



**SIUSLAW NEWS:  
A LOOK BACK AT 130 YEARS**

INSIDE — A7



**'Our city is prepared to help these people'**

*Community prepares to help those affected by wildfires*

BY CHANTELE MEYER  
SIUSLAW NEWS

Much of the western United States has been blanketed by a thick layer of smoke since Monday night as eastern-blowing winds brought dry heat to California, Oregon and Washington. This has compounded already dry conditions and sparked wildfires in both rural and heavily populated areas. In the first days of an emergency of this scale, official reports and social media pages have been limited to getting areas evacuated and keeping people safe.

"In an emergency like this, and this is a fast-moving emergency, the first 24-48-72 hours in this case, all you'll see those responders talking about is life and safety," said Megan Messmer, City of Florence Public Information Officer and coordinator of Western Lane Emergency Operations Group. "They're getting people to safety because it is basically now or never for some of those areas."

The City of Florence partners with many governments and agencies across the state, including Lincoln County, where the Echo Mountain Complex fire is burning, and the eastern part of Lane County, where the Holiday Farm Fire is burning. Like other groups, it is in communication with the Red Cross and is ready to assist with evacuees.

"In the first few days, you don't see a lot of where people can donate from the official sources. ... Once people are safe, then we can figure out the community can wrap around them and provide the support and help they need," Messmer said. "That's what you're starting to see yesterday and today."

Towards the end of this week, local community members started several drives for water, food and other supplies. Unfortunately, however, it was unclear on what could be accepted by the Red Cross. Other than financial donations, the threat of COVID-19 has changed how people can give in an emergency.

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**CONSTRUCTING A GATEWAY**



PHOTOS BY MARK BRENNAN/SIUSLAW NEWS

The installation of one of the main features of the ReVision Florence project began this week as the Old Town Gateway Memorial structure was completed. The project has taken years to come to fruition and the cost of the gateway is more than \$425,000 to this point. David Dougherty, the designer working with MurraySmith Engineers and the City of Florence on the project, said he was pleased with the first stages of the install. "It seems to be going well up to this point," he said on Thursday. "We are working on the lighting inside the columns." Dougherty said crews planned on having the gateway ready for a test of the lighting last night.

**Smoke and fire cause concern, confusion, rumors**

BY MARK BRENNAN  
SIUSLAW NEWS

The recent extreme fire events throughout California and the Pacific Northwest are dramatically impacting the lives of residents in Florence. Drifting banks of smoke and toxic particulates have darkened local skies since Monday, finally lessening later in the week as Pacific winds began moving the massive clouds of smoke away from the area.

There has also been a series of smaller fires responded to by Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue (SVFR), raising concern among residents and sparking unfounded rumors on social media that arsonists were at work in the area.

"These are certainly unusual times, and everyone is extremely

on edge right now, including our firefighters. We are reasonably certain that the Sweet Creek fire was intentionally set but none of our other recent fires were considered to be suspicious," said

**"We are still responding to multiple calls each day for individuals using chain saws or with small fires in their yard. Anything that can produce a spark is not allowed during these extreme fire conditions. ... It only takes one fire associated with strong, hot winds to start a conflagration."**

— Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue Chief Michael Schick

SVFR Chief Michael Schick. "We had two dumpster fires occur about the same time the other day but, geographically, they were very far apart and neither is believed to be arson."

Schick explained that dumpster fires are most often due to the improper disposal of materials — car ash trays, cigarette butts, cleaning solutions, small batteries — making it extremely important

for people to be cautious when disposing of dry materials or anything else that could potentially start a fire.

"For example, be very cautious when dumping ashes from a barbecue. They may seem to be cool, but it only takes one hidden ember to be exposed to a little breeze to start it actively burning again," said Schick.

In fact on Friday, Lane County Waste Management announced that it had temporarily closed seven of its waste transfer stations through the weekend due to hazardous air conditions, including the Swisshome transfer station. Florence remains open as of press time Friday.

Another problematic situation has been the dryness of the air, as well as grass and brush.

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**City of Florence Planning, Transportation committees meet**

BY MARK BRENNAN  
SIUSLAW NEWS

The Sept. 8 Florence Planning Commission meeting had a short agenda as the two-and half-hour meeting was primarily focused on the Planned Unit Development (PUD) planned at 35th Street and Rhododendron Drive. Commissioners had continued the testimony from Aug. 25 regarding the development meeting in order to gather materials required by the city and the planning commission in order

to move forward with the application process.

Chairperson John Murphey asked for a roll call, led the pledge of allegiance and turned the meeting over to Florence Senior Planner Roxanne Johnston, who updated the commission on the application process.

The applicant, Mercedes Serra of 3J Consulting, is coordinating the applications on behalf of APIC Florence Holdings, LLC, which is seeking approvals for the expansive proposed PUD. The project would include 31 detached single-family

residences, 49 single-family attached residences, and 46 multi-family units. The properties are comprised of approx. 9.28 acres located at the NE intersection of Rhododendron Drive and 35th Street, zoned Mobile/Manufactured Home Residential District (RMH) and regulated by Florence City Code Title 10, Chapter 10.

The scale of the PUD has caused concern among surrounding neighbors who are questioning both the city and developers on a number of aspects of the pending approv-

al, including concerns over major traffic increases in the area, as well as the manner in which stormwater will be collected and disbursed. Other concerns include the need for a turn indicator on Rhododendron Drive and the overall livability of the neighborhoods surrounding the development.

The city has determined that a number of conditions must be met by the applicant before final approval can be given and construction would be allowed to begin.

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**WEATHER**



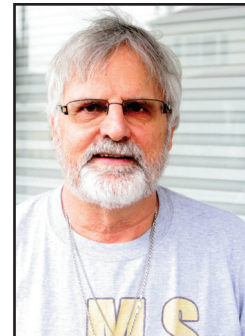
Partly cloudy with a high of 61 and a low tonight of 49.  
Full forecast on A3

**COMMUNITY**



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