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could do to help children who were attending school, but whose families were living in their car.

“That’s what we decided our focus was going to be — to help families and help them transition into something a little bit better,” Lenux said.

Wood and Lenux are the president and vice president of First Step. There are seven members in total on the board of directors and about 30 volunteers helped put together the community First Step unveiled on Sunday.

“It’s a huge blessing. We’ve worked really hard to get this where it is and I’m pretty excited about it. I’m very encouraged by everybody that’s come together to make this work,” Lenux said.

First Step is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) cooperation that was approved by the Florence Planning Commission for a one-year conditional use permit.

Wood said the program will “prove the concept that if a family has sustained housing where they are warm, dry and safe but not too comfortable that they think it’s permanent, then they can successfully turn their lives around.”

Currently, First Step’s community has two homes behind the Presbyterian Church and a



On July 21, Florence First Step President Greg Wood, pastor of the Presbyterian Church of the Siuslaw, and Vice President Kathy Lenux host a ribbon cutting for the transitional housing nonprofit’s first units.

third off-site. All are drug- and alcohol-free with designated quiet times. The program is open to families experiencing homelessness in Florence who are looking to turn their lives around and get help leaving the cycle of homelessness.

A family is defined by First Step as two individuals, or a single parent with one or more children. Families fill out an application to be a part of First Step, and if the family is approved, they sign a lease of sorts that says they are allowed to stay for up to two years, they will remain drug- and alcohol-free and adhere to the designated quiet hours.

The lease also states that part of the family’s working wages, disability or whatever income

they receive, will be donated monthly to a savings account that First Step sets aside for each family.

“When they are ready to leave, they will have some money set aside with their name on it that they can take with them and use that for a down payment for a rental or whatever they need,” Lenux said. “We want them to succeed.”

First Step works with two social workers who help families connect with the Department of Human Services, SOS classes such as money management, the Department of Motor Vehicles and other tools that will help progress the family’s lives.

“First Step is a program that will help families transition into a safe, self-sufficient envi-

ronment,” Lenux said.

Ideally, the families won’t need to stay the full two years at First Step, Lenux added. The goal is to provide them with the tools they need to self-sustain and find permanent housing as soon as they can.

“We are focusing on who we can do the most good for in the shortest amount of time,” Wood said.

This is the housing-first approach to homelessness that other cities across the U.S. have successfully implemented as well.

“We were trying to do something that will improve the quality of a person’s life,” Lenux said. “There’s a lot of models out there, but we figured if we get them into something as

close to a home as possible, it gives people the opportunity to get out of their cars, or get out of their tents, and focus on things other than just surviving.”

At the ribbon cutting ceremony on Sunday, Wood and Lenux thanked the individuals who donated trailers to the program, Viking Plumbing for installing the water line free of charge, Dan Lofy for his help with construction and the community support and volunteer work.

They also thanked the Oregon Community Foundation for its grant of \$200,000 that helped First Step purchase a piece of property across from Sand Master Park, where the group plans to either expand

or completely move First Step after its one-year permit with the Florence Planning Commission expires.

Lenux says once they prove that First Step works, they can continue to work with SOS to help house more families in Florence and either extend or renew their permit with the Planning Commission.

“There is a need in Florence to get families off the street,” Wood said.

He anticipates a waiting list for the three units they have so far.

William, Nena and Vadyn will be one of the first families moving into First Step. Already, they have purchased a vehicle and insurance and obtained driver’s licenses, and William said his job at McDonald’s is the longest he’s sustained a job in a long time.

“This program is the only reason we are okay,” he said.

The family went through SOS to find First Step and Nena says they plan to finally have a home of their own soon.

“The homeless shelters are good for whatever you need in the moment, but in the long run they can’t help,” Nena said. “It’s truly a blessing here with First Step. We’re learning how to take care of ourselves.”

For more information about First Step, visit firststepcommunity.com.

PAC from page 1A

This was made clear during the July council meeting, where Henry said that he simply “doesn’t buy, in his heart” the idea that a broad and varied collection of public art pieces would be a significant economic driver for the city.

Henry also stated that he felt the leadership of the committee needed to change before he would support PAC continuing as an official part of the city structure. This position was supported by councilors Geraldine Lucio and Woody Woodbury.

Monday’s PAC meeting began with Chairperson Harlen Springer setting the stage for what will undoubtedly be a difficult process to reimagine the relationship between PAC and the city.

Springer restated the council’s mandate that PAC must restructure itself and, within 90 days, submit for approval a plan to work in a different way with the council and the city.

One of the main issues that Henry cited for his insistence that PAC be reconfigured or completely eliminated as a committee was what he called the dominance and unprofessional behavior of Councilor Joshua Greene, who serves as an ex-officio member of the art committee.

Springer then announced to the committee that he and Greene had met, and that Greene had made a decision regarding future participation in the work of PAC.

“Joshua and I met on Friday and he has agreed to step away from the being the ex-officio representative of the PAC,” Springer said. “He is doing that for the benefit of the committee, and we believe that’s in the best interest of the community. I would like to personally say that whatever has happened over

the past several weeks and months, the discussions and heated exchanges and that sort of thing does not, and should not, detract from Joshua’s decades of work here in our city. I believe the city owes Joshua a great debt of gratitude.”

Springer then announced that committee member Greg Carlton had resigned due to what he considered an unwarranted attack on the work done by PAC and the unfair accusations leveled at Greene by Henry and other community members.

Shortly after, Greene unexpectedly arrived at the meeting and was asked to make a brief statement to the committee members. Greene was visibly subdued as he addressed the committee.

“As you all know, I have been very fond and passionate about public art. I was extremely moved by Greg’s resignation letter and it made me feel I needed to be responsible and apologize to all of you for my behavior over the last few months,” said Greene. “I wanted you to know that the issues between me and Joe are personal, and it is getting in the way of us doing good work. All of you, as responsible and well-meaning members of the community, should be given the respect to do exactly what you have committed yourself to do and shouldn’t be slighted by these distractions.”

Greene continued, “We have worked very hard over the last four years to get to where we are and, hopefully, we will get past all of this and continue on this journey. Right now, things are going to be a little different than I had imagined because of the budgetary issues. But there is still work to be done and I think it’s best if I stay out of it and let Harlen and Jo (Beaudreau) and everyone else lead

the way. What happens in the future is yet to be seen. But I am hopeful, I am a visionary and I am a dreamer — and I respect you all tremendously. With that, I bid you adieu.”

Greene then left the meeting after receiving thanks from PAC members as he exited.

The meeting continued afterwards with Springer reading into record portions of Carlton’s resignation letter, which starkly contradicted the criticisms leveled at Greene by Henry and Lucio.

Springer next took a few minutes to respond directly to what he perceived as attacks directed at him made by the mayor, whose comments called into question Springer’s truthfulness and professionalism.

He read from a transcript the statements he had made during a television interview, highlighting for PAC the actual words he said, which contradicted statements Henry had attributed to him.

Next, the attention of PAC members was then directed to a discussion geared towards redefining the work to be done by the committee and the way in which that work will be done. A number of points made during the dis-

cussion touched on some of the problems that PAC had in sharing the process used in selecting art — including placement of the controversial Quince Street mural, which was recently completed.

City Recorder Kelli Weese provided guidance as to the exact constraints imposed by the city council, and members were encouraged by Springer to share their opinions on the role of public art in Florence, as well as what role they envisioned for PAC moving forward.

Members of the committee provided additional comments to the Siuslaw News regarding the meeting after the work session ended.

While many PAC members were supportive of the process and the art selected for the mural, there was a recognition by member Peggy Meyer that a more receptive approach should be taken in the future when considering content and placement for future art installations.

“We have been getting lots of negative feedback for months and it hurts like the dickens,” Meyer said. “There’s a line in our mission statement that speaks of diversity. I think the public is afraid we’re going to keep giving them

our idea of what ‘the WOW factor’ is. They seem to feel that we are coming across as elitists. That’s not our aim. It’s time we give the people what they’re asking for. The public’s negative feedback has been a wake-up call to us. This doesn’t have to be a fight.”

“It’s up to us to get things back on the right footing. It’s time to work together.”

Kurt Vander Bogart is the ex-Officio member of PAC representing the city’s Community Economic Development Committee, and his interpretation of the Marino-Heidel Mural provides a different take on the piece.

“PAC members have learned a great deal from the ‘Stitching Time, Weaving Cultures’ mural. Earlier and more frequent communication with the public will ensure a greater meeting of the minds with all stakeholders,” he said. “I still like the mural. It combines a rich Native American history with an art style that is very visionary. I also like the Yachats ‘Oregon is Magic’ boat and lighthouse mural. The rounded lines and colors of the design are very similar to the 1942-era in this country’s art history.”

Vander Bogart went on to say that many other commu-

nities have murals that are based from a specific time, citing Coquille’s large historic early 20th century mural depicting horses and buggies riding down an old town street. Other examples included Coos Bay’s three large images of Steve Prefontaine, the Coos Bay and University of Oregon track star from the late 1960s to early 1970s.

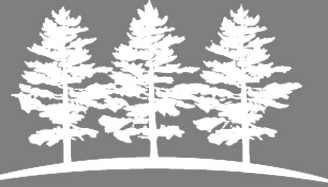
“All these murals are great, but the ‘Stitching Time, Weaving Cultures’ mural in Florence is the only one that can transport you in another dimension — if you let it,” said Vander Bogart.

Details of a ceremony to recognize the completion of the Marino-Heidel Mural were then discussed. This event is planned for Wednesday, Aug. 7, at 11 a.m.

Springer updated the group on the regional dignitaries are scheduled to participate in the unveiling, which will be hosted by Henry.

The remainder of the meeting was spent charting out the future course of PAC. Additional work will be done to solidify the plan to be presented to the city council in the next few weeks, with a finalized proposal delivered at a future council meeting sometime within the next 90 days.

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How To Participate
The fee to participate is \$20. An ad for the Community Wide Garage Sale with a map of all participation sales will be published in the Siuslaw News on September 11th and 14th. Because of print deadlines, the registration deadline is 5pm Thursday August 30 2019.

You will also receive two official Community Wide Garage Sale signs as well as a tip sheet on how to have a great sale. Maps will be available in the Siuslaw News, online and at the Florence Visitors Center.

Please post signs only on private property with the owner's consent.
Posting signs on City utility poles, street or signal light poles, and median strips is against the municipal code.

Name _____ Phone _____
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Subdivision name (if any) _____
Dates (CIRCLE): Friday 9/13 Saturday 9/14 Sunday 9/15
Times: _____
15-word description:(Date, times and address are included. Addition words over 15 are \$0.50 each.)

Add'l Words _____
Bring form and payment to 148 Maple St in Historic Old Town or mail to Siuslaw News PO Box 10, Florence, OR 97439
Call 541-902-3526 | florencechamber.com
Deadline is August 30th at 5pm to be included on the map.

