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Cottage Grove Sentinel

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

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Council candidates take their turn at Chamber forum

BY JON STINNETT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Cottage Grove's candidates for City Council found themselves right where they wanted to be last week — for one night, at least.

Four council seats are up for election this November, and the seven candidates for those open positions joined the Cottage Grove Chamber of Commerce at the Council chambers at City Hall for its forum on Tuesday, Sept. 27 to outline their positions on city issues.

The race for Ward II features candidates Bob Ehler, Henry Lancaster, Rodney Cimburke and Merlyn Adams. Kenneth Michael Roberts and Ivan DelSol will vie for an open at-large seat, while Councilor Amy Slay is unopposed for reelection in Ward IV. Moderators Cameron Reiten of Cottage Grove radio station KNND and this reporter prepared a list of questions to the candidates in advance, which were tackled in the first half of the forum after opening statements; the second half of the evening featured questions from the audience and, in a few instances, from those watching at home on a live Facebook feed.

In opening remarks, Ehler described himself as a 29-year Cottage Grove resident with experience on the City and South Lane Fire budget committees.

"This is my third time running, and hopefully it's a charm," Ehler said.

Lancaster, a homeschooled student, said he's running to make Cottage Grove a better place.

"I want to try to help make this city be a better place," Lancaster said. "Regardless of who wins, I hope we can all do that together."

Radio personality Kenneth Michael Roberts is seeking election to the seat he was appointed to last year, and he listed budget committee appointments along with a seat on the St. Vincent DePaul board among his qualifications. For her part, Slay said she was disappointed to be running unopposed in Ward IV, as she was hoping the voters would have a choice in that contest. Slay, a longtime Grover, works at Weyerhaeuser and was also appointed to her position last year.

Ivan DelSol founded the Opal Center in downtown Cottage Grove. He's a computer programmer who moved here 12 years ago and has served on the City budget committee and served on the boards of two area nonprofits.

"I'm running because I want to help Cottage Grove thrive in modern America while maintaining its small-town magic," he said.

Ward II candidate Rodney Cimburke said that Cottage Grove has offered much to him and his family in their decade here.

"I'm here because I want to give back a little bit," he said. "I'm a pretty passionate person, and I have a lot of opinions about this and that thing. But I'm not running so I can sit up here and filibuster. I'm more concerned with your opinions."

Merlyn Adams volunteers on the boards of the Healing Matrix and Cottage Grove Gleaners and said that living near Coiner Park helps make issues surrounding parks and recreation important to her.

"There are opportunities to still take your kids to our parks to have a wonderful picnic," she said, "and I look forward to continuing to improve those locations."

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photo by Jon Stinnett

Ward II candidate Rodney Cimburke addresses a question at the forum held at City Hall last week.

SAYING GOODBYE



photo by Jon Stinnett

Bohemia Park glowed with candles in remembrance of Rebecca McElroy Thursday. Friends gather to remember 24-year old lost in crash

Rebecca McElroy had recently shared her regret that her friends and loved ones in the Cottage Grove area had not been getting together as much as they should due to the demands of daily living.

On Thursday evening, many of those friends gathered at Bohemia Park, this time to pay their respects and offer condolences to each other after the car crash that claimed the 24-year old's life on London Road near Nichols

Lane early that morning. The Lane County Sheriff's Office said it is unsure why McElroy's Kia Optima left the roadway, though two of her best friends, Tara Blount and Ona Secord, urged the group to reach out to others in times of despair and not be afraid to be the "bad friend" and take a friend's car keys for the evening. McElroy was remembered as a vibrant personality who brought joy to many lives.

Pets getting credit for teaching students in Harrison classroom

Teacher says guinea pigs teach empathy, responsibility and leadership, in addition to other qualities

BY JON STINNETT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

There are rodents living in a classroom at Harrison Elementary School, but nobody's worried.

In fact, teacher Carolyn Jenkins lauds the two additions to the Owls Nest classroom, which works to educate students on the autism spectrum, as vital teaching tools. Last spring, the class welcomed Super Hoot and Cookie Wallace Batman Willis McGee (named by the students), two guinea pigs, also known as cavies, that Jenkins said are capable of teaching lessons that books can't cover.

Jenkins said she saw an advertisement for a grant program through Pets in the Classroom, which, as its name suggests, places pets where students are ready to learn from them.

"We want to make sure that our students get all of the experiences that students in other classrooms get," she said. "One of those is having a classroom pet."

Guinea pigs are great classroom pets, Jenkins said, because they're not overpowering or scary for students like larger animals. They're also not too small to be mishandled, as hamsters may sometimes experience. Pets in the Classroom adds that pets teach children responsibility and leadership, compassion and respect for all forms of life.

"They're a great size for the kids and their motor skills," Jenkins said.

Accepting the guinea pigs into the classroom set off a chain reaction at school, where Jenkins said that staff as well as students went a



photo by Jon Stinnett

Students Jon Robertson, Vincent Smart and Sean Butler compile "poop data" on their classroom pets, guinea pigs Hoot and Cookie.

little bit "guinea pig crazy."

"We checked out books, watched movies and did a lot of research," she said. "All the staff here now have guinea pigs, and I even bought a little sling to carry mine around."

In the Owls Nest, students learn to handle Hoot and Cookie, which Jenkins said is often comforting and soothing and offers good practice in keeping their bodies calm. Pets also teach empathy for other beings, a lesson that is often difficult to pass on to those on the autism spectrum.

Having the guinea pigs and knowing so much about them has also offered students in the Owls Nest the opportunity to pass those lessons on to their peers.

"For lots of kids on the spectrum, friendships can be tricky," Jenkins said. "This gives them

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School Board discusses easement near Kennedy, hears full-day K report

Kindergarten students experienced their first full day of school on Monday

BY SAM WRIGHT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

The South Lane School Board discussed a possible easement to the City of Cottage Grove at its Monday night meeting.

The City has recently discovered that there is a need for a power line by the Warren H. Daugherty Center and Al Kennedy High School in order to power water pumps to supply water to surrounding residents. The City has drawn up a contract which requests the permission of the School District to construct a power line and an electrical substation by Taylor Street.

Parent was quick to inform the board that this was not a motion to approve the contract, but to request direction and negotiation ideas from the rest of the Board.

The city sat down with legal representation and informed the School District that they can give credit on fixtures of old buildings in the area as long as they can document the facilities that used to be present.

The District also negotiated that a service fee for the school to tap into the electrical substation would be waived, which would normally be 25 percent.

The School Board has yet to approve the contract, but there were no board members speaking against the easement and that the contract seemed beneficial to both sides.

Special Services Coordinator Chad Hamilton also gave a brief report on the first day that South Lane School District's kindergarten classrooms held their first full day of school on Monday.

"Overall things went well," Hamilton said, "We have every kid in kindergarten except perhaps two or three that successfully finished a full day."

Superintendent Krista Parent said she heard that it was a trying time for the school district's transportation department, but that they pulled it off with a lot of hard work.

The School District recently implemented a plan to move kids to full days of school, but they started the school year with a "staggered start." The staggered start came in response to reports from teachers about the difficulty of starting full-day kindergarten at the beginning of school last fall, the first year of mandated full-day kindergarten in Oregon. Hamilton says that the district's kindergarten teachers are responding fairly well and are putting a lot of energy into the new schedule. However, he also said there isn't enough information on whether this will be beneficial for students and teachers in the long run.

"We're getting a lot of mixed feelings from schools in town," Parent said of the new schedule, "We'll figure out what's best for the kids."

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WEATHER



Poss. showers

HIGH 57 LOW 46

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