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“The information is meant not to be an advocacy piece, but an informing piece,” Pierson said. “It’s just facts to help you make an informed decision.”

The materials include data on the Siuslaw School Bond Measure 20-291, “Bonds to Construct and Upgrade School Facilities, Improve Safety;” the facilities overview conducted in 2016; the maturity of the bond; floorplans and more.

Of note, the district has a 20-year school bond that will expire at the end of this year.

“Almost at the very time that this bond would take effect, which is a tax assessment, the old bond retires,” Pierson said. “The old bond is 90 cents on \$1,000. The new bond is \$2.72 on \$1,000.”

According to Lane County Assessor, the 2017 Median Home Assessed Value in the Siuslaw School District is \$200,108. The monthly cost of the new bond would be \$45.36, which makes \$544.29 the annual cost. Under the old bond, the same property would have paid \$180.10.

If the bond passes, it will take 80 percent of the funds to build a new high school facility and use the rest on safety, seismic and technology upgrades at the other buildings.

According to Bond Advisory Committee Chair Kim Erickson, “One important thing with the new high school that is being proposed is that it would not be built on the existing floor plan. It would not displace the kids for any period of time. They could still go to school while the school is being built and, once the new one is complete, they would move in and the old one would be demolished.”

Pierson also included an advocacy letter, titled “Good Education is Great Business,” in materials presented to the chamber.

“I am definitely wearing my other hats for this letter,” he said. “I’m writing that really as a person who is interested from the perspective of the chamber of providing information about things that I think are important for our business community to consider, and also from the perspective of LCC.”

In his letter, Pierson talks about how the district got to this place, and why it now requires either extreme renovation or complete replacement of the high school building.

According to the bond proposal materials, it would cost approximately \$5.6 million less to build a new high school than it would to remodel.

“Sometimes people say, ‘Well, is the school falling apart? If so, they haven’t maintained it, and why are we needing to give them more money?’ But just like if you have a 1970s-era Mustang, you can do a great job of doing all the oil changes, taking care of all the different aspects of servicing your car and following everything in its manual, and still, over the course of 50 years, the transmission might just go out, or the head gasket might blow. You maintain it really great; it’s just something that happens,” Pierson said. “My contention back in 2016 was that the school district was doing a really great job of maintaining its facilities. It’s not about that. It’s just an older facility built in an entirely different era and there are some critical infrastructure pieces that are failing.”

These include plumbing, electrical and mechanical systems that are nearing their end-of-life dates throughout the district, but especially the high school.

“One of the reasons I’m excited to wear my ‘LCC dean hat’ is that one wing of the high school will be dedicated to career technical education,” Pierson said. “We already collaborate with the high school on several dual-credit classes, so Siuslaw High School students can take a class and get college credit at the same time. That’s like free college tuition for students who take the district and LCC up on that offer. ... If this career technical education facility that is

part of the high school is built, we can continue to collaborate in more ways.”

Also using his “LCC hat,” Pierson talked about the social value of education.

“Public education ensures that the ‘least among us’ have the same essential educational and economic resources available. And there is in fact a huge ‘underclass’ in our community that many of us rarely see,” he wrote.

United Way estimates that 58 percent of Florence households are below the poverty line for the nation or under budget for the basic household survival budget for Lane County.

In the Siuslaw School District, 68 percent of students qualify for free or reduced lunch.

“Better education influences private enrichment. There is an individual benefit, but there is also a great social benefit,” Pierson said. “More students doing well, graduating, a community more engaged and involved in the schools ... all that leads to better citizens and students who stay in the community or leave and come back — and makes the community more valuable to professionals looking to relocate.”

He also listed the “social capital” of engaged students volunteering and linking into the community.

“Good local schools give good local students a reason to stay,” Pierson said.

He added that this would continue to help Siuslaw’s graduation rates — which are already higher than national and state levels.

Siuslaw keeps track of students who graduate in four years — 80.8 percent in 2018 — and those who are “completers,” or those who finish in five years, get their GED or enroll in a program to finish their degree — 95.8 percent in 2018.

“There was a sense in the community a couple years ago that the district hadn’t done a great job with graduations,” Pierson said. “Folks were thinking that graduation rates at Siuslaw weren’t that great. They are that great.”

Other statistics Pierson and the committee want people to consider are the facilities assessments. The engineering was funded by three Oregon Department of Education technical assistance program grants totaling \$70,000. The money from the bond would go straight into the construction projects.

“This program is all about critical thinking from a business perspective. How can we as businesses make effective analyses of critical business decisions? A lot of them are quite complex,” Pierson said. “We asked Gary to come do the impossible and give us a quick overview of what critical analysis might look like for businesses on a complex set of issues

When Smith arrived, he shortened to 20 minutes what can be a six-day course on critical thinking. He emphasized the importance of both logic and emotion when making decision — as long as everything is thought about from multiple angles.

“As humans, our brains are amazing. One of the things that is unique about the way our brains work is that they take shortcuts. It’s the only way we can process the amount of information that comes at us. We don’t see clearly. We have biases. We are constantly referring back to the entire history of everything we’ve known to make a decision. We rely on that day in and day out, because it works. While we’re driving, doing certain things. But sometimes, when we’re making a really big decision, that can work against us,” Smith said.

He said people should not use “gut reactions” for big decisions, including financial decisions, but pause to consider both long- and short-term consequences. Twice he used the example of Las Vegas and its ties to both casinos and unplanned weddings.

“Most serious decisions, especially financial decisions,

don’t work that way well. There aren’t too many people who trust their gut and come back from Vegas with more money than when they got there. That’s just not the way that goes,” he said.

Similarly, people should always take a moment before making a big decision.

“I was asked to come here to inspire you to dig deeper, to look, to take it more critically,” Smith said when he came back to the issue of the school bond.

He acknowledged his own biases — his ties to education, including a family background in teaching, his own experiences and the fact that he has “supported every education levy” presented to him in his life, as well as the fact that he was a high school dropout — as he encouraged people to think critically about the information presented to them.

“If I’m going to start thinking of this as a business owner, a property owner or as a resident of the community — and it affects all those things — what are the impacts?” he asked.

Pierson offered one example.

“It has been demonstrated time and time again in various research around the country that in school districts that pass a bond and have what can be considered great schools, property values rise,” he said. “Take taxes. A lot of us in the business community are not necessarily inclined to immediately say yes to taxes, but there is reason to believe that this bond, if passed, even though there is a bit of a tax hit, that property values will go up considerably. You’ll get way more value back.”

Smith said the Bond Advisory Committee and those interested in passing the bond — or defeating it — need to consider the stakeholders in the community, or those with an interest in the outcome.

“Stakeholders really get graded on two different metrics,” he said. “One: how interested are they, from low interest to high interest? And two: how much impact can that person have to your project or what you’re doing, from low impact to high impact? Obviously, people with high interest and high impact are those you cater to the most.”

However, people with low interest in schools — Smith listed people without school-age children — but high impact, in that they own homes or businesses, could affect the outcome if they vote against the bond or choose not to vote.

“You can’t ignore that side of things when you talk to your stakeholders,” he said. “You have to think about all the different hats you have as a stakeholder. Not just ‘are my property taxes going up,’ that’s obviously a financial steward of your household situation, but you also have the ‘community member stakeholder’ hat that you can put on. You need to have the ‘what’s best for my business and my business community’ hat that you put on,” he said. “That’s really all critical thinking is. It’s taking a second to look at all the angles.”

Ultimately, voters will have to choose an option as they prepare for the Nov. 7 General Election. They either vote to approve the bond, vote against it or decline to vote at all.

And that’s where Smith said people should be prepared for activism.

“We see in this country that plenty of people who believe in things don’t show up at the polls. That’s just an unfortunate side effect of our democracy, that you don’t have to be involved if you don’t want to be,” he said.

He describes what Pierson and Erickson are currently doing as activists, including going to meetings, writing letters, talking to neighbors, interacting with businesses and volunteering.

“At the end of the day, it’s person to person. All politics are local, right? It will eventually get down to handshakes and door knocks, or whatever it takes to get this thing passed or defeated,” Smith said.

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Local restaurant to celebrate 11 years in community it sees as ‘family’



STORY AND PHOTO BY DAMIEN SHERWOOD FOR SIUSLAW NEWS

Rosa’s Mexican Restaurant, 2825 Highway 101, is celebrating its 11th anniversary on Aug. 31 while extending an appreciative “thank you” to the Florence community.

Restaurant owner Rosaura Perez took a break between the lunch and dinner rushes to talk about her business.

“I never thought about starting a restaurant here,” she said, though restaurantering runs in her family. In Mexico, her mother and mother-in-law both ran restaurants while Perez was growing up, and this set her on a path to find her element in the kitchen.

When Perez and her husband first came to Florence in 1992, though, Perez was accustomed to warmer climates and briefly retreated back to the California heat. While there, Perez had her first child.

Though she enjoyed the sun, she remembered the pleasant atmosphere of Florence.

“It’s beautiful, green, quiet,” she said. “Nice people. Beautiful community. We really enjoy it here.”

Wanting the best environment for raising their child, they moved back to Florence in 1994 and firmly planted their roots, her husband making a living in upholstery and Perez finding work in the local food

service industry.

After serving many years in a variety of restaurants, though, Perez hit a pay ceiling when her bosses refused to give her any more raises. She and her husband decided it was time to start their own business and, in 2007, opened Rosa’s Mexican Restaurant.

“It was crazy” when they first opened, Perez remembers. Enormous lines formed outside and their tiny restaurant had to be expanded with each passing year.

Despite the hard work, Perez rose to the challenge naturally. Since an early age, she had helped her mother run the family restaurant in Mexico and subsequent years of restaurant work had prepared her for the role.

“I’ve got a passion for the kitchen,” she said. “I can stay all day here.” So much so, her children often tell her the restaurant is her first home and their house her second.

Sometimes, she says, her husband will catch her staring into space and perceptively inquire, “Are you thinking about the restaurant?”

Perez’s enthusiasm for the business stems from her background, but also a dedication to family. Her dishwashers, cooks and servers have, at various times, all been comprised of her husband, sons, cousins, nephew, niece and sister-in-law.

Of the eight workers currently employed, six are family — and this is only because two family members recently returned to Mexico. Truly a family-run business, Perez derives a great deal of strength from this fusion.

To the community at large, too, Perez extends a deep gratitude.

Three years ago, the family lost their teenage son in a tragic drowning accident. The loss was devastating to the family. Through it all, strangers rallied in support.

“The whole community,” Perez said, turned out in their time of grief.

After the tragedy, the family returned thanks with a scholarship program funded by an annual taco feed event. Three years running and growing each time, the Jose Dela Mora Scholarship now awards up to six students pursuing their passions in art or wrestling.

This exchange between the family and community left a profound impression on Perez.

“We are like brothers and sisters now. Like family,” she said with a wistful smile. In this spirit, the upcoming anniversary celebration returns thanks and appreciation to what she considers an extended family.

“I really love my community and I’m really, really grateful for living here,” she said. “I’m not born here, but I feel American.”

Open
Monday – Saturday
11am-9pm
To Go Orders Available

MEXICAN RESTAURANT

<p>APPETIZERS</p> <p>Rosa's Nachos Quesadillas Cheese Dip</p> <p>Fiesta Fresh Guacamole Fresh Ceviche</p> <p>VEGETARIAN</p> <p>Veggie Fajitas Enfrijoladas Veggie Burrito Poblano Chile Relleno</p> <p>SEAFOOD</p> <p>Pesado Ala Veracruzana\$18.95 <i>Grilled halibut sautéed with bell peppers, scallions, cherry tomatoes, capers, green olives & prawns smothered in our special homemade sauce. Served with steamed rice</i></p> <p>Parmesan Crusted Halibut\$17.95 <i>Grilled halibut steak covered with parmesan cheese & topped with artichoke salsa. Served with rice & beans</i></p> <p>Seafood Burrito Halibut Fish Tacos Camarones Costa Azul\$17.95 <i>Prawns stuffed with crab meat & wrapped with bacon. Served with tortillas & accompanied with peach habanero sauce. Served with rice & beans</i></p> <p>Camarones Ala Crema Camarones A La Diabla</p> <p>Camarones Al Mojo De Ajonjolino Camrones A La Mexicana</p>	<p>ENSALADAS</p> <p>Tostada Salad: <i>Crispy fried flour or corn tortilla topped with refried beans, lettuce, onion, tomatoes, cheese, sour cream & guacamole. Meat Choices: chicken, shredded beef or seasoned beef.\$10.95</i></p> <p>Fajita Salad Avocado Shrimp Salad</p> <p>Taco Salad De Garden</p> <p>SOPAS</p> <p>Albondigas Soup Caldo de Camaron Siete Mares Pozole</p> <p>Tortilla Soup Caldo de Mariscos Menudo</p> <p>ESPECIALES</p> <p>Fajita Crhimichanga Chimichanga Carmaon Chimichanga Fajita Quesadilla Club Quesadilla Grande Quesadilla Carmaon Quesadilla Flautas Huarache Plate Sopes Echiladas Mexicanas</p> <p>Seafood Enchiladas Enchiladas Mexicanas Seafood Enchiladas Enchiladas Enchiladas Suizas Enchiladas Poblanas Burro Grande Chiles en Nogada Chile Rellenos with Meat Los Tres Amigos Plate</p> <p>BURRITOS</p> <p>Deluxe Wet Burrito Fajitas Burrito</p> <p>Macho Burrito Rellena Wet Burrito</p> <p>BEEF</p> <p>Chile Colorado Plate Steak Mexicano</p> <p>Carne Asada y Mojo Carne Asada y Mas</p> <p>CHICKEN</p> <p>Chicken en Mole Pollo A La Crema</p> <p>Rosa's House Specialty Chicken\$13.95 <i>A chicken breast grilled then sautéed in a special sauce with mushrooms, green peppers, carrots & onions, served over a bed of rice with jack cheese. Served with black beans & tortillas</i></p> <p>BREAKFAST</p> <p>Machada Con Huevos Hevos Rancheros Huevos A La Mexicana Chilaquitos Tortilla Skillet Chorizo con Huevos</p> <p>Breakfast Burrito Omelet Cameron Omelet Veggie Omelet</p>
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Gift Certificates

Party Room

COMBOS

Your Combo: *Served with Rice & Beans*\$12.95

Choose Two: Enchilada, Chile Relleno, Taco or Tamale (Pork or Chicken) the choice the filling: Cheese, seasoned Ground Beef, Chicken, Chile Verde, Chile Colorado, Carnitas or Shredded Beef.

Large Combo: *Three Taquitos (Chicken or beef), with one cheese quesadilla. Served with rice & beans & garnished with guacamole & sour cream* \$13.95

FAJITAS

Your choice of meat sautéed with fresh peppers, onions & mushrooms with our special fajita seasonings. Served with rice, beans, fresh house guacamole, sour cream, pico de gallo & fresh corn or flour tortillas.

Grilled Chicken Breast\$14.95
Tender Grilled Steak\$14.95
Succulent Shrimp\$16.95
Combo of Chicken, Steak & Shrimp\$18.95

Serving Beer, Wine and Cocktails

Siuslaw Readers Choice winner for Best Mexican Cuisine/ Restaurant
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