

Feeding frenzy!

Raptors join the pursuit of hatchery trout, page 11A

Cottage Grove Sentinel

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 6, 2016

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

VOLUME 128 • NUMBER 40

School Board worksession deals with budget shortfall

BY JON STINNETT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

With a little more than two months remaining in the 2015-16 school year, South Lane School District finds its budget about \$600,000 short following a lower-than-expected estimate of the state of Oregon's contribution to education funding. The District also faces a shortfall for 2016-17, and together these gaps were the sole focus of a School Board worksession late Monday afternoon.

South Lane Superintendent Krista Parent spent much of the worksession detailing the methods the District — particularly Parent herself and district Business Manager Phil Scrima — have used to estimate South Lane's budget numbers throughout the year, then augment those numbers when more exact estimates come from the state. The most recent State School Fund estimate, however, which was delivered on March 17, "set us on our backside," Parent said.

Declining enrollment at South Lane is partly to blame for the decrease, Parent explained, showing a table indicating that the District is graduating classes of some 240 students while welcoming classes of incoming kindergarteners that number only 160 or so. The state funds school districts per student, and the March 17 estimate included an enrollment figure that dropped by 30 students since December of 2015 and is about 130 students lower than this time last year. When used to calculate the State School Fund estimate, the enrollment number created a deficit of \$949,919 for the 2015-16 school year.

Other reductions in the estimate would lower the State School Fund contribution even more. The District lost \$81,274 through a drop in the index used to

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Jenny Gamez killer gets 35-year sentence

Former Wisconsin police officer also charged with killing a Minnesota woman

The former Milwaukee, Wis. police officer convicted of killing a 19-year old former Cottage Grove resident in 2012 was sentenced to 35 years in prison for the crime last week.

Steven Zelich, 54, apologized and said he was "100 percent responsible" for the death of Jenny Gamez, whose body was found stuffed inside a suitcase along a Wisconsin highway in 2014, according to the "Milwaukee Journal-Register." Zelich pleaded guilty to first-degree reckless homicide and hiding a corpse in January. He had faced a maximum 50 years in prison.

"It was not an intentional act," Zelich reportedly said. "I'm very sorry Jenny was the victim and I wasn't able to protect her the way I was supposed to."

Zelich is also charged in the killing of Laura Simonson, a 37-year old Minnesota woman who died under similar circumstances. The bodies of both women were discovered in suitcases. He reportedly told investigators that the women's deaths came about as a result of a sex act that went too far, which he described as "breath play" involving asphyxiation.

For a time, Gamez had stayed in the care of Lorraine Ericksen of Cottage Grove, who served as her foster mother. She graduated from Al Kennedy Alternative High School in 2010, then started school at Lane Community College. Ericksen told the Sentinel she had lost contact with Gamez shortly after she moved out of her home.



photo by Jon Stinnett

Keiko and Rex Ziak tell Kathy Parsons about the writing on a flag her father once owned. Parsons gave the flag to the Obon Society, which will work to return it to its original owner, during an event at the Cottage Grove Library Saturday.

Flag returned at library exhibit

Group will now work to find its owner or his family

BY JON STINNETT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

A society that works to return heirlooms lost or taken during wartime to their original owners fulfilled its mission in front of a small crowd at the Cottage Grove Public Library Saturday.

A donation from the Doyle and Donna Shepherd Foundation brought the Obon Society to Cottage Grove for the first stop of its new traveling exhibit. Its founders, Rex and Keiko Ziak, brought a dis-

play featuring photographs of many of the Japanese flags that were carried close to the hearts of Japan's soldiers during World War II, flags that carried beautifully inscribed messages from loved ones to soldiers that often did not return from battle.

American soldiers subsequently brought many of the flags home from them as souvenirs or the spoils of war, though many soldiers or their families now desire to give the flags back to their rightful owners in what Rex Ziak called "the final

chapter of World War II" during Saturday's brief library presentation.

"In this case, American soldiers brought back memories of their service, but rather than retain them, they had feelings that these items should go back to the families to provide some closure," he said. "We think this is the final chapter of the war, the healing of hearts that lets us know the hostilities are over."

Keiko Ziak added that the flags

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Refurbished vs. new: School District chose a new Harrison as opposed to renovating old school

BY JON STINNETT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

South Lane School District officials hope that a bond levy to replace the aging Harrison Elementary building in Cottage Grove will pass muster with voters during the May 17 primary. Others in the community, however, have wondered about the feasibility of renovating the existing Harrison property and whether it might be more cost-effective to repair the old Harrison building than to build a brand-new one.

It's a question that the District sought to answer itself in 2015 when, during the deliberations of the 50-member Bond Advisory Committee that examined the possibility of putting a bond before voters to replace Harrison, it commissioned a report from architect David McClean (himself a member of the advisory committee) of DMc Architects that would outline the costs of renovating the old building

and the needs a renovation could fulfill.

Voters this May will decide whether to approve a \$35.95 million bond to rebuild Harrison Elementary at the former Cottage Grove High School site on Taylor Street, make security and technology upgrades throughout the District, relocate Kennedy High School, renovate the Warren H. Daugherty Aquatic Center and tackle deferred maintenance projects. The District enlisted the services of BLRB Architects, which has worked with the community to formulate a plan for a new Harrison at an estimated cost of \$18.921 million, plus the costs of furnishings, permits and other associated costs that total about \$4 million of the cost of the bond.

The Harrison Elementary Space Needs/Facilities Audit, Master Plan and Renovation Project, submitted by McClean in July of last year, seeks to "determine the costs associated with repairing, modify-

ing and, if necessary, expanding the Harrison facility to the extent that it is functionally comparable to a new school."

To accomplish this, the report aims to identify current issues with the Harrison building, determine the need there going forward, generate a facilities master plan and determine the costs related to such a project.

In the report, McClean acknowledged that the report stepped beyond merely renovating a new building:

"While the data contained within this study is derived from a combination of design experience and reputable costing sources, the broad scope of this project required educated assumptions and a degree of subjectivity..." he wrote. "While not an exact science, the data herein should serve as a useful tool in helping determine the value of a repaired, modified and expanded Harrison in comparison to a new school of similar size and

complexity."

The report details a Harrison Elementary building with a host of shortcomings. Expanding the building to the west (the only direction McClean deems possible on the narrow site) would entail the purchase of nearby residential properties. There are currently no provisions for off-street parking at Harrison, and the report is short on details with regard to how to include enough parking at a renovated site.

The existing Harrison building has no dedicated gymnasium, and the master plan proposed the addition of a gym. The existing kitchen is half the size that would be appropriate for a school its size, and the plan proposes expanding the kitchen to the west. Many classrooms were built between other classrooms, cutting off light to several rooms, and the report states that their "biggest fault is their

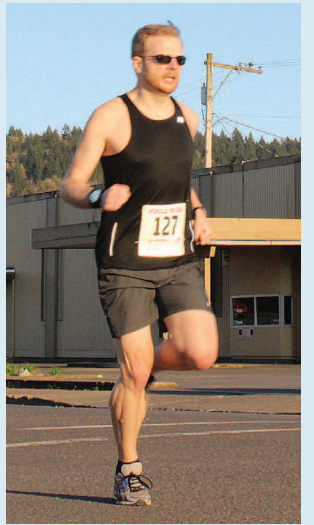
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Meet my Farmer

New location draws a crowd, page 3A



Fool's errand

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