



SIUSLAW NEWS: A LOOK BACK AT 130 YEARS INSIDE — A7



'Remote Workers and the Rise of Main Street'

How lifestyle destinations can harness remote workers for economic growth

By CHANTELE MEYER SIUSLAW NEWS

Small towns on the Oregon coast are gaining attention as lifestyle destinations due to their abundance of natural beauty, recreational opportunities and charming business centers.

The discussion, which also included representatives from British Columbia and Montana, centered how the novel coronavirus COVID-19 might allow remote workers to live where they want while working where they want — as long as the technology infrastructure is in place.

PNWER covers the five northwest US states and all of western Canada.

"It's a very diverse, large area," said PNWER Senior Program Manager Steve Myers. "We're lucky today to have representatives from three areas around our region that represent a diverse geography and community perspective when it comes to economic development and other issues around our region."

The panel included Roblan, representing his hometown of Coos Bay and the Oregon coast; Central Okanagan Economic Development Council Manager Krista Mallory, representing Kelowna in B.C.; and Bozeman, Mont., Economic Development Director Brit Fontenot. PNWER Innovation Co-Chair Nirav S. Desai moderated the panel.

Desai described the three locations as "lifestyle cities — great locations that aren't just fun to vacation in, but are great towns."

Although vastly different in location, the three areas encompass similar growth trajectories in recent years, with technology as a key point in economic development. Similarly, the impacts of economic shutdowns due to COVID-19 have caused people in these areas to plan for a future where in-person meetings may not be possible.

See ECONOMY page 5A



COURTESY IMAGE

'Sea and shore' to unite in new mural

Clawson's Wheelhouse waits on city approval after community funds project

Sometime in the next few months, a colorful new mural titled "Legends and Lore of Sea and Shore"

By LENA FELT SIUSLAW NEWS

recognition in town after he restored the 1990 mural of a whale on ICM Restaurant's front entrance on Bay Street

will appear on the south side of Clawson's Wheelhouse on Eighth Street off Highway 101. The new mural has been in the works since last October, when Amy Clawson spread the word that she was hoping to add some life to the blank white siding of her business.

Local artist Michael Wood jumped at the opportunity as soon as he heard Clawson was looking for an artist to take on the job.

"It really was just serendipity how it came to together," said Wood, who gained

in Historic Old Town Florence.

"When I was working on the ICM mural, the Novellis asked me if I would do a mural on their little crab shack on the dock as well," Wood said. "So I did, and I sort of got a reputation for those murals."

One of the first concepts Wood pitched to Clawson was inspired by the interior of Clawson's Wheelhouse, which showcases several mermaids and other nautical elements.

See MURAL page 6A

Mapleton schools to hold classes online for all grades

2020-21 school year to begin Sept. 14

By JARED ANDERSON SIUSLAW NEWS

The Mapleton School District has announced it will be beginning the 2020-21 school year online, with the possibility of moving to a hybrid schedule later in the year. The decision comes after Oregon Gov. Kate Brown announced new metrics for districts to allow onsite learning.

"I know it's hard for a lot of our families, especially working families that will now have kids at home with online learning. But we're going to do our best to support them," said District Superintendent Jodi O'Mara.

When O'Mara discussed reopening at the beginning of summer, she stated that they hoped they could open up fully on-site, no hybrid models.

See MAPLETON page 6A

THE DIRECTION WE'RE GOING

A deep dive into partisan politics in Florence and the Siuslaw region

By SIUSLAW NEWS EDITORIAL STAFF

In this two-part introduction to Siuslaw News' investigative series that began with a front-page editorial on Aug. 8, we have chosen to eliminate references to specific individuals and groups, with those specifics coming in subsequent installments of this series. We have chosen this approach so that our readers can first get a clear understanding of the broad issues related to partisanship in our community and its impacts on local government, and hopefully do so without creating additional fracturing between specific groups, individuals and our community.

What follows is an overview which is clear but not accusatory.

The groups we write about in this series have often used soundbites without context in order to both denigrate political opponents and further divide the community. We are doing our best to provide the truth without adding to that division.

The City of Florence has come to this moment because of a series of small steps, miscommunications, mistrust and overall frustration with the direction of things resulting from decisions both distant and in the recent past. It's these smaller steps that we will be covering over the next few months as we examine specific moments that have led to where we are today.

But to understand any of this, it's important to know what is being fought over. We felt the best way to

do that was to begin with an overview of this investigation, how it came about and what mistakes have been made on all sides — including our own — along the way.

"Have city committees been infiltrated by partisan actors?"

In February 2019, members of the newsroom here at Siuslaw News were still learning from mistakes we had made during the 2018 election for Florence City Council. In a two-part series titled "Chaos in the Community," we described a number of disturbing incidents that had occurred in the run-up to that election. Incidents included sitting councilors attempting to push out candidates, vandalism being reported and ethics complaints filed.

However, what took our staff most by surprise was that it was occurring at all. Two of our three reporters had been hired little more than a year earlier, and none had noticed any signs that the political atmosphere had deteriorated to the extent that it had. So, 2018 — we thought — was a one-off and something merely sparked by the heightened political atmosphere in the nation.

We were wrong. After the 2018 election, it seemed most were ready to move on as elected officials made hopeful statements about working together. There was a sense that a level of normalcy would return.

But by February, elected officials were again openly fighting with each other. Many of those arguments surrounded the direction of the

city, from how affordable housing should be approached, to the role of job creation. The Public Art Committee (PAC) and the Florence Urban Renewal District (FURA) were suddenly becoming battle grounds. At that point, we began asking the city a host of questions about those agencies and others; the city had spent countless hours and tens of thousands of dollars on community planning.

We decided to look at committees and their role in the city, how some had flourished while others had failed — some due to internal conflicts among members, others because of the sheer enormity of the task at hand.

We found plenty of information on the issues facing the city, and there were some clear disagreements about what direction the city should take. But ultimately council members and committee officials appeared to have more in common than not and the gaps in agreement seemed easy to bridge.

Yet problems continued to escalate although no one could pinpoint the reasons why.

To find out, Siuslaw News began asking questions beyond the scope of what was transparent and into things that had become more opaque. Though most of our questions were attempts to either dispel or verify rumors — some given from elected officials themselves — the questions began exacerbating what had already become a tense situation between elected officials.

See DIRECTION page 8A

Siuslaw News NEWS & VIEWS THAT DEFINE OUR COMMUNITY VOL. 130, NO. 64 FLORENCE, OREGON

WEATHER



Mostly sunny with a high of 65 and a low tonight of 47.

Full forecast on A3

COMMUNITY



Yachats begins annual banner sale INSIDE — A3

LIFESTYLE



Free Fishing weekend INSIDE — B

RECORDS

Obituaries & response logs Inside — A2

NEW: TV GUIDE

Inside — B3-B4

KIDS CORNER

Activities for kids Inside — B5

CLASSIFIEDS

Listings and notices Inside — B6

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