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Siuslaw News  
NEWS & VIEWS THAT DEFINE OUR COMMUNITY  
VOL. 131, NO. 28  
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FLORENCE, OREGON

WEATHER



Cloudy with a high of 50 and a low of 42.  
Full forecast on A3

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PHOTOS  
BY MARK BRENNAN  
SIUSLAW NEWS

## Hopping to it



The Rotary Club of Florence's Interact Club at Siuslaw High School devised a way to bring Easter baskets to children, even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Last week, 12 high school students, led by Interact Club President Brea Blankenship and Community Service Chair Cate Waggoner, worked with employees at Oregon Pacific Bank to stuff 300 bags with over 3,000 Easter eggs with candy and prizes.

The students invited the Easter Bunny to join them at Siuslaw Middle School on Saturday morning to hand out Easter Egg Baskets. The Easter Bunny greeted children as they arrived. Approximately 80 local children drove through with their parents to receive the eggs.

In addition, nine children received golden eggs with golden tickets. They were able to take their



tickets to Siuslaw Outreach Services to redeem for prizes like bicycles, basketball hoops, a mini drone, a tabletop foosball game, stuffed animals, a kite, magic set and more.

Interact students distributed the remaining eggs to the Boys and Girls Clubs of Western Lane County, Siuslaw Outreach Services, Florence Food Share and Oregon Pacific Bank.

## Council approves Benedick annexation

City of Florence extends COVID-19 State of Emergency

BY MARK BRENNAN  
SIUSLAW NEWS

The Florence City Council met for a regularly scheduled evening meeting on Monday, April 5.

All councilors were in attendance virtually for the meeting, which once again centered around discussion and consideration of an annexation request from Benedick Holdings, LLC. However, the meeting began with Mayor Joe Henry first issuing an official proclamation designating April as Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Siuslaw School District Board member Suzanne Mann-Heintz spoke briefly about the issue after Henry read the proclamation into the record.

"I would like to remind everyone to look for the pinwheel gardens that will be coming up all over town," Mann-Heintz said. "The pinwheel is a symbol of a safe, happy childhood and also reminds everyone that a connected child is a protected child — and everyone has a part to play in reducing child abuse and neglect," Mann Heintz said.

Henry then announced the appointment of Wayne Sharpe and David Peden to the Florence Urban Renewal Agency Budget Committee and of Jeff Archambeau to the City Budget Committee before turning the council's collective attention to Florence Planning Director Wendy Farley-Campbell to talk about the prop-

erty, a 49-acre parcel off Rhododendron Drive.

The petition for annexation has been a main point of interest on the council's agenda for the past few months. Some opponents to the annexation have mounted a public information campaign prompting more than 250 letters and public statements in opposition to the annexation.

Dozens of yard signs denouncing the annexation have sprouted up along Rhododendron Drive and other side streets in the area of the proposed annexation, with a group of residents opposed to the annexation retaining legal counsel to represent them in their opposition.

See ANNEX page 7A

## Boards discuss future, finances of WLFEA

BY MARK BRENNAN  
SIUSLAW NEWS

The combined boards of Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue (SVFR) and the Western Lane Ambulance District (WLAD), collectively known as Western Lane Fire & EMS Authority (WLFEA), met virtually on March 25.

There were a number of tense moments in the meeting, primarily due to the concerns and public positions voiced by WLAD Director Larry Farnsworth, who believes the economic model under which the ambulance district operates is unsustainable.

This position has been a sticking point at recent meetings, including arguments for and against

Farnsworth's position during public comments.

During the meeting, International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) Local 851 President Michael Caven, who represents members of both WLAD and SVFR, directed his comments specifically towards Farnsworth's public position opposed to the latest contract agreement negotiated between the union and the district.

"I cannot remain silent following the paid advertisement made by a member of this body," said Caven, referring to a full-page ad taken out in the March 17 edition of Siuslaw News that included, among other things, salary and benefit information. "We saw Director Farnsworth take out an ad

that attacked district leadership, fellow directors, the union and our members after he was unable to sway the bargaining team or his fellow directors to pass draconian cuts to avoid what he sees as a financial crisis. It is unfortunate the director felt the need to take out an advertisement to spread misinformation. This break in decorum was unnecessary and disappointing."

Following the public comment period, the meeting continued. Fire/EMS Chief Michael Schick introduced new full-time employee Mackenzie Jeffcott, who has been working at the district for two years previously to her promotion to full time.

See BOARDS page 6A

## County to remain at low-risk level despite rise in COVID-19 cases

BY CHANTELE MEYER  
SIUSLAW NEWS

On Tuesday, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown announced that positive cases of the novel coronavirus are increasing statewide. With that in mind, four counties are in a two-week caution period for facing backward movement with case counts. Lane County just moved down to "low risk" of community transmission on March 26, so will remain there through the caution period.

According to the governor's office, "Counties that reduced their COVID-19 spread enough to move down in risk level in the previous two-week period, but see their numbers go back up in the next two-week period, are given a two-week caution period to re-focus efforts to drive down creeping case numbers and give local businesses additional certainty on their plans for operating."

Lane County Public Health (LCPH) Public Information Officer Jason Davis said the county was notified of 35 positive cases on Monday and 116 cases over weekend, bringing the county total to 10,998 total cases.

"That dovetails with the increase we saw last week with numerous days in double-digit cases," he said. "We are seeing a significant increase in our overall cases."

See COUNTY page 6A

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