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## FURA meets on audit, ReVision and Quince Street development

The Florence Urban Renewal Agency (FURA) held its monthly meeting on June 30. The agenda for the Wednesday evening meeting was centered around an update of COVID-19 procedures and reports from Administrative Services Director Anne Baker and Acting City Manager Megan Messmer regarding the results of an agency audit and an update on the ReVision Florence Streetscaping project.

The COVID-19 discussion was the first item considered by the directors and was led by City Recorder Kelly Weese.

Weese addressed in detail the public comments requirements for holding municipal meetings, as there has been some concern expressed by residents over their ability to participate in public policy development since the closure of public meetings.

See FURA page 5A

## Florence man sentenced to life in prison

*Kevin Lee Cooper was arrested in 2019 for murder of his mother*

Kevin Lee Cooper, 62 of Florence, was sentenced to life in prison yesterday after pleading guilty to killing his mother, Anola Beth, in her home on Munsel Creek Drive in 2019.

Cooper pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in Lane County Circuit Court this past June, avoiding a trial scheduled for August.

See SENTENCE page 6A

## Celebrating Independence Day 2020



PHOTOS BY MARK BRENNAN/SIUSLAW NEWS

Businesses across town were some of the first to show their patriotic spirit and put up decorations for Florence Habitat for Humanity's first annual Fourth of July Porch Parade.

### Habitat creates 4th of July Porch Parade as an alternative to cancelled events

BY LENA FELT  
SIUSLAW NEWS

This Fourth of July will look different for many people across the country. Due to social distancing regulations most large-scale Independence Day events are canceled. Locally, this includes the Florence Area Chamber of Commerce annual fireworks show over the Siuslaw River and the pie and watermelon eating contest hosted by Florence Habitat for Humanity and the City of Florence.

"We were really disappointed because we had taken the pie and wa-

termelon eating contest and were expanding it this year," said Janell Morgan, the executive director of Florence Habitat for Humanity. "We were going to do a kid's bike parade and have live music. We had all sorts of things planned. So, we were really disappointed when it all got cancelled."

After hearing about the cancellations, Morgan, along with the rest of Habitat's Fourth of July Celebration Committee, began brainstorming other possible ways to honor the

See 4TH OF JULY page 6A

## DeFazio seeks to 'Move Forward' with \$1.5 trillion infrastructure act, now on its way to Senate

BY MARK BRENNAN  
SIUSLAW NEWS

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a massive infrastructure package, H.R. 2, "The Moving Forward Act," on July 1. The legislation was drafted by Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chair Peter DeFazio, U.S. Representative for Oregon's 4th congressional district, who managed the many hours of debate surrounding the bill, which ultimately passed by a vote of 233-188.

The Moving Forward Act is a \$1.5 trillion plan to rebuild many facets of America's physical infra-

structure with the added goal of providing new opportunities for workers and small businesses dealing with a wildly shifting business environment.

The act allocates monies for repair and upgrades to roads, bridges and transit systems but also to school districts, housing and additionally provides significant assistance to state and local governments with specific projects that improve broadband availability and efficiency.

The Moving Forward Act was actively managed on the house floor by DeFazio, who has been working on crafting the bill with

an eye towards not only repairing disintegrating bridges and mass transit systems but also to focus hiring workers displaced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Passage of this bold, forward-thinking infrastructure bill is proof that, finally, there is a majority of us in Congress who won't accept the status quo and instead are willing to fight for a new vision that invests in our communities, addresses the climate crisis, and creates better opportunities for all," DeFazio said after passage of the act. "We get there by putting millions of people to work in jobs

See ACT page 5A

## Crisis Response answers increased calls for mental health help

*MCR calls for hope amid alerts for suicide, addiction, fear of pandemic*

BY JARED ANDERSON  
SIUSLAW NEWS

**Editor's note:** To contact the Mobile Crisis Response team for help, call 541-997-3515, the non-emergency number of emergency dispatch. In case of emergency, contact 911 and ask for MCR.

Since the pandemic and resulting shutdown began, the Siuslaw region's Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCR) has seen a rise in the number of calls of suicidal thoughts and attempts. One of the biggest increases has been seen in the younger population of the region.

"We've got a lot of people struggling right now," said Lori Severance, who works with the MCR program. "There are mental health issues such as depression, anxiety or issues with bipolar. A lot of times, it's connected with being underemployed, unemployed — just not being able to get on their feet."

For the older population, Severance stated that one of the biggest concerns she is seeing is fear of the pandemic. While the population has adapted well to many of the restrictions the shutdowns have brought, tourists and locals alike have flouted regulations regarding social distancing and mask wearing. This can keep residents at risk from the virus away from local

businesses, which in turns affects jobs.

"There's no easy answer," Severance said about the pandemic. "As a town, if we enforce it and depoliticize it and make it an issue of total safety and respect. It's time to find a new normal. This is going to be with us for a while. It's not going to go away anytime soon. We can't just hunker down at home and be fearful. We've got to find a new way to get out there that is safe for everybody."

Above all, Severance said people need hope.

"The main thing is to give people hope and baby steps in the right direction," she added.

When Severance started with

Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue three years ago, the department had a chaplain who would respond to sudden death situations, car accidents and house fires.

"When he retired, they replaced him with four people," she said. "We renamed the program the Community Support Team (CST) because we wanted to broaden our clientele."

In November of last year, Western Lane Fire and EMS Authority signed a contract with Lane County to provide 24/7 mental health crisis services in addition to the services local agencies were already providing. This led to the creation of the MCR.

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Siuslaw News  
NEWS & VIEWS THAT DEFINE OUR COMMUNITY  
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### WEATHER



Partly sunny with a high of 63 and a low tonight of 50.  
Full forecast on A3

### COMMUNITY



OPB holds annual Ice Cream Social  
INSIDE — A3

### LIFESTYLE



In honor of the Novellis  
INSIDE — B

RECORDS  
Obituaries & response logs  
INSIDE — A2

A LOOK BACK  
INSIDE — A10

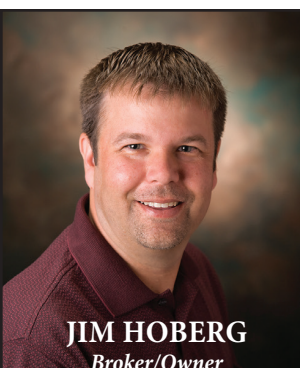
SIDE SHOW  
Activities and comics every Saturday  
INSIDE — B4

CLASSIFIEDS  
Listings and notices  
INSIDE — B5

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