



OPINION

Bond measure represents commitment to our future

BY JON STINNETT
Sentinel Editor

Do you remember when the citizens of Cottage Grove contributed sweat equity, local materials and money to the construction of the Cottage Grove Armory? How about the time that a pool was built to help teach local kids to swim, in the process ending a series of drownings in local lakes and rivers? Later, the community banded together to help build its own hospital, at about the same time that locals pooled their resources, time and talents to successfully pass a bond to build a new Cottage Grove High School.

Okay, so there are events on the above list that few of us could remember, and as a relatively recent arrival to this community (having started covering news and events here in 2006), I have not personally witnessed even the most recent efforts toward community betterment that I've described.

And yet from my earliest experiences in Cottage Grove, these were cited by locals as examples of small-town ingenuity and grit, of a community rallying around itself to overcome its challenges and better its future. There have been many more such examples in the decade I've been fortunate to call this town my workplace and my home.

Indeed, all of us have benefited from the planning, foresight and sacrifices of our Cottage Grove forebears, and evidence of their successes abounds in the structures that have served as this community's gathering places, its halls of education, worship and rehabilitation, for generations.

Simply put, look around and you will see a town built by hard-working people, people with an eye toward the future and an unwillingness to accept the impossibility of any task, great or small. Cottage Grove views itself as a place where challenges are tackled head-on with a fierce commitment to community values and the belief that its citizens are best positioned to decide for themselves what is best for their town, their families and their descendants. It is one of the most uplifting aspects of living in this amazing place.

Recently, Cottage Grove has rallied around yet another challenge, the deterioration of a school building that has served to educate thousands of young people. In early 2015, a group of 50 locals gathered to discuss a potential bond to replace the aging Harrison Elementary School, make needed repairs and upgrades to safety and technology throughout South Lane School District. In tours of the school by the Bond Advisory Committee, it

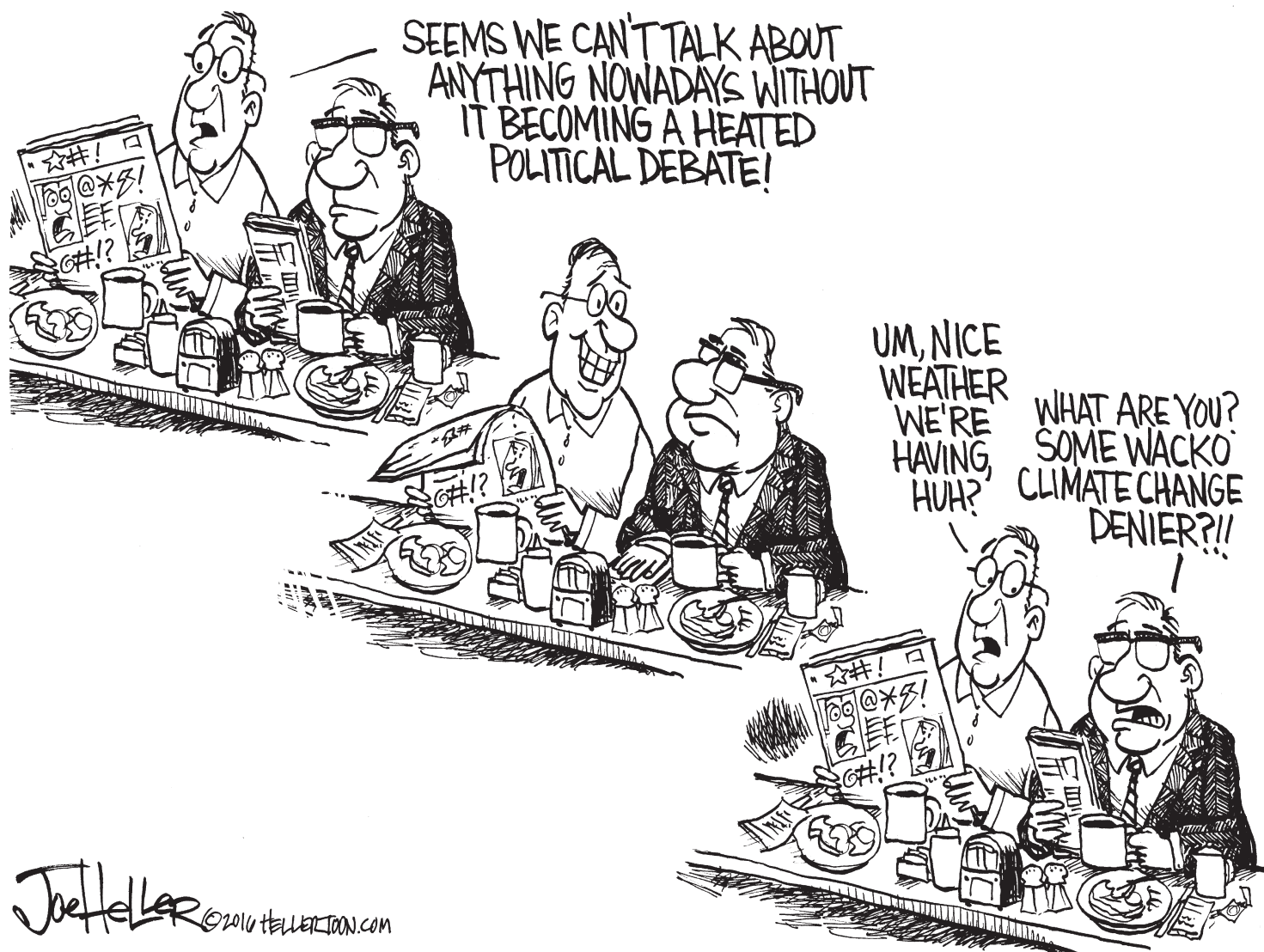
became apparent to the group how dilapidated Harrison had become through decades of overuse, patchy repairs and deferred maintenance.

"This is not a great place for kids to learn, and it's because of the physical structure itself," Harrison Principal Ali Nice said during the first tour of her school. With a look around at the cramped rooms repurposed many times over the years, the inefficient heating and cooling systems that make the building unbearably hot in some rooms and chilly in others, the gymnasium that must double as a cafeteria, leaving little time for indoor exercise, the absolute absence of parking, not to mention the need for seismic upgrades to withstand a major earthquake — a fact that many of you already know became obvious to the committee: It is time to replace Harrison Elementary School.

South Lane School District officials know that in a time of tight budgets, the bond process is perhaps the only way to fund such a significant need. They also recognize the need for upgrades throughout the District to systems that contribute to the health, well being and growth of our sons and daughters. And they are not alone.

Since the decision was made to pursue Bond Measure 20-240, a new generation of Cottage Grove citizens has contributed countless hours to planning for a new Harrison Elementary and ensuring that the word gets out about the needs that the bond will address. You have likely spoken to supporters of the bond measure on your front steps or on the telephone or read their literature in your mailbox or online. The commitment of so many to this cause is laudable and reaffirms this town's drive to create a better future for itself. It is also completely understandable given what we already know about the character and spirit of those who call the Cottage Grove area their home.

South Lane School District and its supporters are not asking for the type of commitment that this community's organizers have already displayed. They ask simply that you vote yes to support Bond Measure 20-240 on May 17 and add your voice and your vote to the chorus of supporters of a brighter future for area students. The challenge is real, but the timing is right, and the task is ours alone. Join me in voting yes on Bond Measure 20-240, and years from now our hearts can swell with pride as we ask each other: Remember that time we got together and helped build a beautiful new elementary school?



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dance thanks

On behalf of South Lane Ballet Academy, I want to say a big thank-you to Lincoln Middle School for setting up a unit of dance for its students. Each grade level received a week-long dance experience including modern, partner, jazz and hip-hop dance. The students at Lincoln were, for the most part, respectful, adventurous and receptive to the new experience. Even partner dancing was well received.

Students were smiling, laughing, all while exercising. At a time when the arts are no longer fully funded, I was grateful to see LMS take the initiative to write a grant and put it to use using our local non-profit. Thank you to Heather Devine, Jason Corwin, Jeff Dreiling and Mark Dreiling for encouraging your students. I often heard the words "try something new" and "step out of your comfort zone" not only spoken but demonstrated (Mark may or may not have done some cartwheels, for example). Thanks again for a wonderful experience!

Mandy Conforth
Cottage Grove

LWV supports Harrison bond

The League of Women Voters of Lane County urges a yes vote on Measure 20-240 to provide funding for much needed improvements to schools in the South Lane School District. The League believes that the condition of school facilities is important to the effectiveness of the educational program, the quality of

each student's experience and the security of students and employees.

If approved, Measure 20-240 would authorize property taxes to pay off about \$36 million dollars in bonded debt over 25 years. Additional important projects are fire and other safety and security upgrades for all schools in the district, roof replacements and other deferred maintenance, technology upgrades for all schools, renovation of the Walter H. Daugherty Aquatic Center.

The good news is that the expected tax increase for taxpayers will be modest because the repayment schedule for the new bonds will be coordinated with the repayment schedule for the bonds issued earlier for constructing Cottage Grove High School. Also, if the measure is approved, the school district will be eligible to apply for \$4 million in state funding for additional capital projects. Make an investment for community youth with your yes vote.

Linda Lynch
LWV of Lane County
President

re: KNND program

'Monday Gold' makes me smile and sing. Thanks, Lloyd Williams.

JoAnn Gray
Cottage Grove

Vote yes for bond 20-240

Have you ever had one of those "aha" moments where the information given to you clicks? Mine was during a tour of Harrison Elementary School over a year ago.

While touring the school with the group that would ultimately decide to recommend putting the bond on the ballot, I asked why a window had been installed in what had been a broom closet when my son attended eight years ago. I was told they needed a private space for counseling, and they cleaned out the closet, put two chairs and a very small desk in there (and the window to "give them some light") and called it a counseling room! A broom closet? Seriously? The change was for a school that was built for 125 students that now has over 400 registered there. Now that is making the most of what you have!

We need better for ALL of our students and our amazing teachers and staff who "deal" with the space they have been given. It's time for a new Harrison. It's time to see our kids safe. It's time to see maintenance taken care of. It's time to see pool upgrades. This needs to happen, not only for our kids but for our community. It's time to vote yes. I did!

Rhonda Worley
Cottage Grove

SVA supports the bond

Recreational opportunities that develop active,

healthy kids are vital to our community. As the current president of the South Valley Athletic Association (SVA), I can tell you how challenging it is to sustain those services for the hundreds of young people in Cottage Grove. Volunteers for the SVA dedicate their time and energy to our kids, raising funds and recruiting support from our local families and businesses. Our biggest challenge is finding adequate space for kids to practice and play. Volleyball, basketball, and soccer all require gym and field space. That space is becoming harder to find each year. What is available is in need of repair and maintenance. We need your help.

South Lane School District is a strong supporter of community recreation programs. The partnership between the District and SVA keeps our programs running and affordable. On May 17, our community can take action to improve the school facilities that we all depend on to help our kids grow into healthy, productive adults. Approval of the school bond will provide South Valley and other youth organizations with the facilities we need to improve youth recreational services.

The board members of South Valley will continue to find opportunities for kids in Cottage Grove. What they cannot do alone, we can make happen as a community. Vote YES for Kids on May 17; our kids deserve it.

Dustin Bengtson, President
South Valley Athletics
Association

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Superintendent addresses bond ratings inquiry

A letter reprinted from the April 27 Sentinel:

Bond ratings?

If it is not too much to ask, then why does not the school board of district 45J provide the voters of the bond ratings from Moodys, Fitch and Standard and Poors the ratings on this proposed \$39.5 million bond issue? It is a real hassle to create accounts for each one. Just go ahead and try.

I want ratings. No ratings = NO on 20-240! It is that simple. Are these good bonds or are they junk bonds?

Charles Ames
Cottage Grove

On April 30, South Lane Superintendent Krista Parent wrote in response:

Dear Mr. Ames,

Thank you for your inquiry regarding the bond rating for the South Lane School District bond measure. You are correct that when bonds are "issued" they are rated. That will happen when the new bonds are issued. The district's current bond rating is an A+, rated by Standard and Poor's. The district's bond rating was updated in 2012 and then again in 2015. This rating

will be increased by the enhanced rating provided by the District's participation in the Oregon School Bond Guaranty program. This will increase the A+ rating to an AA+ rating. I hope this satisfies your question. Please feel free to call me at 541-942-3381 ext. 131 if you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,
Krista Parent
Superintendent

Letters to the Editor policy

The Cottage Grove Sentinel receives many letters to the editor. In order to ensure that your letter will be printed, letters must be under 300 words and submitted by Friday at 5 p.m. Letters must be signed and must include an address, city and phone number or e-mail address for verification purposes. No anonymous letters will be printed. Letters must be of interest to local readers.

Personal attacks and name calling in response to letters are uncalled for and unnecessary.

If you would like to submit an opinion piece, Another View must be no longer than 600 words.

To avoid transcription errors, the Sentinel would prefer editorial and news content be sent electronically via email or electronic media. Hand written submissions will be accepted, but we may need to call to verify spelling, which could delay the publishing of the submission.