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Siuslaw News



INSIDE Today's Issue

Siuslaw News
NEWS & VIEWS THAT DEFINE OUR COMMUNITY
VOL. 131, NO. 69
AUGUST 28, 2021
FLORENCE, OREGON

WEATHER



Sunshine with a high of 68 and a low of 51.
Full forecast on A3

COMMUNITY



Rally supports "For the People" Act
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SPORTS



Sailors start six-man football
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Lane County issues new COVID-19 guidance

Gov. Brown adds back outdoor mask mandate

By DAMIEN SHERWOOD FOR THE SIUSLAW NEWS

Last Saturday, Lane County released updated guidance in an effort to fight the recent rise in COVID-19 cases.

As well as the usual recommendations to wear masks indoors or when six-foot distances cannot be

maintained outdoors, emergency recommendations call on businesses, organizations and employers to take immediate action to limit ongoing community spread and defend the county's dwindling hospital capacity.

The Lane County Board of County Commissioners discussed the health advisory on Aug. 24 and voted unanimously to officially take up the weekend's recommendations. However, commissioners did not go as far as to call for a mandate.

Public health officials described

the health landscape to commissioners, reporting that 65 percent of all ICU beds are occupied by COVID patients and that daily case rates were in the triple digits.

Lane County's guidance came just a day after Gov. Kate Brown took steps to curb the statewide rise of COVID cases by requiring Oregon health care workers and K-12 teachers and educators to be fully vaccinated by Oct. 18.

Only medical or religious exemptions apply. Meanwhile, hundreds of national

guardsmen have been deployed to help fill roles as frontline healthcare workers struggle to meet demand.

Oregon is now averaging more than 2,000 new confirmed and presumptive cases of COVID-19 each day.

As of Aug. 20, more than a quarter-million Oregonians have contracted COVID-19.

Brown also announced new statewide outdoor mask requirements on Aug. 24, which went into effect Friday.

See COVID page 6A

Dunes City hears about water, council considers masks

By MARK BRENNAN SIUSLAW NEWS

Dunes City Council met on Aug. 25 for its regular meeting with all councilors in attendance at Dunes City Hall. The council met in person on the room's dais with only two members, councilors Susan Snow and Robert Orr, wearing masks.

The issue was raised near the end of the meeting, when Orr asked the group to act in some way to acknowledge and meet state restrictions on public gatherings which require attendees to wear a mask.

"I would like to suggest we do one of three things: that we all wear masks, partly as an example to our students and partly for safety purposes. I know there are some that are uncomfortable with that, so my second suggestion is spreading ourselves around the room again. [Third.] I think we should hold Zoom meetings, for those that are concerned and want to remain safe," Orr said.

The response from other councilors was not supportive and the issue was not officially acted upon, although Councilor Duke Wells repeated his position that he would not wear a mask, regardless of current mandates. He was joined in his refusal to heed mandates by Councilor Tom Mallon and Mayor Robert Forsythe.

The three all stated their objections to mask wearing, with Wells agreeing to Orr's request for social distancing but refusing to wear a mask.

"It's just how I was raised and who I am. I just feel like I have been lied to," he said. "I also keep thinking the narrative from the CDC keeps changing to fit political stuff, that's just how I feel. I got a shot and I didn't want too, and I haven't worn a mask and I'm not going to."

Snow was the most supportive of following the current executive orders regarding masking, social distancing and abiding by recommendations from the Oregon Health Authority, which is the basis for Oregon Gov. Kate Brown's most recent mandates.

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One pandemic financial lifeline continues, another ends

U.S. government extends halt on student loan payments, concludes temporary federal unemployment benefits

By REINA HARWOOD SIUSLAW NEWS

On Aug. 6, the Biden Harris Administration announced an extended moratorium on federal student loan payments, which was scheduled to expire at the end of September. Now that has been moved to Jan. 31, 2022.

About one in six adults and one in three young adults have student loans, U.S. President Joe Biden stated

in a press release.

"The pause has been a critical lifeline so they don't have to choose between paying for basic necessities or their student loan during the pandemic that upended their lives," he said.

In total, around 44 million Americans owe more than \$1.71 trillion in student loan debt, according to the 2021 Student Loan Hero report.

The federal administration's de-

cision on the extension was placed to offer the U.S. Department of Education and borrowers spare time to prioritize other expenses to reduce loan defaults, with an additional approach to "economic recovery," the president added.

According to Federal Student Aid, an office of the U.S. Department of Education, the extension entails several relief measures for eligible loans. The first

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Florence approves mural, street closures in special session

By MARK BRENNAN SIUSLAW NEWS

The Florence City Council met on Aug. 23 for a special session primarily dedicated to the consideration of a request for approval of a mural on the east side of Lovejoy's Restaurant and Tea Room and two decisions related to street closures.

There were no public comments at the Monday meeting, as Florence Mayor Joe Henry had asked during the Aug. 16 council meeting that no comments be allowed due to the designation of this meeting as a "special" session.

The majority of the meeting was geared towards a presentation and discussion of Resolution 29, Series 2021, asking the council for approval to place a mural in Historic Old Town Florence. The application process included prior approval by the Florence Planning Commission which forwarded their approval to the council.

During the meeting, there were public hearings for the mural application and the road closures

but there was no opposition to the items.

The application for the mural was filed by Heather Burnem, the owner of Lovejoy's, 185 Nopal Street.

The staff presentation regarding the request was made by Planning Director Wendy FarleyCampbell, who said the subject property is located near the southwest intersection of Nopal and First streets and faces the Port of Siuslaw parking lot.

"The applicant proposes an approximately 960-square-foot mural painted directly on the south wall of the building containing Lovejoy's Restaurant and Tea Room," she said. "The south wall of the restaurant immediately faces a retail building and the mural is to consist of a scene of London, England, specifically Big Ben, The



The proposed mural at Lovejoy's Restaurant and Tea Room on Nopal Street may need modifications before final approval.

Houses of Parliament, Portcullis House, Westminster Bridge, the river Thames and the iconic double decker red buses."

The Florence City Code that regulates murals has a number of strict criteria that must be met before approval is given, and FarleyCampbell reviewed the process her department went through to assure the application was meeting all of those criteria.

The majority of these requirements were properly met, but the issue of when a mural becomes more of a sign than an image

See MEETING page 9A

Football team receives partial program clearance for vaccinated athletes

On Aug. 22, the Siuslaw School District notified the district's students, staff and families that one or more people on the Siuslaw High School football team have tested positive for COVID-19. This prompted a two-week suspension of the program.

Screening testing for vaccinated players of the Siuslaw High School

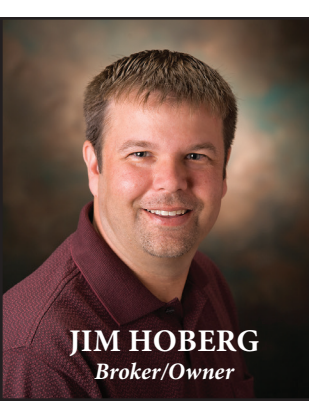
football team took place Thursday, Aug. 26, at Siuslaw High School. Vaccinated players were asked to bring their vaccination card or other medical documentation for record keeping.

After a negative BinaxNOW Rapid Test, vaccinated players and coaches could again schedule on-campus conditioning and other

related football activities. A new schedule was not announced as of press time.

With the long duration of some variants, vaccinated athletes did not need to isolate, but should continue to monitor for the onset of symptoms related to COVID-19 for the next several days.

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