



Learning center gets a new name, page 3A



Champ!  
Dennis tops state in wrestling, page 1B

# Cottage Grove Sentinel

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SOUTH LANE COUNTY'S MOST AWARD-WINNING NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1889

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## DECISION, 2016

### Races for mayor, several council seats expected

BY JON STINNETT  
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

With the national furor regarding the upcoming presidential election already heating up, it's worth noting that the autumn of 2016 will also feature a local election that could significantly alter the face of city government in Cottage Grove.

The four-year term of Cottage Grove's Ward II City Councilor, Jeff Gowing, ends Dec. 31, 2016, as do the remainders of the Council terms that are currently being served by recently appointed Councilors Amy Slay and Kenneth Michael Roberts. Two-term incumbent Mayor Tom Munroe has also indicated



The 2016 Cottage Grove City Council: Jake Boone, Mayor Tom Munroe, Kenneth Roberts, Mike Fleck, Amy Slay, Garland Burback, Jeff Gowing.

that he will not seek re-election, leaving four of the Council's seven votes up for grabs this November.

Slay, who was appointed to represent Ward IV last September following the departure of Kate Price, said she intends at

this point to run for election to the position.

"I've decided to try and learn more if the voters decide that's what they want," Slay said. "Now that the shock has worn off and I'm starting to get the hang of things, I'm excited to

learn from those around me. It's already been a cool experience."

Roberts, an at-large appointment following Heather Murphy's recent departure, said he

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### But what'll it cost?

Harrison Elementary bond's expected impact for local taxpayers

BY JON STINNETT  
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

South Lane School District representatives filed paperwork with Lane County Elections on Friday to place a \$35,950,000 bond levy that's slated to replace the Harrison Elementary School building and make other district upgrades on the ballot this May.

On May 17, voters will decide whether to support Ballot Measure 20-240, and local homeowners may be weighing the cost of the levy in the form of property taxes in their decision.

On Monday, South Lane Superintendent Krista Parent

outlined the tax implications of the bond measure, though she added that all figures are projected and subject to change when the District actually sells the bonds.

"We can't guarantee the rate until we sell the bonds," she said. "The rate on that exact day determines the first-year rate."

During efforts to pass a similar bond to replace Cottage Grove High School, (some unsuccessful) Parent said the community "said very clearly" that the threshold of \$2 per \$1000 of assessed property value was as high a cost as

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### Meeting scheduled at City Hall to talk crime, solutions

BY JON STINNETT  
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Online conversations regarding ongoing property crime and other incidents have prompted a meeting at City Hall next week.

An event dubbed "Stand up for Cottage Grove" is scheduled at City Hall on Tuesday, March 8 at 6:30 p.m. with Cottage Grove City Councilor Amy Slay spearheading its efforts.

"I grew up in Cottage Grove, and I don't feel like we are the community we used to be," Slay said. "Many of us want this community to be free of crime and vandalism, and I think these issues are getting worse every year. A lot of people say they wish somebody would fix this or change that, and here's their opportunity."

Slay recently wrote that she believes neighbors have a responsibility to help protect each other.

"I truly believe our best defense against criminals is simply being neighborly," she wrote.

"Be present on your block; know your neighbors. Be aware of who lives around you and the cars they drive. Stay calm so you make good decisions. Last but not least, be a team!"

Posts regarding thefts and other property crimes regularly appear on Facebook pages dedicated to local groups, and Cottage Grove's Delores Dixon, who has been working to drum up attendance at next week's event, recently posted that she envisions a program much like Neighborhood Watch.

Interim Police Chief Scott Shepherd said he supports and plans to attend next week's meeting as long as it advocates for "observe and report activity" on the part of local residents.

"I wouldn't want people to feel like they should confront others," Shepherd said. "We wouldn't want a situation where somebody confronts someone else and ends up assaulted or verbally accosted. I support any effort to observe and report suspicious activity to us, but I wouldn't want it to put anyone in a bad position."

Slay said she hopes the meeting will be informational for those who attend.

"I hope people come out to listen," she said. "Let's get together to get people on board."

Shepherd said he's also been approached by Shauna Neigh, coordinator of the Main Street program in Cottage Grove, about a possible "block captain" scenario to deal with issues that have become

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### Employment analyzed at Chamber mtg.

BY JON STINNETT  
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

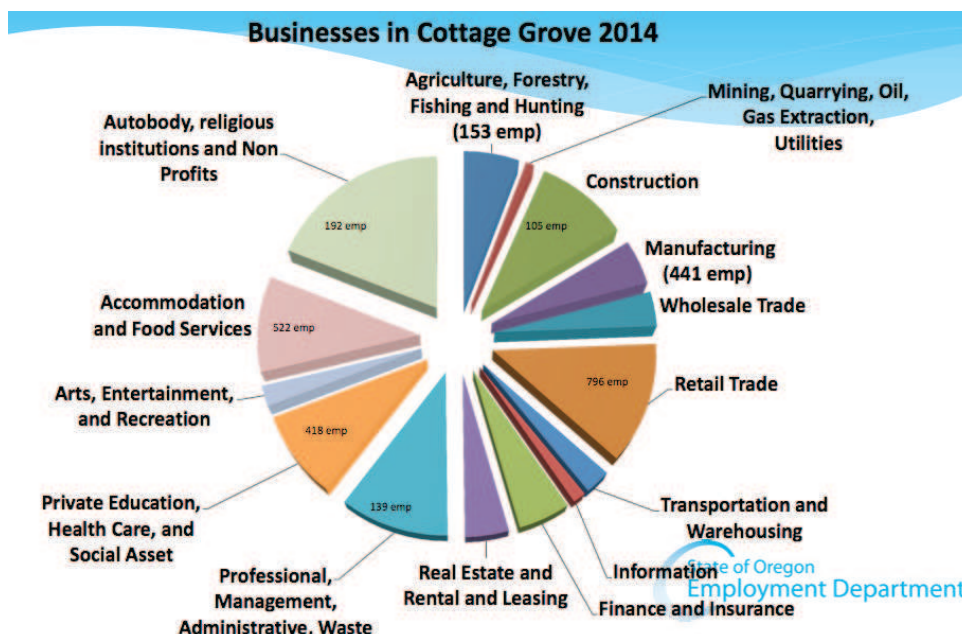
Guests at the Cottage Grove Chamber of Commerce's annual business meeting got a rather in-depth look at the area's workforce during a presentation from Kim Thompson, Lane County's Workforce Analyst with the Oregon Employment Department.

Thompson's presentation at El Tapatio on Wednesday, Feb. 24 highlighted a community with strong ties to retail and service-related jobs, a place where most businesses are small, employing less than 10 people, and a town that has lost some of its larger employers in recent years.

Most of Cottage Grove's employment is in the retail, manufacturing, accommodations and food service industries, according to a pie chart Thompson presented (though she did add that statistics from major employers such as South Lane School District and very large firms were kept out of the list for confidentiality reasons. Data came from quarterly employment/payroll census figures.)

The area boasted 153 employees in agriculture, fishing and hunting in 2014; 441 people were employed in manufacturing and 796 work in retail. Religious institutions, auto repair businesses and non-profits account for 192 employees.

Sixty-two percent of the area's businesses employ between one and four people, and nearly 20 percent have between five and nine employees. Only five businesses employ between 50 and 99 workers, a number



This slide from a presentation using statistics compiled by the Oregon Employment Department breaks down Cottage Grove's labor force. (Very large firms and School District employment are not included).

that has declined in recent years. Thompson said the crowd gathered on Wednesday was at a loss to explain this decline.

Employment is picking up throughout Lane County, Thompson said, though a "tightening of the labor market" means that employers are having trouble filling some jobs. Workers are finding more opportunities but stiffer competition for them, according to the presentation. Lane County's unemployment rate was 5.8 percent last November, down from a high of 13.2 percent in 2009. Data showed that Cottage Grove's unemployment rate fell sharply from 2014 to 2015.

Thompson pointed out that "Lane County still has a way to go to reach pre-recession employment levels." The recession led to 18,000 job losses after hitting a peak in February of 2008, and it had since regained

69 percent, or 12,400 jobs, by November of 2015. The County's housing market, though, was described as "painfully slow": single-family homebuilding has been slow to pick up since the recession, and starter homes have been the only category selling reliably. Numbers of building permits rise and fall, and home values are rising slowly.

With regard to future employment outlook, the service sector is expected to see the most job growth, though these jobs will largely represent the replacement of workers reaching retirement age. Farming, fishing and forestry represent the areas expected to grow the least. Structural changes in some industries, workforce skill gaps, unstable global economies and lower participation in the labor force are seen as major challenges to continued business development in Lane County.

**Stand up for Cottage Grove meeting**

Tuesday, March 8  
6:30 p.m.  
City Hall

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