

FLOGRO from page 1A

Public Works Director Mike Miller has been a strong advocate of the FloGro program and has taken a particular interest in seeing the effort continue and to grow.

"I saw the composting program as an environ-

mentally friendly way to reduce the amount of money spent on hauling biosolids, originally to the Short Mountain landfill [located just outside Eugene] and now to Heard Farms outside of Roseburg," Miller said.

Since the program has been in place, Miller said

the city has lowered its spending on hauling and disposal costs of biosolids from \$80,000 per year to \$50,000.

"As we utilize more of the biosolids in the composting program, we expect to continue to reduce that cost on an annual basis," Miller said. "Through the composting process, we are able to produce Class A composted biosolids and meet the 'exceptional quality' criteria under the U.S. EPA and Oregon DEQ regulations on biosolids."

In addition, FloGro is good for gardens.

According to Miller, "Using composted biosolids improves soil health and allows the soil to hold more water while letting it drain and breathe better. Again, this program allows us to take care of two waste products — yard debris and biosolids — and produce a sustainable soil amendment for our community."

Philben has suggested in recent EMAC meetings that there should be a concerted effort to expand the FloGro Program and offer composting options to all interested residents.

She added that money could be saved when less material needs to be hauled and dumped.

"Currently, only a fraction of the biosolids produced can be used to compost FloGro because of the constraints of space, equipment and personnel," Philben said. "That means that most of the dewatered sludge needs



MARK BRENNAN/SIUSLAW NEWS

FloGro, a Class A biosolids product, is produced through a composting process that combines chipped yard debris with biosolids. The end result is a sustainable compost supply, which the city cultivates at the Wastewater Treatment Plant at 650 Rhododendron Drive.

to be hauled away and disposed of. The expense involved in doing this will only increase with time and, if the sludge or biosolids can be composted here in Florence into a useful product, it will save the city money in the long run."

Miller said his commitment to the community extends beyond providing the essential services required of his department — clean water, electrical services and properly maintained roads — but also includes significantly improving the quality of life for residents.

This ethos has taken hold in the department, as evidenced by Murphy's thoughtful responses during the tour on Wednesday.

"It was nice to share some of our operations at the Florence Wastewater Treatment Plant with the EMAC committee members. When I look at our wastewater treatment operation and the professionals that I work with, I feel the need to point out that, for us, it is more than a job and so much more than a profession," Murphy said. "The health of our community and being good stewards to the environment are the driving force behind all the decisions we make. Every day we look for innovations and opportunities to improve processes, save energy and lessen the impacts of wastewater on our little neck of the wood."

He added that the com-

posting program provides measurable results.

"We get to take different forms of unwanted waste, yard debris and biosolids and safely turn them around with our own efforts to create a beneficial product that can be used right back in the community from which it came," he said. "All of us at Public Works look forward to learning more and growing the City of Florence Composting Program into something much larger."

Distribution of FloGro soil will be distributed this year at a time and place yet to be determined.

For more information, visit www.ci.florence.or.us/publicworks/flogro-it-makes-flowers-grow.

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BUDGET from page 1A

The overall cost to taxpayers to run the city during this time is expected to be approximately \$71.9 million, increasing from \$65.2 million, which was budgeted during the preceding biennium. This means a 19 percent increase in the proposed budget.

Reynolds also reviewed the efforts of city staff over the last year as related to COVID-19 protocols and other situations related to the pandemic. In particular, she mentioned the challenges faced by the Florence Events Center due

to the facility's inability to operate fully during 2020 and into this year.

"Although COVID-19 has significantly impacted local business, the overall impact to the city so far has not been catastrophic," Reynolds reported. "Most city revenues impacted by COVID-19 are currently projected to return to normal levels by fall 2021."

The city manager also stated Florence's primary source of revenue — property taxes — has remained stable over the past year, seeing modest growth.

Additionally, due to COVID concerns, one-third of city staff have been working from home while two-thirds have been at their workplace or performing duties in and

around the city.

Reynolds then shared her expectations that the City of Florence will receive funding from the recently passed American Rescue Act, which is expected to approach \$2 million.

During the rest of the committee meeting, Reynolds provided a breakdown of expenditures by category and type provided. Those figures show that Florence is expected to spend \$15 million in personnel costs, \$17.9 million for materials and services and \$21 million for capital outlay.

After this, City Recorder Kelli Weese reviewed some of the rules and procedures in place for the mandated public viewing of city meetings and the process for those members of the pub-

lic who wish to comment at those public meetings. She also reviewed COVID-19 protocols and reminded the members that there was a public hearing scheduled for the committee on May 10 at 5:30 p.m.

There were no additional questions or comments, which prompted the meeting's adjournment.

Members of the City of Florence Budget Committee are Mayor Joe Henry, city councilors Woody Woodbury, Sally Wantz, Maggie Wisniewski and Bill Meyer, Chairperson Brittany Hornung, Vice Chair Leonard Larson, Jeff Archambeau, Ron Hildebrand and Joel Marks.

For more information, visit ci.florence.or.us.



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COVID Restrictions & Protocols Apply

Port to consider budget May 19

On Wednesday, May 19, the Port of Siuslaw Board of Commissioners will hold a work session at 5 p.m. and their regular meeting at 7

p.m. at the port conference room, located at 100 Harbor St. in Florence, Ore.

The work session will include LCOG regarding the

Strategic Business Plan and the regular meeting will include a resolution to adopt the FY21-22 budget.

Work sessions and regular meetings are open to the public. Due to COVID-19, meetings are being held using Zoom. The agenda and a zoom link will be posted 48 hours before the meeting. For more information, call 541-997-3426 or visit portofsiuslaw.com.

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