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Petition challenges investigation outcome

Petition requests termination of SLSD Superintendent



Dr. Krista Parent

By Caitlyn May
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A petition to terminate South Lane Superintendent Dr. Krista Parent made headlines after it appeared on social media on September 17 accusing Dr. Parent of "abuse of authority" and "mismanagement of power."

The South Lane School Board has the authority to remove Dr. Parent from her position but according to board president Alan Baas, that requirement is not legally tied to the number of signatures a petition gains. Baas said the decision to terminate Dr. Parent would be a personnel matter and take place in an executive session after conferring with the board's attorney and the Oregon School Board Association.

The petition, initiated by Cottage Grove resident Jennifer Holloman, cites rumors that came before the school board earlier this year claiming Dr. Parent was accessing the locker room at the high school where male student athletes showered. It claims a subsequent coaches' meeting was described by some attendees as "intimidating and bullying." It does not specify who those meetings were described to.

The school board addressed parental concerns surrounding the rumors in February after taking a tour of the locker room area. Board member Taylor Wilhour explained that the showers and locker areas were separated and an existing procedure insured a same sex staff member gave the all clear before an opposite sex staff member entered the locker rooms. A newly instituted policy required a female coach to enter the locker rooms via a storage room to bypass the locker and shower area completely.

The petition also cites an alleged romantic relationship between Dr. Parent and a subordinate employee and several complaints filed against Dr. Parent by former district employee David Presely.

The school board hired independent investigator Susan Nesbit, a former investigator for the Teachers Standards Practices Commission, through its attorney to look into the allegations of inappropriate behavior and reported romance.

A document summarizing Nesbit's findings state the investigation revolved around two questions. One asked if the allegations made in the complaint asserted a potential violation of board policy, district rules or other legal or professional standards under the board's jurisdiction. The other inquired as to whether or not evidence supported a conclusion that Parent engaged in behavior in violation of board policy, district rules or other established expectations for her position.

"Ms. Nesbit concluded that many, if not most, of the allegations contained in the complaint did not rise to the level of alleging a violation of any policy or rule under the board's jurisdiction," the summary of the investigation stated. It went on to note the allegations "primarily involved matters related to Parent's personal life." The final conclusion stated, "Interviews, research and documentation did not indicate Krista Parent used district staff time, district equipment, or district funds nor made any offer of enticement or accessed any district resource in the course of a personal relationship with a district employee."

Presley's complaints included allegations of nepotism as well as complaints about the hiring process, compensation, sports field maintenance and drug testing for student athletes.

During the first school board meeting of the school year held on September 11, Holloman addressed the board, asking why it had not addressed the findings of the investigation during a public board meeting.

The board discussed the matter during a closed executive session

Please see PARENT PG. A8

Council approves \$267k for CGPD PD will operate with digital radios

By Caitlyn May
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"Holy crap, that's a lot of money," were the first words from Cottage Grove Police Chief Scott Shepherd when he first saw the projected cost of a new radio system.

Shepherd came before the Cottage Grove City Council on Monday, September 25 to request that the department be permitted to lease a new digital radio system at a cost not to exceed \$267,075.

"Our ability to communicate with other agencies is hampered by our current radio system," Shepherd told the council.

The Cottage Grove Police Department currently utilizes a UHF analog radio system that has been in service for 16 years. In a memo to the council, Shepherd described the current system as having obsolete equipment, frequent system failure and poor transmission quality. He also cited Cottage Grove's rural setting as an obstacle in maintaining the current system as well as its inability to interact with outside agencies' equipment.

"An example is when we had the OSP (Oregon State Trooper) shooting," he said. "We were one of the first units on the scene because of our proximity and at times we couldn't talk to someone on the other side of the parking lot because our systems don't mesh."

Mike Harmon of the Lane Regional Interoperability Group was also present and touted the benefits of the digital system to the council noting that during the shooting of the OSP Trooper earlier this month, there were 75 radios in use and 12 conversations taking place among law enforcement personnel without service disruption thanks to the county's trunking system. The trunking system works on the basis premise that individuals who use a certain channel or frequency will not communicate on that channel at the same time therefore allowing there to be more users than channels.

A coming federal law will mandate a switch from analog to digital, a step Shepherd told the council the local department could take

Please see RADIOS PG. A11

Dog kennels prep for winter at CGPD



PHOTO COURTESY KEN MICHAEL ROBERTS

The Cottage Grove Brewers Guild members pose with police chief Scott Shepherd at the benefit held on Saturday, September 23 to raise money for the department's dog kennels.

By Caitlyn May
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Saturday was for the dogs.

The Cottage Grove Brewers Guild hosted a fundraising event at the BrewStation to help raise money for winter upgrades for the dog kennels housed at the city maintenance yard and utilized by the Cottage Grove Police Department.

It was a night of bingo and raffles with \$1 from every pint sold going directly to the kennel fund during the event which was dubbed, "Pints for Paws." Prizes for the raffle included a date night at the Village Green Resort dinner for two, Domino's Pizza gift

cards, Empire video gift card, two tickets to any performance of Cottage Theatre's next show, "Jekyll and Hyde," gift cards to Stacy's Restaurant, Bochetto Spa, Yamaha, Les Schwab tire alignment, Cottage Bowl, Pinocchio's Pizza and Garden of Ink Tattoo.

Cottage Grove City Councilor Ken Roberts spoke of the event during the Monday, September 25 Cottage Grove City Council meeting. Roberts has been working closely with the Brewers Guild to prep the kennels for the winter weather and was on hand Saturday for the event.

According to Roberts, the group has raised approximately \$3,000 and has completed the heated dog bed installation and continues to weatherize the kennels.

Fire levy question set for Nov. 7

By Caitlyn May
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Measure 20-278—a renewal of a 47 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value levy—is on the ballot in November and South Lane County Fire and Rescue is asking residents to vote yes.

The levy, which was passed in 2012, has lowered insurance rates, increased staffing and garnered new equipment for the fire district, according to Chief John Wooten who said the loss of the levy would lead to service changes in the next fiscal year.

"When the levy passed in 2012, we had an out-the-door time of three minutes and 30 seconds. The national standard is 90 seconds," Wooten said. "Now, after the levy, our time is one minute and 27 seconds."

The change is reportedly due to an increase in staffing and personnel as well as updated equipment and an adherence to the master plan created in 2011.

A third-party company completed a study that yielded the master plan which included suggestions for improving the fire district's Insurance Service Office (ISO) rating. The rating system ranks districts from one to 10 with one being the best and 10 signaling no fire protection in the area based on a district's response time, training, testing, equipment, dispatch and the water system in the area the district serves. This information is then shared with insurance companies which use it to prep policies and determine rates.

"The better the fire district's services, the better the ISO, the better the insurance rate," Wooten said.

In 2005, the district's rating was 5.9.

"What that means is inside the city of Cottage Grove and Creswell you are a five and outside those areas it was a nine which is one away from not having any fire protection," Wooten said.

The current ISO rating is 2/4/10W.

To achieve that rating, the district has added 36 hours per day to service as well as increased staff levels to include 21 full-time line positions.

Please see FIRE LEVY PG. A11

COMMUNITY

Finding family

New librarian at genealogy can help trace roots. PAGE A10



CITY

Faye Stewart

Faye Stewart has been on the job for six months. PAGE A8

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