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In March, WLAD Director Larry Farnsworth clarified that the creation of WLFEA did not mean the two districts would consolidate completely. "It's not a merger," he said. "It may never be a merger. It doesn't need to be a merger for us to realize a lot of the synergy that's before us. So, we can speak with one voice and we can give better direction to the chief. I'm sure the chief would appreciate having a single voice to direct his work and the work of his staff."

The creation of WLFEA also helps bring financial transparency and simplicity to the IGA.

"The concept is to give overall management to both districts," WLAD Director Rick Yecny said. "Under the proposal, the third entity, which would be a non-taxing entity, would have two board members from each board sit on the committee. If there was ever a tie vote, the full boards would convene with all 10 board members required to make a final decision by vote. The idea, too, is that all three boards would meet at the same time, which would cut the total number of meetings down from 24 to 12. We will have fewer meetings, which also means reducing the amount of time spent creating meeting packets, scheduling meetings — and it allows the boards to communicate directly."

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.

spectives regarding the debate over climate change. The arguing and acrimony surrounding the issue often threatened to drown out the reason for the concern. While millions of people around the planet voice deep concern for the need to take action in reducing or eliminating man-made toxins and pollutants as part of impacting climate change, millions of others go about their lives with little or no concern over the issue, choosing to believe that the human impacts on the planet are not as critical as others portray.

Regardless of where a person stands on the debate, each side believes there is validity in their point of view that should be acknowledged. However, there is an axiom that seems to apply in this situation, which is to hope for the best but plan for the worst.

This philosophy is embraced by the U.S. military, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and state and municipal governments around the country. The reason is simple: science and what people understand about it is always evolving and changing, creating the possibility of misinterpretation — which seems to be the main thrust behind the current debate over climate change.

Not to say the series couldn't find common ground in the debate.

Most agreed that the planet's resources are finite, and the processes often used to extract and consume them can be destructive, causing interruption of other natural cycles.

Humans now have the ability and the necessary tools to alter, modify or destroy every habitat on Earth. This can occur through intent, neglect, misjudgment or inaction.

But do we understand the long-term impacts of humanity's power to impose its will on the planet? And do we understand the Earth's ability to impose its own will humanity through its changing climate?

Those questions, and the debate over them, continue into the new decade.

**PAC ADOPTS GUIDELINES**

The City of Florence Public Art Committee (PAC) met on Dec. 2 at Florence City Hall for the first time since the city council approved the committee's modified workplan at its Nov. 4 meeting. The approval of the revised workplan removed the metaphorical "Sword of Damocles" that was hanging over the organization, as members worked successfully to respond to calls earlier this year for the committee's reorganization or dissolution.

These calls came after the selection of PAC's purchase of the "Stitching Time, Weaving Cultures" mural on the east side of the Lincoln Public Utilities District Building, on the corner of Quince Street and Highway 126.

The process by which art is integrated into the different aspects of the city's overall public art program was criticized by many residents as a direct result of the mural's installation. Public meetings were held to packed rooms of residents upset with or in favor of the subject matter and the style of the piece created by Marino-Heidel Studios of Portland. The makeup of PAC, its reporting process, and how

the city funds public art all changed drastically because of the mural controversy.

**ADDITIONAL 2019 HIGHLIGHTS:**

• **Awards:** On Jan. 23, Florence Area Chamber of Commerce held the 11th annual **Siuslaw Awards** at the Florence Events Center to honor local individuals and businesses for their contributions to the Siuslaw region. Winners included: 2018 Distinguished Service Award – Jenna Bartlett, Non-Profit Achievement Award – Florence Habitat for Humanity, Community Caring Award – TR Hunter Real Estate, Curb Appeal – City of Florence Public Works, Customer Service Award – Hecla Head Lighthouse Bed and Breakfast, Innovation in Business Award, which went to the Florence Public Art Committee and Stu Johnston Business of the Year – Siuslaw News. The Florence First Citizen was Dee Osborne and the Future First Citizen was Audrey Lowder.

• **Collard Lake Road:** Lane County voted to maintain Collard Lake Road, County Road No. 2216, and completed

Asphalt and sinkhole repair.

• **Democracy:** On Dec. 17, more than 200 people gathered in front of Florence City Hall in support of the House of Representatives' action to formalize Articles of Impeachment for President Donald J. Trump. Other protests or petitions throughout the year included the "Women's Wave" rally in January, the Red for Ed "grade-in" and signs in front of Siuslaw schools in support of funding Oregon's schools in May, the Lights for Liberty vigil at Florence First United Methodist Church in July, climate change protests in several locations and Florence 4 Life's pro-life gathering on Highway 101 in October.

• **Dunes City:** Dunes City Council and staff continued to discuss reasons the community should remain a city, especially as the city dealt with issues of taxation and revenues. In addition, a housing development on Little Woahink, water conditions and wildlife were all important topics throughout the year.

• **Education — Mapleton:** Mapleton Elementary School

opened its preschool in October. One parent said, "The preschool adds an important steppingstone for students, parents and the community." New school counselor Brittany Anderson now meets with students three half-days and one full day each week. The **Mapleton Community Resource Center**, part of the Western Lane Health Network, made progress towards opening.

• **Education — Region:** Siuslaw Vision completed a qualitative report on education in the entire region, ultimately determining "that learning is very personal and people are looking for it to apply to exactly what they want to learn in their lives," according to Siuslaw Vision Coordinator Stephanie Sarles. "In general, we discovered that our Siuslaw residents love and value learning and what it provides for them. They believe education is the key to whatever they want." **Food Backpack for Kids**, feedbackpackfor kids.com, continued to offer pre-packaged, ready-to-eat food to children who are food challenged.

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**CLIMATE CHANGE DEBATE**

In October, Siuslaw News launched a three-part series looking at the different per-

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