

Rep. McKeown to host town halls Monday



Town halls in North Bend, Florence and Yachats give an opportunity for residents to discuss local issues.

Oregon Rep. Caddy McKeown will be hosting the most recent in a series of town halls and public forums on Monday, Oct. 1, in Yachats, Florence and North Bend. These events are open to the public, with an opportunity for community members to ask questions and

pose issues for discussion.

Town Halls are scheduled as follows for Oct. 1:

- Yachats: 10 to 11 a.m., Yachats Commons, 441 Highway 101
- Florence: 1 to 2 p.m., Siuslaw Public Library, 1460 Ninth St.
- Coos Bay & North Bend: 5 to 6 p.m., North Bend Public Library, 1800 Sherman Ave. in North Bend.

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The second challenge is finding a person who can navigate the existing intergovernmental agreement for administration between the two entities, as well as help in the process of determining its viability.

During the meeting, the SVFR Board of Directors reviewed financial reports from Office Manager Dina McClure.

In August, a financial report presented by McClure surprised directors by suggesting that there was a cash flow situation on the horizon that might require immediate action to forestall. McClure has been working, with the assistance of a consultant, to identify and move towards resolving past accounting issues that were outdated or ineffective.

Last month, she reported that due to delays in reimbursement for personnel deployments, as well as necessary and positive changes made to the organizations' accounting practices, there was the possibility that SVFR would be unable to meet financial obligations later this year.

SVFR is now attempting to address the possible future shortfall by authorizing staff to use an account that holds capital reserve funds, for short-term costs associated with financial obligations, like payroll and health insurance payments, that cannot be delayed.

McClure said the resolution to accomplish this was meant as a safeguard and would only be tapped if the arrival of expected and approved reimbursements arrived later than hoped.

"The resolution itself is pretty self-explanatory. Again, in order to postpone the need for a line of credit, it is the recommendation to use the capital reserve funds at SVFR, to use that money for expenditures to get through the next month's payroll and monthly expenses. Hopefully, with those reimbursements coming in, we will be able to get through November as well," McClure said.

After a brief discussion, during which SVFR board members affirmed their collective reluctance to do so, the offered resolution passed unanimously.

In addition, Langborg and McClure requested that SVFR enter into an agreement with a local financial institution to acquire a line of credit for the district that would provide up to \$300,000 for immediate use if needed.

Before taking action, directors pressed Langborg on the expected arrival of reimbursements, which the chief director said he has pursued diligently.

"We are being as aggressive as we can. I am on a first-name basis with them and, on top of that, they understand our situation and why we are on a first-name basis. But the people I interact with are mid-management, so some of these things have to be approved at levels above them and that's going to take some time," Langborg said.

The agenda item that followed was more involved, with two bids, one from Oregon Pacific Bank and a second from Banner Bank, presented to directors.

Representatives from Banner Bank were on hand to answer questions from directors and Mike Webb, a WLAD board member and an executive at Oregon Pacific Bank, did the same for his employers.

Oregon Pacific Bank President and Chief Executive Officer Ron Green, an SVFR board member, was not present at the meeting.

The decision to authorize the acquisition of a line of credit is a topic that has previously drawn strong criticism from directors.

SVFR Director John Carnahan has been associated with the fire department for a long period of time. In that time, and especially since he joined on the board, he has been clear in his opposition to borrowing money.

Earlier in the meeting, he supported the resolution to use money from the Capital Reserve Fund only after staff assurances that the money would be replaced as soon as expected reimbursements arrived.

Carnahan was also initially reluctant to open this line of credit, but seemed convinced by points made in Director Ned Hickson's analysis of the district's financial situation.

"In the past, we've talked about establishing a line of credit simply because of what we experienced this year, with a financial gap so to speak," Hickson said. "The other part of this question is, are we just putting off the inevitable, is this something we need right now? I was under the impression that we felt like we should have this anyway, in the event we need it, for who knows what. Hopefully we don't ever use it at all, but it is something we should just have for that peace of mind."

"For \$250 a year, it seems worth it to me."

The resolution to move forward with obtaining a three-year line of credit for \$300,000, at a cost of \$250 per year, which also stipulated that any use of the line of credit first be approved by the SVFR board.

Banner Bank was selected as the organization to provide the financial support to SVFR.

Besides Green, SVFR Director Woody Woodbury was not in

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Both Murray and Lewis made brief presentations touching on the paths that brought them to OCHS.

Moving forward, Murray is focusing his attentions on facility upgrades and staff training while Lewis is working to improve the organization's social media presence and on updating internal procedures. The short presentations gave way to a more informal question and answer period between the members and Murray and Lewis.

Robbers said she was pleased with meeting, particularly in light of previous OCHS meetings where police presence was requested by OCHS board members.

"The board appreciates its members' input and suggestions, as well as the calm demeanor last night," she said. "All suggestions and questions are being reviewed to help the board and employees continue to improve and build on the positive image we continue to present to the public."

Robbers also wanted to remind the public that the popu-

lar OCHS Christmas store will reopen soon for the holiday season.

"We are inviting the public to the opening of our annual Christmas Store on Nov. 1," she said.

The store will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at 80 Harbor St. in the building formerly known as Vintage Blue Antiques. Anyone wishing to volunteer should contact OCHS at 541-997-4277.

"We can't put on the Christmas store without the help of volunteers and patrons," Robbers said.

attendance, but the three voting members formed a quorum.

The last item of new business tackled by the two boards was the recommendation made by a joint sub-committee, made up of members from both boards, on an interim replacement for Langborg.

WLAD Board President Rick Yecny and Hickson spoke briefly about the process undertaken with the Special Districts Association of Oregon (SDAO) to find an interim replacement for Langborg.

This week, the committee vetted and interviewed two candidates suggested by SDAO and had settled on one candidate, Steve Abel, as the best fit for the

district.

"I'm happy to say that they were both excellent candidates, they were really good, but they were quite different," Yecny said. "They both had good backgrounds and good experience. We distributed their resume to Dina, Operations Manager Matt House and Division Chief Jim Dickerson, and all five of us were unanimous in recommending Steve Able as the candidate we should consider for the position."

Hickson affirmed this take on the process which had recommended Able.

"As Rick said, they were both really good candidates. They both had strong backgrounds ... but in the end it really came

down to two things," Hickson said. "One was the availability of (the other candidate), trying to split his time between Oak Ridge and here, and the other was Steve had a very detailed plan for finding a permanent chief. He had a specific plan which included community involvement and it was very thorough."

The recommendations from the subcommittee were accepted and both SVFR and WLAD voted unanimously to pursue Able as the district's interim director, with a window of six to nine months to find a permanent chief for the districts.

This story was approved by the Siuslaw News editorial board.

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