

No apparent public meetings law violation for SLSD

A complaint must be filed for a final determination by the state



Superintendent Krista Parent

By Caitlyn May
cmay@cgsentinel.com

A complaint has been filed with the South Lane School

District concerning superintendent Krista Parent and a possible private action. While the action is not prohibited by district policy, questions have been raised as to whether or not Parent violated public meetings law in discussing the issue with individual school board members.

The issue first arose when a Eugene publication noted Parent may have violated public meetings law by meeting with school board members one-on-one, citing 2015 and 2011 Oregon Court of Appeals and Coos County Circuit Court decisions.

In the case of the South Lane School District Board, however, according to those involved, there was no discussion that could lead to a final decision; a key component in public meetings law violations. Further, according to Oregon

School Boards Association Executive Director Jim Greene, Parent did not discuss anything that would be used to determine a future vote on the matter. "Let's say for example, she called the board and said, 'I think you ought to do an investigation' and they said, 'yeah let's do an investigation' and a quorum of board members agreed individually, that would be a violation," Greene explained using a hypothetical scenario. He noted he was not party to the phone calls made by Parent to the members of the school board but to his understanding of the events as relayed to him by members of the school board, no quorum was present and no final decision was made. According to Parent, she intended to allow board members to ask her questions about a personal matter that had been discussed on social media and eventually led to a complaint being filed with the school district late last week. It was South Lane School Board President Sherry Duerst-Higgins who contacted Greene to inquire as to what options existed for Parent to share information with the board in a manner that did not break the state's public meetings law. "As long as the board does not deliberate towards a decision, it's not a violation," Greene said, noting his 20 years as a member of the state bar and his various work with elected bodies and public meetings law. He also noted that the South Lane School Board would only be permitted to use information garnered from the investigation into the matter

related to the complaint, and not information they received from Parent during their one-on-one meetings should the issue come before the board. Parent did note that she met with two board members jointly, rather than one-on-one due to scheduling. However, because the school board is comprised of seven members, two does not qualify as a quorum. The Oregon Government Ethics Commission directed the inquiry as to whether or not Parent violated meetings law to the Oregon Attorney General's Office. However, that office noted that unless a complaint is filed, it has no jurisdiction to determine if an official violated the public meetings law. According to a manual the office created on the subject, "The Attorney General's only role under the Public Meetings Law is to provide legal advice to state agencies, boards and commissions that are subject to the law and to the Oregon Government Ethics Commission in its role under ORS 244.260. Most district attorneys do not have a role in interpreting the Public Meetings Law. The exception is where a district attorney also serves as legal advisor to a county governing body. If a citizen wishes to compel compliance with the meetings law, or believes that a governing body has violated the law, the citizen may file a private civil lawsuit against the governing body. A citizen who believes that a governing body has violated the provisions permitting an executive session may file a complaint

with the Oregon Government Ethics Commission." Parent said she did not believe she violated open meetings law, citing the requirements of the law that state a quorum must be present and the board must deliberate towards a final decision. Duerst-Higgins released the following statement in regards to the ongoing investigation, noting that once it was complete, financial details related to its cost and the cost of a third-party independent investigator would be made public in line with personnel and privacy laws. "A formal written complaint was filed recently regarding our superintendent. The South Lane School District Board of Directors wants you to know that we are taking this issue seriously and are working in the best interest of students, families and staff. Our goal is to be as transparent as laws and policies allow, and do what is best for the district and community. We are following board policies in seeing the complaint through. The superintendent is cooperating with all aspects of the complaint process. We are in the process of hiring an outside impartial party that will oversee the written complaint. Please be aware that due to confidentiality laws the board is limited in what we can publicly share. It is the board's intent, at the investigation's conclusion, to disclose as much as is legally allowed. Throughout this process our top priority will continue to be the students and staff of the South Lane School District."

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Rhododendrons \$13/plant or \$130/dozen
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WHAT TO BRING:
Bring paint, household cleaners, lawn and garden chemicals, car care products, arts and crafts products, and just about any other household hazardous waste. The limit is 35 gallons of waste in total from each household. Check labels for words like flammable, corrosive, poison, caution, and danger. For your safety it is always best to carry these items in a separate compartment (like the trunk of your car) with secured lids to eliminate spills in transport.

DON'T BRING:
Empty containers, drums, radioactive waste, asbestos, explosives or electronics. For information about disposal of radioactive waste, asbestos and explosives, call Lane County Waste Management Division at 541-682-4120. Up to seven (7) Covered Electronic Devices, CEDs. Can be recycled for free at any one time at these 6 Lane County Transfer Stations; Glenwood, Cottage Grove, Florence, Oakridge, Veneta, and Vida during normal operating hours. Also, Lane County accepts sharps, oil, antifreeze and batteries of all types year-round at all refuse disposal sites. Call 541-682-4120 for more information.

What about hazardous waste from businesses?
Businesses which generate small amounts of hazardous waste may pre-register to bring that waste to this event. Businesses must pay for disposal of the waste, but most can save money by using this program, rather than hiring a contractor on their own. For more information about this program, call Lane County Waste Management Division at 541-682-4120.

Year Round Collection Sites—Paint, Electronics, and Fluorescent Lamps
Paint, Electronics, and Compact Fluorescent Bulbs (and tubes up to 4 feet) are accepted year-round at various locations in Lane County through on-going collection programs. Check out the websites below to find a location near you, or call 541-682-4120 for more information.

PaintCare
www.paintcare.org

Oregon E-Cycles
www.deq.state.or.us/lg/ecycle
1-888-5-ECYCLE (532-9253)

CFL Collection Sites
List of Participating Lighting and Hardware Stores
www.lanecounty.org/lamps

CITY OF COTTAGE GROVE TREE LIMB PICK-UP WEEK OF MAY 15, 2017

The City of Cottage Grove Public Works Department will be conducting the annual Tree Limb Pickup May 15, 2017. Property owners will be responsible for removing any branches or limbs placed in the street after May 15, 2017.

Residents can not place branches in the street where curbside parking does not exist.

This is strictly a tree limb pickup, nothing other than loose tree limbs or branches will be picked up.

If you have questions regarding the Tree Limb Pickup Program, please call the Public Works Department at (541) 767-4100 or stop in at the Public Works office located in City Hall at 400 East Main Street for a brochure.

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