

WLFEA from page 1A

moving in together. If the two agencies decide to merge, that will be the marriage. The further you go down that path, you get more committed to this whole process.”

WLFEA is an outgrowth of the IGA, which was formed to eventually merge the two entities to both save costs and create operational harmony between the two agencies.

“We’re truly driving to drive us to ‘one team,’” WLFEA EMS Operations Chief Matt House said. “If you look back five years, 10 years, even 20 years, we’ve always worked really well with each other. But over the last three years [with the creation of the IGA], I’ve seen us working stronger together than I’ve ever seen. Operationally, that makes me extremely happy. It’s seamless and fluid on calls. We’re doing great things for our community, and that’s really the focus when you look at operations.”

While operations have been seamless, board control over the operations were not. The IGA stipulated that the fire chief had operational authority over both SVFR and WLAD, but was employed solely by SVFR.

“One of the pitfalls of the IGA was that Western Lane didn’t really have input,” Schick explained. “Through this IGA, I had oversight through Western Lane, but really, my bosses were the SVFR Board of Directors. Western Lane was allowed to have input, but that was just because the SVFR Board of Directors said they could have input.”

Looking to find a way to give WLAD official say over matters, such as the hiring and firing of the chief, the agencies entertained three options. The first was just changing the language of the IGA to give WLAD more authority, but “that didn’t fix anything and was only good as long as the IGA lasted. It wasn’t a long-term solution,” Schick said.

Another option would be that SVFR and WLAD could have decided to completely merge into one entity, but neither agency was fully ready to commit to that step.

The final option was to form a third entity that would have oversight by both agencies, but would still allow SVFR and WLAD to remain independent taxing districts. That eventually became WLFEA.

Operationally, SVFR and WLAD (along with their boards) will still be in charge of base operations: SVFR over fire prevention

and suppression, WLAD over ambulance operations and Mobile Integrated Healthcare.

But WLFEA will house the administration, including Schick, House, Fire Ops Chief Jim Dickerson and office staff for both agencies. The budget for WLFEA will come from contributions from SVFR and WLAD.

As for the board of WLFEA, “the board of directors will have equal representation, two directors from each agency,” Schick said, pointing out that normally boards have an odd number of members. “But they went with four because if there is a tie, it has to go back to the other boards. If the WLFEA board is 2-2, it would go back to the SVFR and WLAD boards, and then it would have to be a majority of each board.”

At last week’s joint SVFR and WLAD board meeting, directors approved the adoption of the WLFEA, with members of the IGA committee, which officially dissolved Oct. 1, serving as the first WLFEA board through June, when two new board members — one from SVFR and one from WLAD — will be appointed to replace two current members through a nomination process. The process will be repeated on an annual basis to assure carry-over of two previous board members each term.

“Our objective was to avoid the possibility of having four brand-new members of the WLFEA board at some point,” said SVFR Board President Ned Hickson, who will be among the four members of the new WLFEA board, along with Ron Green, Larry Farnsworth and Rick Yecny. “For this first term, members of both boards

felt it was a good idea to essentially transition the IGA committee into the WLFEA board to assure a smooth transition. Then, starting July 1, two of us will be replaced by two new members, with two previous members staying on for an additional term, similar to how the SVFR and WLAD boards elect a portion of new board members each term to avoid filling a board with four brand new members.”

Schick acknowledged that both the creation of the board, and the reason for its existence, could be confusing for the public. To alleviate confusion, he listed a number of questions that he has heard from the public, as well as fielded some other questions from WLFEA staff.

Will the public notice any difference in emergency response?

No. “There won’t be any difference,” Schick said.

Both agencies have already been working together for years, and the public will see no difference in the level of services.

Even the logos will remain largely the same — the fire trucks will still say Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue, the ambulances will still say Western Lane Ambulance.

If there is one noticeable change, it’s how staff will answer the phone. Staff will now introduce themselves as “Western Lane Fire and EMS Authority” when someone calls into either the fire or EMS.

Will property taxes change because of this?

No. “There’s going to be no impact on the taxing district,” Schick said. “There won’t be any changes on the property taxes.”

Will this decrease cost for both agencies?

More than likely, though there aren’t any official numbers yet.

“We certainly think that it will,” Schick said. “But just having the efficiency in having fire and EMS under one umbrella, I think that’s worth doing it alone. But I think we will see some cost savings. We have seen some, and I think that will continue.”

Are SVFR and WLAD going to merge?

Unknown. While WLFEA is certainly an important step to merging the two agencies, neither board has expressed interest in speeding up the process.

“There’s been no discussion about an actual merger at the board level,” Schick said. “We’ll certainly talk about it. We’ve never said that there’s a certain date where they need to have things in place. Right now, we’re just focusing on if the authority will work.”

If the two agencies do decide to merge, what will it look like?

Again, the agencies are not at that point yet and will continue to be two separate taxing districts. But if they do decide to merge, “It will be fire-based EMS, essentially,” Schick said, pointing out that the majority of Oregon districts are EMS and fire combined.

“Will you have

See AGENCY page 7A

Buying or Selling? I can help.



Richard Beaudro
Principal Broker
541 991-6677

85545 Pine St – Private 10 acre estate. Luxury 4 bdrm, 4 bath home with granite, Italian tile, stone fireplaces, media room with bar, garages, shops, and mini barn. Park-like setting on multiple lots. Siuslaw River, historic bridge and Old Town views! **\$1,250,000.** #2745-17283691



1749 Highway 101 • 541-997-1200



SELLING A HOME IN THE FLORENCE & SURROUNDING AREAS?

\$ FLEXIBLE REAL ESTATE LISTING COMMISSION PLAN \$

- * 5%- another broker brings the buyer (2.5% listing agent 2.5% buyers agent)
- * 3.75%- listing agent brings the buyer, no other agents involved.
- * 2%- seller brings the buyer, no other agents involved.
- * 0%- you owe nothing if your home does not sell by contract expiration date.

Plan includes: Competitive Commission Rates. Creative & Aggressive Marketing Campaign. Complimentary Home Warranty during listing period, transferred to the new buyers at closing. Open Houses. Yard sign w/ flyer box. Professional Photography including drone aerial pictures. MLS Listing seen on over 3,000+ Real Estate Search Websites. NO hidden fees, CANCEL anytime, NO fees paid until the homes sells.

**- PROVEN RESULTS & SALES STATS -
SAVE MORE MONEY, KEEP MORE PROFITS -**



To get the no obligation process started contact local Real Estate expert:
Andrea Kirkpatrick, Licensed Broker in Oregon
Hybrid Real Estate
541-505-1943 • oregonbrokerandrea@gmail.com



FRAA ART CENTER

120 Maple Street
Phone: 541-997-4435

Hours Open: Wed-Fri 11am-5pm,
Sat 10am-5pm, Sun. 11am-5pm
Closed: Monday, Tuesday

Classes, Workshops & Events

NEW! Art of Journaling with Kay Lorraine

Tuesday, October 15th, 10:30 am-12:30 pm
Learn how to use art to enhance and express beyond the pen and paper, bringing life into your written words. Pre-registration required at FRAA.

Painting with John Leasure

Saturdays 9 am - 12 pm
No painting experience required. Contact: jleasure@hotmail.com or 541-991-2754 for details and fees.

FRAA joins Wine Trail/Float Hunt

FRAA will participate again this year in the Chamber’s Annual Wine Trail and Glass Float Hunt on Saturday, October 12, 12-5 pm. We will be hosting Server Winery.

Annual Members’ Meeting

Tuesday, October 22nd, 10:00 am. Come learn about what we have been doing and upcoming events, hear annual survey results, provide suggestions for our future, and vote for new board members.

Next Art Change-Out Day

Monday, November 11, 2019, 9-11 am

NEW! The Big Wave Spooky Word Contest 2019

Friday, October 25th, 7 pm at FRAA
Admission free. Poets, songwriters, storytellers all welcome. Must be your original work. Limited to 4 minutes. Registration at 6:30 pm. Prizes for 1st, 2nd and 3rd places as well as best costume!

Big Wave Poetry 1st Tuesday Open Mic

Tuesday, October 1, 2019 at 7:00 pm
Admission is free and refreshments will be available.

Poetry Workshop

Small group meeting of poets to enhance their written word. Last Tuesday of each month, 6:30-8:30 pm. Write fraaoregon@gmail.com if you are interested in joining.

Writers Workshop

Writers discuss their current works and get inputs from other writers. 2nd Tuesday, Monthly, 1-4 pm Write fraaoregon@gmail.com for details.

For more information about classes, visit fraaoregon.org. To register for these classes, please call or visit FRAA at our Art Center on Maple Street.

Local Eats

Your guide to great locally owned restaurants.

Mo's Restaurant

PARMESAN CRUSTED PETRALE SOLE

\$14.95
and for dessert...
SNICKER OR PEANUT BUTTER PIE FOR \$5.95

Mo's Old Town, Florence • Daily 11 am - 8 pm
Serving Bowls of comfort for Over 50 Years

SurfSide

RESTAURANT & CLASSIC COCKTAIL LOUNGE

We appreciate you!

Fall is a great time for locals to enjoy Surfside Restaurant and the magnificent ocean view! To say thank you for being or becoming a customer we'd like to reward you with our **Loyalty Card**. Come pick up yours today!

Driftwood Shores Resort
88416 1st Avenue, Florence

1285 RESTO BAR

Spring is here, stop in today.
Where good friends & great food come together!

Steak Seafood Pasta

Monday-Sunday 11am to Close

Reservations • Take Out
1285 Bay Street in Old Town, Florence
(541) 902-8338