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spring break last March and jumped feet first into comprehensive distance learning (CDL). By May, she felt she had a handle on it.

“The online part was difficult. ... I could barely send a stinking email, let alone teach online. So I spent a lot of summertime watching YouTube videos and practicing — and I was up for the challenge,” she said.

Rankin joined the elementary school’s planning committee for the 2020-21 school year and helped develop a process for CDL, limited in-person instruction (LIPI) and the hybrid plan that will go into effect Feb. 22.

“If I could look at my crystal ball, I just can’t believe we are where we are. It’s been a challenge. But I’m kind of proud of myself — I’ve actually become a pretty good online teacher,” she said.

So much so that her colleagues presented her with an award for her work in technology.

“I would have laughed at that, because I consider my-

self a techno idiot, but that’s what they gave me. And I actually have overcome some obstacles, which I’m proud of,” Rankin said. “I have made a rapport with my kids online, which I did not think was possible.”

The fourth grade has been lucky, she said, since she is able to teach the students via livestream. The district sends out materials, and the students are able to follow along while she teaches.

“The kids are on with me,” she said. “When we’re doing a math lesson, they have that math lesson in front of them. I’ve enjoyed that. It’s been a little more interacting, a little more engaging.”

She’s had to learn to engage virtually with students and connect them to the learning materials in whole new ways.

“I teach, whether my kids are getting anything out of it or not. I know I put a lot into it. This is the hardest I’ve ever worked in the 30 years that I’ve been a teacher.”

Rankin has had to learn a lot of lessons over the years. While she said teaching hasn’t changed much, she has had to adapt.

Her very first class consisted of 37 fifth graders. She

had to learn not to be their friend, but their instructor and disciplinarian.

“It took until Christmas to get my class back into order. So I vowed there and then that I will lay down the law.

She also had to adapt the way she planned lessons. Things wouldn’t always go the direction she wanted, but those impromptu days sometimes were the most effective.

“I love teaching. ... I love watching them grow. I enjoy planning and then watching that lesson that I planned come about, and how the kids really love it. ... Just watching kids ‘get’ it. That’s probably one of my favorites is when they look at me and go, ‘I get it!’ They love that, and it makes the teacher happy, too.”

— Vicki Rankin, teacher at Siuslaw Elementary School

Now, even online,” Rankin said.

This method has helped hundreds of students find success both within and outside of the classroom.

“I really think kids want (discipline), even though they act like they don’t think they do,” she said. “It just makes for a better teaching environment. Not chaotic. You know, it was chaotic in my room that first year.”

One thing that has changed about teaching is the expansion of the internet and accessing information.

“Now kids can find answers to things at their fingertips,” Rankin said. “But I also think it’s been a little bit of a demise. People want instant gratification, and they don’t want to work for it.”

“I love teaching. I mean, I do. One thing I could say is, kids are still kids. Even though things are different right now and there are things that are different about learning, I just love watching them learn. I love watching them grow. I enjoy planning and then watching that lesson that I planned come about, and how the kids like really love it. ... Just watching kids ‘get’ it. That’s probably one of my favorites is when they look at me and go, ‘I get it!’ They love that, and it makes the teacher happy, too.”

In fact, Rankin loves teaching so much that she will tutor a pod of students as they navigate the next semester of school.

“I’m going to help a group

of kids that are struggling,” she said. “This has been hard for parents and families, and their dynamics. We are moving into a hybrid model, but it’s still not kids here at school all the time. So I’m going to help a small group of kids get through the rest of the year.”

Her initial plans had been for leisure, she added, and travel. But the COVID-19 pandemic will keep her local. This also means some more time with her 17-year-old son, a Siuslaw junior.

Rankin had considered retiring earlier, but the promise to get to see kids back on campus saw her through.

“I came in over (winter) break and got my room ready, because at that point, we saw kids! We did LIPI and we invited kids in, in very small groups. They were here and I did see them and it was really fun to see them in person,” she said. “But I’ll tell you what — teaching with a mask is not an easy task whatsoever.

Teaching throughout the pandemic has not been easy. The “ever constant changing” has been a challenge, she said, especially with the flexibility required by teachers and families.

“But I’ll miss teaching. I’m sure I’ll miss it. Maybe not right away,” Rankin said. “You know, when you’ve been doing something for 30 years, it does become part of your life. Your school people become your family. You look forward to it. It’s all those things. You make a rapport with them. So yes, I’m going to miss them all.”

The Siuslaw School District Board of Directors learned of Rankin’s retirement during its January meeting.

Director Paul Burns has worked with Rankin and her classrooms at the Knowles Creek Smolt Trap through his job as a fisheries biologist at the U.S. Forest Service.

“Vicki Rankin has put in so much time and energy over the years. She’s put in a lot to this district,” Burns said. “I hope she knows that we respect and appreciate her time.”

The school board expressed sadness that they couldn’t shake her hand or see her in person as they thanked her for her service to the district.

As for Rankin, she didn’t want a ton of attention as she wrapped up her time at Siuslaw.

“I think it’s time for me to ride off into the sunset,” she said.

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biennium, then quickly produce a biennium budget,” said Reynolds. “Currently, there are five goals in place. They’ve evolved a little bit over time, and I feel like they are really great goals and do encompass a great body of work.”

The goals include the delivery of city services; sustaining and improving the quality of life for Florence residents and visitors; creating a strategy and actions to sustain and improve Florence’s economy; working to sustain and improve communication and citizen trust; and to work to improve the city’s financial position. These goals are selected by the city council annually, with similar goals in place since 2016.

In her review, Reynolds mentioned not only the need for councilors to act as ex-officio members on city committees, but also to consider representation on other governmental boards and committees.

“One of the things I am most proud of since I became city manager is getting the permission and the authority to be a part of these more regional groups, whether it is here in Florence, here in our backyard, or across the county and state,” Reynolds said. “And we really have seen some benefits come from that partnership and us being at the table.”

The city manager also spoke about some of the future items she and city staff will be working on this year, including an update to the policies related to use of public spaces.

“We recognize it is time to develop some space reservation use policies and procedures so the community can access those assets as easily as possible and so that we can remain good stewards of those facilities,” Reynolds said.

Next, Weese covered her responsibilities in her dual role as city recorder and economic development coordinator.

Her presentation consisted of a recap of city policies regarding ongoing issues she has been overseeing, including updates to COVID public policies, working on development projects and the need to consider a local plan for post-COVID integration of Florence City Hall into public meetings.

Weese also mentioned the need to develop a long-term

staffing plan for Florence’s economic development efforts and announced the completion of the City’s contracting and purchasing rules, along with a complete restructuring of the City’s Administrative services Department.

Following this, Turner recapped Florence Police Department’s completed work plan goals, which included the acquisition of body-worn camera equipment and the implementation of policies regarding their use.

The police chief spoke of his appreciation and support of the Mobile Crisis Response Team, mentioning the need to attain funding, most likely from the county, to continue the program.

Turner also included his thoughts on the use of new technologies by the FPD, especially in the areas of communication by utilizing a new group-sharing app, and in the field of information gathering.

“One of the things that COVID has brought to the police department is a lot of opportunity to participate with technologies that we normally wouldn’t have been able to participate with,” Turner stated. “Smart Board technology is just simply a system that allows one administrator to communicate with all employees, at their workstations, at their computers, to provide training, information or any kind of updates — all while keeping them socially distanced and safe.”

New technology and a reduction in cost of some basic equipment was another point Turner emphasized to councilors.

“We are looking into the feasibility and implementation of a drone program, as a patrol resource,” he said. “You’ve probably heard about this in the media. One of the things that is very exciting is that it has become so inexpensive and much more affordable.”

Turner went on to explain a drone would be a force multiplier and that it allows officers to see what is happening in difficult-to-navigate terrain or even inside of buildings. He added he was pleased with the enthusiasm his officers have expressed in adding to their knowledge and new tools available.

Public Works gave the last presentation of the meeting, with Miller recapping the completed items on his department’s work plan goals, including the completion of

work at the Florence Municipal Airport, which has had significant upgrades to its lighting array and runway.

Additionally, Miller talked about the relocation of the Florence First Harvest Community Gardens to Rolling Dunes Park and the improvement of ball fields at Miller Park, including completion of a storage maintenance building during the past year.

Finally, the council discussed committee appointments.

The number of openings

on committees and commissions which councilors should fill is extensive, a point that was made often during the meeting. That point comes into sharper focus when considering the various county, state and regional groups which deal with municipal issues.

Henry, who has served in many committee capacities and continues to do so, suggested one way that might lessen the load on busy councilors.

“We did have some kind of informal discussions —

and people volunteered and we assigned people — but I want to make that official at our next meeting,” he suggested. “Perhaps some of our committee chairs could take on assignments of things that are related to their particular committees.”

The proposal will be revisited once the final assignment of committee positions have been confirmed during the Feb. 18 Florence City Council Special Work Session.

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