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all students; and whereas board members are critical in establishing the inclusive expectations, culture and conditions that allow for quality teaching and learning ... I Kate Brown, hereby proclaim January 2020 to be School Board Recognition month in Oregon and encourage all Oregonians to join in this observance."

In comments at the end of the meeting, Siuslaw School Board President Guy Rosinbaum stated his appreciation for the board and his fellow members.

"To the board especially, I know it can be trying at times. I know it is for me. I appreciate everything you do," he said.

After the proclamation, Facilities Advisory Committee (FAC) member Bob Orr gave an update on the progress the newly formed group has made. The commission was created to study the state of the facilities in the district, and what needs to be replaced or repaired.

"I would like to start by saying that having spent the day in an ice-cold high school building, it's nice to come over here where you actually have heat," Orr said, referring to the heating problems that Siuslaw High School has due to old equipment. "It leads me to the solution of getting rid of the building and starting over."

To many on the committee, it has become clear that a new high school will be needed, as repairs for the high school building are far costlier than starting new. However, the district's last bond measure in 2018 failed to pass for a variety of reasons, one of which was outreach by the district. This is a lesson that the FAC learned after speaking with an architect.

"They suggested we reach out to the community in a much bigger way than we have before. Listen to the

community, find out what they think is important regarding the schools, what are they willing to support, engage them in meaningful dialogue, and get an overall sense of what's going on out there," Orr said. "I think the committee took that to heart."

The FAC has just applied for a grant that could help members train in working with the community, and is looking for partnerships.

"We're moving forward as quickly as we can right now. We'll just keep you posted on how this proceeds," Orr said.

The school board then moved on to a group of policy updates from the state, one of which centered around staff texting with students.

The discussion stemmed from a revision regarding reporting requirements for suspected sexual conduct with students.

Originally, the text of the policy stated, "Texting or electronically communicating with a student through contact information gained as a contractor, agent or volunteer for the district is strongly discouraged." However, a revision changed "strongly discouraged" to "prohibited."

Siuslaw High School Principal Kerri Tatum had been hearing some complaints regarding the wording.

"I've been talking to coaches about best practices, and there has been considerable pushback from coaches and ASPIRE volunteers as far as this being the means of communication that is effective for students," Tatum said. "I'm not saying I necessarily agree — I don't think it's a good idea for adults to be texting individual students, but I am hearing some pushback."

The official way for electronic communication be-

tween students and staff is through email, which is recorded by the district's IT department. But modes of communication have changed over the years, and

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— **Guy Rosinbaum, Siuslaw School Board President**

as Tatum reported, certain staff members point out "This is how kids are communicating. They don't check their email."

Board member Susanne Mann-Heintz, who also volunteers with the district's ASPIRE program, notes that the students she works with do indeed prefer texting. She asked that if someone from ASPIRE does text a student, should they include another staff member in the text?

"One of the things that I've suggested to my coaches, is if they need to text a student, I feel they should include a student and parent, or a student and another coach," Tatum said. "But right now, there's not policy or law against it. I recommended to my staff not to put themselves in that situation."

Grzeskowiak said, "You do have students and teachers using the Remind app, which does the exact same function. But it makes the conversation visible to everybody that's in the group."

Rosinbaum laid out the difficulties with staff texting students.

"This has actually been a problem where text has been interpreted completely differently by parents and students than how they were meant by coaches and teachers," he said. "If the texting app or device that you're using isn't being recorded by our IT department, then I wouldn't allow it. How can

you prevent someone from changing a text to say what they want to say, nefariously or not nefariously? How do you defend against that if you're a teacher or a coach?

How do you defend against it if you're a kid?"

For Rosinbaum, third party monitoring was key.

"I think you're just opening yourself up, and the school district, to a lot of interpretation. And as we all know, once it starts getting interpreted in a certain way, that's the way it is, truth or not," he said. "These apps are changing faster than we can come up with policies for them. If the students aren't checking their emails, that's not your fault. That's their fault. And if this is the way we're going to communicate with you, check your email."

Later in the meeting, the board discussed upgrades that were made to Siuslaw Elementary School, including the near completion of the elementary gym, which had been damaged by water last year and had to be remodeled.

"I'd like to commend the staff and students for their response to the disruption of having the gym closed," Elementary Principal Mike Harklerode reported. "For about half of the day between Thanksgiving and Jan. 13, we had to use alternate spots for both PE classes and rainy day recesses. Mr. Wells and Mr. Decker did a great job providing meaningful PE (albeit, modified) in either room nine or the library."

"The new floor looks great. Coupled with a complete repaint, it looks like

a whole new facility. We should be ready to roll with regular schedules by the time of the board meeting."

He also praised the new intercom system which had been installed over the winter break.

"We returned to a new, and greatly improved, intercom system," Harklerode said, pointing out that on Jan. 7, the school had its first all-school announcement in nearly five years.

"Not only can we now communicate with every classroom in the building, but we also have features we've never seen before: Push button lockdown communications, volume control, room-by-room on/off switches, music playing capabilities. And many more we're just beginning to play with."

To close out the meeting, board members gave recaps of various meetings they had attended over the

past month in the district's new push to reach out to nonprofit or governmental institutions in the region.

Board member John Barnett had attended the City of Florence's Community and Economic Development Committee, where he learned about the city's push to create more tech sector jobs and a larger fiber network.

"The city and local businesses are seeing tech get more and more rural. It's exciting to see that it's working well," he said. He also pointed out that the school district has already made strides in making technology an important part of curriculum, from technology Career Technical Education courses to E-Sports.

"I'm glad that we're moving in the right direction to support that kind of stuff," Rosinbaum said. "We need the city to understand what we're doing here, because we need them to support us in what we're trying to do."

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Sponsored by the Bahá'ís of Florence and held at the Siuslaw Public Library, the gathering expressed disappointment rather than frustration over the feeling that the country has strayed so far from what many in attendance perceived to be America's place as a leader in the worldwide struggle for social justice for all — everywhere.

King was only 39 years old when he was assassinated on April 4, 1968. He had spent the previous decade engaged in a struggle to help his fellow African American citizens achieve the most basic of human rights, foremost of which was the right to vote and the opportunity

to work and raise a family in peace. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 for his work to solidify racial equality.

For many years, King insisted that non-violence was the path to achieving the civil right movement's goals, although King was killed before he saw the positive results his strategy had produced.

One of the most enduring testaments to the effectiveness of his work is Martin Luther King Jr. Day, observed the third Monday of January each year as a federal holiday that marks his birthday and legacy.

Locally, a full house turned out for the Florence recognition of King's work. Titled "Healing the Divide:

Service, Kindness, Compassion," the remembrance was held in the Bromley Room and featured speakers, poetry, songs and readings from King's speeches and sermons. In addition, Florence ORGANIZES (FOR) leader Maggie Bagon recapped the history of the Civil Rights Era.

Students also got involved. Tributes to the memory of King were given by high school student Ramiro Ramirez (see Page A4 of Siuslaw News) and his sister Isabella, who sang a "The Truth Untold." Local vocalist Nyah Vollmar also performed, this time singing her own song, "Thousand Wishes."

"Nyah's song lyrics to slip away from the hating and

letting our visions become our missions filled my old heart with hope for a better future," said Suzanne Mann-Heintz, one of the organizers for the event.

The presentations during the event highlighted opportunities to continue the work begun by King nationally in the local community.

Suzanne Mann-Heintz said she was pleased with both the strong turnout for the remembrance and the recognition that all people can contribute to the effort to further social justice in many areas of life.

"I, too, believe social justice issues are a hallmark in these divisive times. I'm an 'All for one and one for all' kind of woman," Mann-Heintz said.



Local Eats

Your guide to great locally owned restaurants.