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families sheltered. It has also been a challenging period for business owners who point to a lack of coherency in the statewide mandates, which make running a successful business very difficult during the current pandemic.

Scott Weiss, owner of the Beachcomber Pub, has managed to remain operational for much of the pandemic, shifting between indoor dining, takeout-only and now expanded outdoor seating — with no indoor seating.

“It’s been very hard; we have had to continue to make adjustments at every level of our business,” Weiss said. “Every time we have to close our interior seating, it creates issues with our food and beverage suppliers. They are having a difficult time getting product from their suppliers and they are constantly having to change what they have available. So, this has limited what we can substitute, which leads to us having to keep our menus simple.”

Last week, he decided to avail himself of the barrier seating sections provided by the City of Florence for restaurants to use to expand outdoor seating capacity.

Beachcomber joins Old Town restaurants Nosh Eatery, Mari’s Kitchen, Lovejoy’s Tearoom, 1285 Restobar, Bridgewater Fish House & Zebra Bar, Homegrown Public House and Waterfront Depot

in using City-installed high-visibility barricades along the street that allow for additional outdoor seating space. Additionally, Off Bay Street Bistro is using one of the barricades to designate a parking space for vehicles to pick up takeout.

Weiss also decided to purchase new tables and chairs for the seating area.

“The last time the city offered us the barriers, I was hesitant to add the street seating, mostly because the

weather was not cooperating at all,” he said. “With this better weather, we decided to give it a try. This last weekend business was great and, surprisingly, the month of April was phenomenal business-wise.”

our inside dining,” the restaurant posted to social media.

It shows how local businesses have continued to adapt to the pandemic.

As Weiss said, “Hopefully, the good weather will continue, and we will be able to keep serving people outside and eventually we will reopen our inside seating. We will do whatever it takes to keep our business open for our customers and our employ-

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— Scott Weiss, owner of the Beachcomber Pub

Like other area restaurants over the course of the pandemic, Beachcomber has tried to keep staffing levels steady, but has had to cut some positions and reduce the hours for most employees.

Across town, Fresh Harvest Café also made changes. Proprietor Gilmar Ortiz and his staff paved an entire patio in time for the “extreme risk” designation. The restaurant now has 1,500 square feet of outdoor seating — “which will be bigger than

ees.”

When Brown made the announcement of the state’s county risk levels, she called attention to the most recent surge in COVID-19 cases across the state.

“As we are facing widespread cases, driven by new, more contagious variants, I was presented with data showing two paths Oregon could take: one in which we took no additional action and stood by while more people die from this disease. The other

required a temporary tightening of restrictions for certain counties but could save hundreds of lives and prevent as many as 450 hospitalizations over the next three weeks. As governor, I chose to save lives,” said Brown.

On Monday, the Oregon Health Authority showed a statewide COVID-19 case count of 186,877 since the start of the pandemic, with 351 currently hospitalized. In addition, 2,502 people have died from the virus.

The state also has climbing vaccination rates, with 30 percent of the state’s residents fully vaccinated and another 12.9 percent with vaccinations in progress. In Lane County, 34.3 percent of the population is fully vaccinated.

Data regarding Lane County testing, patient status, case ZIP codes and more is available at www.LaneCountyOR.gov/localdata. Additional COVID-19 data, including how to get vaccinated in Lane County, can be found at lanecounty.org/coronavirus. Statewide information can be found at coronavirus.oregon.gov.

MAPLETON from page 1A

For many of the children, it is their first time attending school in person.

Students are in two separate cohorts and attend school for four hours on two days a week.

Half of the students require school transportation, so those students come on Mondays and Tuesdays. Students whose families can drop them off attend Wednesdays and Thursdays.

“It seems to be going really well with the kiddos,” O’Mara said. “It’s so great to have all the kids back on campus.”

Additionally, the district is working on improvements to the preschool wing of the school. This will include asbestos abatement, new flooring and updated plumbing. The projects are still in the planning phase.

The next big item on the board’s agenda was standardized testing, which directors had previously discussed at past meetings. These are the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium tests (SBAC), which test students for Common Core standards in grades three to eight and 11 in math and language arts. School districts must reach 95 percent participation and can be penalized by their state if they do not reach this level.

The tests are held via computer and require both time to take the test and to learn how to take the test — for both students and staff members.

Director Michelle Holman led the discussion.

“At our last board meeting, we passed the resolution to encourage parents to opt out,” she said. “Since then, we did kind of start something in our state. Mapleton was the first to react. Since that time, Ashland, Sandy, Eagle Point, Portland Public Schools and Salem Keizer ... instead of encouraging parents to opt out, they will require parents to opt in. They are not having standardized testing unless the parent wants standardized testing. ... I would like us to do the same.”

At the March board meeting, the directors had hoped that the federal government would not require states to conduct the testing. However, the U.S.

Department of Education determined that states should hold the tests this spring.

Also in March, Mapleton School Board passed a resolution allowing families to opt out of the testing. O’Mara sent letters to the district’s families earlier in April, telling them about the option to opt out of the tests. Several families have since filed to opt out.

Now, however, Holman requested that the board update the resolution to instead be opt-in.

During the discussion, Director Mizu Burruss clarified that there are students for whom the testing is beneficial.

“I think it’s important that if we do opt in, just like if we do opt out, we would need to make a real effort to make sure that every family has the opportunity to take advantage of either way we go about it,” she said. “The more communication the better with individual families.”

Through the board discussion, directors made it clear that the option for students to take the tests was always available.

O’Mara also advised the board on the penalties the school district could face for not complying with Division 22 regarding standardized testing.

“What that means for the district is in November, when I report to the board on Division 22 standards, my report will say we are noncompliant in this area, and this is the corrective action that we’re turning into ODE to say, ‘Here’s how we will correct this deficiency for the 2021-22 school year,’” O’Mara said.

She added that ODE is still looking into standardized testing, and what it might mean for districts in noncompliance.

Board Chair Mary Ellen Mansfield said, “If we do go this route, I don’t have a problem with being out of compliance this year, because it doesn’t sound like there’s a penalty for being out of compliance for this year. But my understanding is, if we don’t have a corrective action that says we will test next year, then there is some potential loss of funding that could come.”

The board agreed to delay a

decision on the further future of standardized testing until more information becomes available.

As for this year, the board moved to update the wording of the resolution to an opt-in version.

“But I do want to make sure that we are conscientious about contacting all the families and letting them know that they have the option to opt in,” Burruss said.

O’Mara said the district could send out letters to the families of students in the grades required to take the tests.

While all members of the board were present throughout the meeting, Director Andrea Milbrett had a poor connection to the virtual meeting and did not vote on the resolution.

People can read the full text of the resolution, as well as the procedure to opt in to standardized testing, under the “Standardized Testing” tab at the top of www.mapleton.k12.or.us.

Moving forward, Holman said she would continue to meet with other interested parties to consider the future of standardized testing in Oregon, as would O’Mara as she attended an Oregon Small Schools Association conference.

“I would love to know where small schools are around standardized testing,” Holman said. “For small schools, when we lose funding is a different thing than when big schools lose funding. We’d really like to hear the pulse of administrators on that topic.”

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