over leadership of the organization, as current CAO Rick Yecny retires.

"We can't accomplish our mission just within the four walls of this hospital," Hawkins said

SUSAN SNOW APPROVED AS DUNES CITY COUNCILOR

In a special session of the Dunes City Council, the council voted unanimously to appoint Dunes City resident Susan Snow as the new city councilor.

Councilor Duke Wells said, "I liked Susan Snow because her résumé was very impressive. ... I think a fresh perception of what's going on in Dunes City is a good thing. That was the main reason why I chose her."

DECEMBER**PUBLIC SHOWS SUPPORT FOR THE PORT OF SIUSLAW**

Public support for the Port of Siuslaw was in full display as commissioners and staff opened their doors to the community, asking for suggestions on how the port should shape its future in a public input meeting.

The public suggestions covered a wide variety of topics, including the port's campground, the marina, housing, tourism and working together with other local agencies.

UPRIVER COMMUNITY PLANS FUTURE OF HEALTHCARE

The lack of medical or mental healthcare contributes to many of the problems the Upriver area has, including behavioral health issues, poverty, geographic isolation and a lack of preventative care. These issues were discussed at a town hall discussing the Western Lane Behavioral Health Network.

The meeting's purpose was to get feedback on the problems facing the community, via the lens of healthcare, in hopes to build a blueprint on how to improve the lives of Upriver residents.

FIREFIGHTERS RETURN TO ASSIST WITH WILDFIRES

Once again, firefighters from Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue have left the district to assist in the wildfire emergencies in California.

A total of seven firefighters, including Kyle Orozco, Captain Jeff Larson and Colton Griswald in a Type-5 brush-fire vehicle, and with Shannon Curry, Levi Green, Captain Andy Gray and P.J. Crescioni in a Type-1 engine assisted with structural protection.

SVFR Chief Director Jim Langborg said, "This is an opportunity for some of our firefighters to get experience they may never get again."

CREWS COMPLETE MOVE- IN TO NEW FACILITY

Florence Public Works will be entirely moved in to its new Public Works Operations Facility at 2675 Kingwood St. this month. The 2.75-acre lot now houses a 5,942 square-foot office building and a 7,754 square-foot maintenance building.

Public Works office staff and crew members all have workspace in the new office building, with room to spare.

'NET' GAIN FROM FCC DECISION UNCLEAR

Net neutrality is the principle that all data on the internet should be equally accessible and that internet regulators, such as governments or internet service providers (ISPs), should not be able to prioritize or degrade access to content. The loss of these precepts in effect entrusts the cable and wireless companies to adhere to net neutrality standards on a voluntary basis.

SIUSLAW VISION KEEPERS SUPPORT REGION'S PEOPLE

Siuslaw Vision 2025 held a public meeting at the Siuslaw Public Library to update community members on current projects and progress of the Vision Keepers.

The Vision works in six categories: jobs, health, learning, services, arts and recreation. It brings together input from a variety of community meetings and surveys.

DRT DRAWS FOCUS OF SMALL BUSINESS REVOLUTION

Florence's Downtown Revitalization Team (DRT) announced this month that the city is in the running to be featured in a web-based TV series that focuses on small businesses and a thriving main street. "Small Business Revolution — Main Street" may choose Florence after a site visit on Jan. 3.

Ellen Huntingdon has led the initiative from initial query.

"I think Florence spoke for itself," she said. "The more you learn about this town, the more you want to be involved."