

Democrats hold Campaign Kickoff today

The Florence Area Democratic Club and the Campaign to Re-elect State Rep. Caddy McKeown will be hosting a campaign kickoff to launch their door-knocking and phone-calling operation in Florence.

The Democrats knocked on almost 1,500 doors in Coos County in July, and are now setting out to talk to voters in Florence over the next few months.

The Democrats' strategy is to meet with voters face to face, or speak with them over the phone, in order to understand the issues that people really care about.

This grassroots-type effort takes time — but it's the best way to get voters engaged,

and the Florence Democrats are ready to get out there and start talking to voters.

Candidates and measures being supported by the Florence Area Democrats include Kate Brown for Governor, Peter DeFazio for U.S. House of Representatives, McKeown for State Representative and Maureen Miltenberger for Florence City Council, as well as gaining support for Siuslaw School District's school bond measure.

The kickoff will be held on Wednesday, Aug. 8.

Participants will have the option of either knocking on doors, making phone calls or just coming to listen and learn. It will begin at 3:30 p.m. with a short training.

Participants will then depart the office at 4 p.m. or stay to make phone calls.

The event will end at approximately 6 p.m.

Food and beverages will be provided.

The kickoff will be located at the Democratic Campaign Headquarters, 4969 Highway 101 Unit 4.

For more information, or to find out how to get involved, call 541-590-3114.

The Florence Area Democrats is an affiliate of the Lane County Democrats.

For more information, visit www.florenceareademocrats.org, call 541-590-3114 or email fadccemail@gmail.com.

Summer art continues on 2nd Saturday

The 2nd Saturday Art Gallery Tour is this Saturday, Aug. 11.

From 3 to 5 p.m. on the second Saturday of each month, participants can enjoy great local art, interactions with fellow patrons of the arts and artists, receptions, refreshments, live entertainment and community.

Enjoy the various types and styles of art at any of the 18 participating locations.

New to this month's tour is the Heffy's Gallery at 1856 37th St. Come by the gallery and the Florence Area Chamber of Commerce to see this unique wood art.

Stop off at Old Town Coffee & Gallery to enjoy some coffee and see Tamarah Philipps' lat-



COURTESY IMAGE

The "Spirit of Summer" continues at the Florence Events Center.

est drawing collection.

Also, Backstreet Gallery is featuring the art of Daphne John and Mike McIntyre.

Meanwhile, the Florence Events Center has the "Spirit

of Summer" exhibit on display until the end of August. Be sure to Vote for People's Choice and become a Patron of the Artists.

For more information, visit 2ndSaturdayGalleryTour.com.

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"One thing will do this time, which we did not do last time, will be a mandatory pre-bid meeting for contractors," Messmer said. "It's a chance for contractors who are interested in bidding to come, meet with us, the consultants and engineers and get more information on the project. At that point, they can ask questions and we can make sure all the bidders get those answers. It also provides them an opportunity to actually walk the area and see things in person

that they may have questions on."

The contractor meeting will be held on Oct. 25.

"Construction would then begin in January and go through the end of September, which is just the typical ODOT construction season," Messmer said.

Through consultation with ODOT and project engineers, Messmer said the city was able to achieve "a win" for the future contractor.

"A lot of this is summertime work, so not being allowed to close lanes on Highway 101 was

a big hurdle, causing night work throughout the full project," she said. "We were able to appeal that decision through our maintenance side of ODOT, as opposed to the capital investment side. They have agreed to allow us to close one lane during the day for this project."

This means that from Monday through Thursday, the traffic plan will include lane closures of one lane at a time during the daytime hours, as well as during the night shift.

"ODOT is concerned about weekend traffic, so that lane closure would not be allowed Friday through Sunday," Messmer said.

By allowing some of the construction to continue throughout the day, "It takes out a lot of the risk of doing night work for the contractor," she added.

City Manager Erin Reynolds said, "More than anything, having consistency across the entire project time period for whatever they're doing — traffic control, management of closures, etc. — if they can do the same thing throughout the duration of the project, that buys down your cost. ...

"Plus, it is consistent for the

community. Once they get over the initial shock of the lane closure, then you just get more accustomed to it occurring."

The City of Florence is working to develop resources for a Business Toolbox to help community members adapt during the process. In addition, Florence Area Chamber of Commerce has plans to support businesses and the economy while construction continues.

In looking at the previous bids and numbers from the current construction season, Messmer said the agencies are hopeful that the new bids will come in around \$4 million.

"Murraysmith provided us with a midpoint estimate a couple weeks ago and we went through that to consider more options to reduce cost, which is where this list came from," she said. "We're using updated figures in our estimate, because there has been a lot of change between last season and this season, as well as a demand on construction."

The \$4 million estimated for construction also allows for a 10 percent buffer.

Engineers are working with ODOT to make sure the project estimates match.

Reynolds said, "Our goal is to keep it the total budget at \$7.4 million, which includes the design, engineering and all the work so far — the right of way acquisition, construction management costs and ODOT fees — as well as the actual cost of doing the work."

In the actual construction, the contractor will be laying framework for some items that will come in at the end of the project. This will include the decorative monuments at the "gateways to Old Town" on Quince Street and Highway 126 and Maple Street and Highway 101. The contractor will only be in charge of building the bases, not doing the actual construction of the arched monuments.

"Urban Renewal and the city can come in after the fact and do a separate contract to create those monuments," Messmer said. "That was one thing through the process and hearing from the contractors that they said was an issue. It's a very specialty work; it's artwork within a paving and street construction project. They aren't necessarily the contractors that would do that, normally. ... Removing those from an ODOT project will save us quite a bit of money and allow us to get better contractors who can do that specialized work."

Reynolds said the monuments were already designed, which would make it easier to bill the right person to create and install them.

The contractor will also be installing a conduit for the six separate utilities to "underground" their lines. This will include optical fiber, phone lines and electricity.

In general, ReVision will still provide an updated, narrower roadway on Highway 101, more pedestrian amenities and bet-

ter landscaping and storm water management. Some of the smaller things won't be as visible at first, though many will be included soon after the main construction ends.

"Our end product, for the most part, will be what we set out for, which will be the sidewalks, the underground utilities, new paving and the plazas," Reynolds said. "What you see is really what we want to be providing. There are other nuances and 'nice to haves' that we may have to forgo at this time, based on cost and budget."

That includes the removal of some of the landscaped bioswales that were added to balance the ones necessary for storm water management.

Mayor Joe Henry, a member of Urban Renewal, said he hoped ReVision will still look "beautiful like it shows in the brochure" and that the project will not exceed the \$7.4 million budget.

"That is our plan," Reynolds said. "If things change in the bidding process and we have to go back with costs, that is a potential, but it is not what we're aiming for. ... We're doing everything that really needs to be done now, and leaving things that can be put back with little to no disruption at some point in the future, if that's something the city or Urban Renewal wants to do."

One component that Public Works will be able to install will be arms on the light poles that will cast more light at the pedestrian level. While more light is not necessarily needed in all the areas, the agencies approved the aesthetics of the poles. The current project bid will not have the main contractor install those, but will leave a plate over where the arm could be installed later, as well as brackets for banners and flower baskets.

"Part of our direction from the board last time was to make sure we intensely monitor the work of Murraysmith to make sure we're getting the best numbers that we can and really have a better understanding of anything that can have cost savings," Reynolds said. "They very much understand where we are at and what we are trying to accomplish."

At the end of the Urban Renewal meeting, Greene said, "I'm optimistic as always, but a little nervous right now. I'm looking forward to hearing those numbers and seeing the designs."

He spoke briefly about the meeting at the Florence City Council meeting on Aug. 6.

"The outcome of the 101 ReVision Project, which Urban Renewal, the councilors and staff have been working on, is going to turn out for the better. There's a lot of reorganizing that is going on ... to see where we can save some money while not losing the aesthetics and the beauty of the concept that we've all embraced," he said. "We're learning new ways to do it for the future. It is a little bit of a setback, but I think the outcome is going to be an educational one. If this turns out to be the solution, it will be a good example for other communities to consider too."

For more information, visit www.ci.florence.or.us/urban-renewal/revision-florence.