

Library Tidings

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Florence selects Margaret Wisniewski for open council seat

3-1 vote secures city council appointment, scheduled for Jan. 25

By MARK BRENNAN
SIUSLAW NEWS

The vacant seat on the Florence City Council was filled in less than 20 minutes on Monday, Jan. 11, in a 3-1 vote during a special meeting held virtually. During the meeting, which was scheduled specifically to address the vacancy, Margaret Wisniewski was selected to fill the seat left open by the resignation of

former councilor Geraldine Prociw last October.

Six individuals applied for the opening to join re-elected Mayor Joe Henry, along with Councilor Woody Woodbury and newly elected councilors Sally Wantz and Bill Meyer. Six candidates for the council seat were interviewed by the council prior to Monday's meeting before selecting Wisniewski, who had been a write-in candidate for a council seat last

November but had finished last with just 11 percent of the vote.

The meeting began with a preliminary "paper" ballot done via messaging, with Henry and Woodbury voting in favor of Wisniewski, while Wantz voted for the second-place finisher in the Florence mayoral race, Jo Beaudreau, and Meyer choosing Joel Marks to fill the council vacancy.

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COURTESY PHOTO

Margaret Wisniewski

'The only way to get through this is by participating in the effort that we know works'

Florence's COVID-19 cases soar to 119 as Lane County Public Health confirms area's first two fatalities

By CHANTELE MEYER
SIUSLAW NEWS

"We've got to make it so that people understand that, at the very base of what you're doing — when you're choosing not to mask, when you're choosing to have gatherings, when you're choosing to not distance yourself — you're taking someone else's life in your hands," stated Lane County Public Health (LCPH) Public Information Officer Jason Davis.

LCPH has been monitoring COVID-19 cases since the outbreak reached Oregon in February 2020. For a majority of that time, the Florence 97439 zip code reported few cases until a recent surge brought the number of people infected with the novel coronavirus up to 119, as reported Tuesday. Thirty-six of those cases were from the past two weeks.

In addition, Florence has had its first deaths connected to COVID-19.

"We are very concerned about Florence," Davis said. "The Florence area has been in some ways fortunate, in that you're behind the



COURTESY PHOTO

Lane County Public Health is located inside the Lane County Health & Human Services Building at 151 W 7th Ave. in Eugene, Ore.

curve and haven't had to battle a large-scale outbreak up until very recently. But now — it's starting to creep up there."

He compared the coast's numbers to where the rest of the county was this past May, where social connections began to make COVID cases rise. At that time, LCPH had enough staff to trace people's activities and present further spread.

"Unfortunately, we aren't able to really drill down on the case level that we were able to back in April and May," Davis said.

Part of this is because of a larger outbreak in the Eugene/Springfield metropolitan area, which began

in November and continues, with more than 250 cases reported in the county over the weekend.

That led to Lane County entering "surge protocol," according to Davis. Under that, LCPH scaled back on the amount of questions asked of people who have contracted the virus, which has made contact tracing even more difficult.

"That makes it tough for communities like Florence that are just now seeing that influx of cases," Davis said. "You have the ability to potentially stifle it or to slow it if you get the right information in the hands of the people who are maybe inadvertently spreading the virus."

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KXCR purchases building, takes over FCC licensing

By MARK BRENNAN
SIUSLAW NEWS

KXCR, Florence's nonprofit community radio station at 90.7 FM, has continued to inform, educate and even grow during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The station, which received the approval to broadcast on the public airwaves from the FCC in 2014, operates on a shoe-string budget with volunteers filling positions that, at traditional radio stations, would be compensated employment.

KXCR broadcasts 24 hours a day, seven days a week and recently became the holder of the FCC license for the station, which had officially been the responsibility of Western Lane Translator (WLT). It also streams online at kxcr.net.

KXCR's Board President Gigi Lassar said she is optimistic about the future of the station and the ways in which it may interact with the community moving forward.

"The license transfer from WLT has just been finalized and approved by the FCC. KXCR is also in the midst of purchasing the KXCR building on Ninth Street from one of the KXCR's founders, Bill Durst, who has always been an incredible support to KXCR. We are closing escrow next week," Lassar said.

KXCR provides daily coastal tide reports, regional weather updates and links to local news outlets in addition to its program schedule. It offers a wide variety of musical and informational programming, some locally produced.

"We are also starting a few new

programs as well, like Medical Mondays and a couple of meditation programs as well," Lassar added.

Michael J. Kello, vice president of KXCR's board, admits challenges presented by the pandemic have been numerous and have led the station to explore other ways to complete their mission to "Educate, Inform and Entertain."

One of the main reasons KXCR has been able to survive the COVID lockdowns is the fact that it has a small group of people who are able to work in group spaces when others are not present at the station. Coupled with the measures instituted to align KXCR with Oregon Health Authority (OHA) COVID-19 guidelines, KXCR has so far been successful.

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Scholarships help businesses prepare for pandemic

Florence, LCC partner on course for hospitality/tourism

By JARED ANDERSON
SIUSLAW NEWS

Lane Community College (LCC) and the City of Florence have teamed up to offer courses to help local private businesses learn the intricacies of cleaning in the pandemic age. The city is providing scholarships for two LCC courses, one of which is called the Tourism/Hospitality Quick-Course program, a six-hour course that focuses specifically on the customer service aspects of controlling the virus through cleaning — though the reasons to take the course go well beyond COVID-19.

"I think there will be a new normal," said Russ Pierson, Dean of Lane Community College Florence Center. "I think folks will be much more sensitive to the possibility of infection. Businesses will want this understanding for years."

Back in April, LCC created the Environmental Service Aide certification course, an 18-hour online class which provides students with entry level knowledge on reducing the spread of germs and diseases in healthcare facilities.

"It really is oriented toward folks who want a career in healthcare," Pierson said. "It would enable someone to get the training they need to get a job at a long-term care facility or a hospital, which are in need of environmental service aides. They kind of look like custodians, but they have additional training with bloodborne pathogens and viruses, such as COVID."

Soon after offering the course, LCC began receiving requests for a shortened version of the course.

"Something oriented toward our restaurants or small businesses that would train people how to do everything right," said Pierson. "That's when we developed this quick course that takes out a lot of the medical terminology, while adding in information that applies specifically to the hospitality sector, retail and small businesses."

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WEATHER



Partly cloudy with a high of 54 and a low of 44.

Full forecast on A3

COMMUNITY



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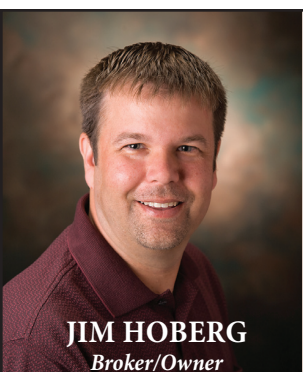
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