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**Siuslaw News**  
NEWS & VIEWS THAT DEFINE OUR COMMUNITY  
VOL. 131, NO. 34  
APRIL 28, 2021  
FLORENCE, OREGON

**WEATHER**



Partly sunny with a high of 62 and a low of 44.  
Full forecast on A3

**COMMUNITY**



2nd-graders donate to OCHS  
INSIDE — A3

**SPORTS**



Vikings PR at home track meet  
INSIDE — B

**RECORDS**

Obituaries & response logs  
Inside — A2

**TV GUIDE**

Inside — B3-B4

**KIDS CORNER**

Activities for kids  
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**CLASSIFIEDS**

Listings & notices  
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# Lane among counties moving to 'extreme risk' amid surge in COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations

*Governor says vaccinations key to staying safe, reopening economy*

SALEM—Due to the rapid spread of COVID-19 in Oregon, Gov. Kate Brown today announced updates to county risk levels under the state's public health framework. With hospitalizations rising above 300 people statewide, threatening to overwhelm doctors and nurses, 15 counties will move to the extreme risk level effective Friday, April 30, through Thursday, May 6. This includes Lane County.

In addition, nine counties will be in the high risk level, four at moderate risk, and eight at lower risk. Douglas County will be at moderate risk. A complete list of counties and their risk levels is available here.



Lane County — and the Florence area — will return to extreme risk starting Friday, April 30, until community spread of COVID-19 slows.

"If we don't act now, doctors, nurses, hospitals, and other health care providers in Oregon will be stretched to their limits treating severe cases of COVID-19," said Brown. "Today's announcement will save lives and help stop

COVID-19 hospitalizations from spiking even higher. With new COVID-19 variants widespread in so many of our communities, it will take all of us working together to bring this back under control."

The governor is partnering with

lawmakers to approve a \$20 million small business emergency relief package to immediately support impacted businesses in Extreme Risk counties through the commercial rent relief program.

In an effort to speed up the return to normal business operations, county COVID-19 data will be evaluated weekly for at least the next three weeks. Any updates to county risk levels next week will be announced on Tuesday, May 4, and take effect on Friday, May 7. Counties that improve their COVID-19 metrics will have the opportunity to move to a lower risk level. Counties will remain in extreme risk for a maximum of three weeks.

"The fastest way to lift health and safety restrictions is for Oregonians to get vaccinated as quickly as possible and follow the safety measures we know stop this virus from spreading," Brown said.

See COVID page 6A

## U.S. releases 2020 Census results

*Oregon gains seat in U.S. House after population increase*

BY MARK BRENNAN  
SIUSLAW NEWS

One of the fundamental exercises of American democracy was completed on Monday, April 26, as the U.S. Census Bureau delivered to U.S. President Joseph Biden the 2020 Apportionment Results. The delivery of the 2020 Census results to the president is an important step in the official ratification of the results, which showed the resident population of the United States on April 1, 2020, was 331,449,281.

The U.S. resident population in 2010 was 308,745,538. This means there was an increase of 22,703,743, a growth rate of 7.4 percent — the second-slowest rate of population increase on record.

The release of Census data is always an area of keen interest because the principle of apportionment, the constitutional purpose of the count, determines the number of representatives each state sends to the U.S. House of Representatives.

Federal funds, grants and support to states, counties and communities are based on population totals and breakdowns by sex, age, race and other factors. More than \$675 billion per year in federal funds spent on schools, hospitals, roads, public works and other vital programs is distributed using Census data.

See CENSUS page 6A

## Siuslaw partners with Hyak on internet project

*School board votes to provide three-year letter of credit*

BY CHANTELE MEYER  
SIUSLAW NEWS

The Siuslaw School Board of Directors met for a special meeting on Monday to continue discussion from the April 14 board meeting. The single agenda item was to consider a private-public partnership with Florence-based internet provider Hyak through the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Rural Digital Opportunity Fund.

Hyak co-owners Robbie Wright and Neil Ecker have been in contact with Siuslaw Superintendent Andy Grzeskowiak and Business Manager Kari Blake about a project to deliver fiber broadband rurally. They approached the board earlier this month about working together.

"With COVID, a lot of us have seen the need for high-speed internet — and quality high-speed internet — dramatically increase

in the last 12 months," Wright said. "The Rural Digital Opportunity Fund is specifically designed to help subsidize delivering internet to very expensive places."

Hyak went through a bidding process to be able to bring fiber internet to rural areas outside of Florence.

According to FCC's estimation, 550 houses are within the areas Hyak will be covering. Wright clarified that the number was closer to 1,100 houses along Highway 126, North Fork Road, Highway 36, Indian Creek Road and Old Stagecoach Road. The project will reach 15 to 20 percent of Siuslaw School District's approximate 900 households with fiber internet in the next couple years.

"This is a pretty far-reaching project for us," Wright said. "We'll be able to impact quite a few households. ... It's going to be a little bit of a hard construction project, but not one that we're afraid to take on."

Through the program, Hyak will receive approximately \$1.6 million over 10 years to support the project. The FCC has several requirements placed on the project, including audited financials, third-party professional review of technical design, construction milestones, business expertise and a letter of credit (LOC).

Part of Hyak's presentation was to ask the Siuslaw School District to consider joining a private-public agreement so Hyak can secure that LOC for three to four years. This would require \$160,000 be set aside each year for four years, which is equivalent to one year of support from the FCC.

"Hyak is requesting a low-interest loan from 97J to meet the requirements of our LOC," Wright said to the board. "These funds will go on deposit with the nation's largest SBA lender and sit untouched in an account."

See PARTNERS page 7A

## WLFEA leadership still divided on future planning

BY MARK BRENNAN  
SIUSLAW NEWS

Boards from Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue (SVFR) and Western Lane Ambulance District (WLAD), known jointly as Western Lane Fire and EMS Authority (WLFEA), met virtually April 22. The meeting followed a pattern of recent WLFEA meetings which have highlighted a major difference in the vision for the future of emergency response in Florence. During the meeting, WLAD Director Larry Farnsworth continued to question the fiscal

model the ambulance district is currently using, as well as stating the joint boards are not sharing with the public the true cost of operations for the two groups.

The meeting was called to order by Fire/EMS Chief Michael Schick, with all members of both boards in attendance.

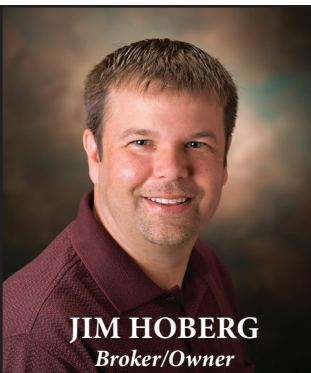
Office Manager Dina McClure presented a brief financial report and shared answers to questions she had received from directors regarding specific fiscal circumstances.

She also presented the commis-

sioners with investment-related options for the SVFR and WLAD districts, which Farnsworth suggested should be selected by the rate of return on the investment funds.

At that point, WLAD directors Mike Webb and Rick Yecny excused themselves from the discussion due to potential conflicts of interest and entered a virtual waiting room; SVFR Director Ron Green, President and CEO of Oregon Pacific Bank, was not in attendance for the meeting.

See DISTRICT page 8A



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