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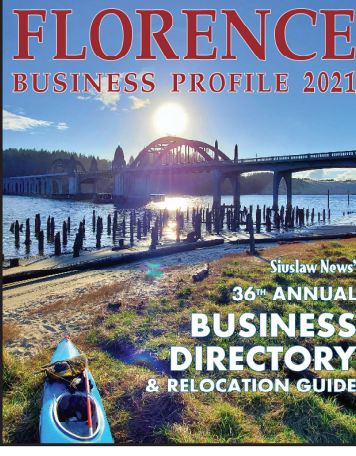
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NEWS & VIEWS THAT DEFINE OUR COMMUNITY
VOL. 131, NO. 17
FEBRUARY 27, 2021
FLORENCE, OREGON

WEATHER



Cloudy and cold with a high of 48 and a low of 37.
Full forecast on A3

COMMUNITY



Local movie theater prepares to re-open
INSIDE — A3

SPORTS



Siuslaw, Mapleton volleyball set to serve
INSIDE — B1

RECORDS

Obituaries & emergency logs
Inside — A2

SIDE SHOW

Activities and comics every Saturday
Inside — B4

CLASSIFIEDS

Listings and public notices
Inside — B5

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2 SECTIONS | 18 PAGES
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Gov. Brown extends COVID-19 State of Emergency

On Friday, Governor Kate Brown extended the State of Emergency until May 2

SALEM — Oregon Gov. Kate Brown extended her declaration of a state of emergency for COVID-19 for 60 days, until May 2.

The declaration is the legal underpinning for the governor's COVID-19 executive orders and the Oregon Health Authority's (OHA) health and safety guidance. Extending the state of emergency also helps ensure Oregon is able to fully utilize available federal COVID-19

relief and assistance, including assistance with vaccine distribution.

"When I issued my first state of emergency declaration last March, there were 14 known cases of COVID-19 in Oregon," Brown said. "Today, we have now seen more than 150,000 cases across the state, and, sadly, 2,194 deaths."

The governor reviews and reevaluates each of her emergency orders every 60 days. Oregon has been in

this state for almost a year due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

"Throughout the pandemic, Oregonians have made smart choices that have protected our families and loved ones, and saved thousands of lives," Brown said. "We helped our doctors, nurses, and health care workers from being overwhelmed last spring, and again during the winter surge. Our infection and mortality rates have consistent-

ly remained some of the lowest in the country. And, for the first time, COVID-19 critical care units are seeing fewer and fewer patients."

Some of this is due to the vaccination process now at work across the state.

"As we vaccinate thousands of Oregonians each day and reopen more school buildings and

See EXTENSION 5A

Two local eateries fined a combined \$35,950

Citing 'willful violations, OSHA fines Little Brown Hen and Firehouse



"Most employers are choosing to do the right thing ... As for those relative few employers who are working against our shared project to defeat this disease, we will continue our enforcement work in the interest of accountability."

— Oregon OSHA Administrator Michael Wood

By MARK BRENNAN
SIUSLAW NEWS

Two Florence businesses, the Little Brown Hen and Firehouse Restaurant, were fined a total of \$35,950 this past week by the Oregon Office of Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) for violations of workplace standards designed to protect employees from the coronavirus disease.

Oregon OSHA is a division of the Department of Consumer and Business Services and is tasked with enforcing the state's workplace safety and health rules.

Separate citations were issued to both restaurants, ironically just days prior to an easing of the restrictions by state authorities on indoor dining; beginning yesterday (Feb. 26),

indoor seating of up to 25 percent of normal seating capacity became allowable following Lane County's new lower "high-risk" designation, down from "extreme risk."

The circumstances surrounding the issuance of citations with such high fines is unusual. The Brown Hen was fined \$17,800 and Firehouse was fined \$18,150.

According to officials, the manner in which the violations was handled by the business owners was one of the critical factors in the assessment of the fines, as was the "antagonistic" response to OSHA inspectors.

"Oregon OSHA fined The New Blue Hen [Little Brown Hen] \$17,800 for willfully continuing to potentially expose workers to the coronavirus disease. It did so despite knowing it was violating a public health order limiting the

capacity for indoor dining to zero in an 'extreme risk' county," said OSHA Public Information Officer Aaron Corvin. "The fine was the result of an inspection opened in response to multiple complaints. The inspection was carried out despite several people — including one carrying a firearm — who blocked the business' entrance and threatened compliance officers."

Using his discretionary authority under state law, Oregon OSHA Administrator Michael Wood imposed the \$17,800 penalty — twice the minimum penalty — due to what OSHA deemed as the Brown Hen's "willful violation."

Corvin also pointed to the need to ensure a more appropriate deterrent where employers insist on disregarding public health

See OSHA 8A

Mapleton schools continue moving forward to re-opening

By CHANTELE MEYER
SIUSLAW NEWS

Mapleton School District Board of Directors met for its regular session on Feb. 17, with the board meeting over Zoom and the public able to watch via YouTube. There were several appearances from district students along with the agenda.

The big news for the district is the return of students to campus, with Mapleton Elementary operating in a hybrid mode of onsite learning and days at home. Next week, Mapleton will begin to bring back its middle and high school students starting Wednesday, with 11th and 12th grade.

Mapleton School District Superintendent said the district can now begin to bring in additional grade levels due to the lowering metrics of COVID-19 cases in Lane County. As of Friday, the county shifted from "extreme risk" to "high risk" for the first time since the state announced the new metric system in November.

"The trend is down, and Lane County Public Health has indicated that they're hopeful that the trend will continue to go down," O'Mara said. "That has dropped us this week into the onsite and hybrid model. That was our hope in the beginning, when we set the

See MAPLETON 6A

Planning Commission discusses annexation, appoints new chair

By MARK BRENNAN
SIUSLAW NEWS

This was a busy week for City of Florence staff and volunteers serving on committees, agencies and as commission members, as there were three meetings scheduled, in addition to Monday's City Council session, which required member attendance.

Chief among this week's committee meetings was that of the Florence Planning Commission (PC), which met on Tuesday with consideration of the annexation of a single residential property to consider, along with housekeeping associated with selecting a new Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson as now former Chairperson John Murphey has been serving in that position for

three years.

Murphey opened the meeting leading the group through the first couple of agenda items before turning the meeting over to newly elected Chairperson, Phil Tarvin.

After Tarvin was confirmed, Commissioner Sandy Young was unanimously selected as the vice-chair after a brief discussion among commissioners.

Resolutions PC 20 32 ANN 02 along with PC 20 33 ZC 03 were then both introduced as discussion topics as both dealt with the annexation request and a zoning change for the property.

City Senior Planner Roxanne Johnston reviewed the timeline of the project, along with additional

See PLANNING 7A

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