

# Budget process for 2018-2019 school year begins



By Caitlyn May  
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Seventeen guesses on how much health insurance costs will increase. Seventeen PERS calculations. Seventeen times of trying to squeeze that last dollar out of the budget and into the classroom. Seventeen is how many times South Lane Superintendent Krista Parent will have completed the long and complicated process of crafting a school-year budget. And she's about to embark on number 18.

Parent addressed the South Lane School Board on Monday, Dec. 4, informing the members that the budget process has begun and while it's just starting, the district is already behind.

"There's two key things," Parent told the board. She explained that the state legislature—because Oregon works on a biennial budget—usually splits the funding package 49 percent/51 percent; schools receive 49 percent of their allotted funds in the first year of the budget cycle and 51 percent in the second. This year, the legislature split the landmark education budget 50/50.

"It automatically means that the second year is a cut because costs go up," Parent said.

Oregon schools were budgeted \$8.2 billion—an increase to Governor Kate Brown's suggested budget of just over \$7 billion—through 2019. Despite the increase, several lawmakers—supported by educators—insisted schools would need more to get by and maintain services.

South Lane School District was able to decrease its cut days from four down to just one thanks to the \$8.2 billion package but next year, that might not be the case.

The day that was cut from this year's school calendar must be reinserted into the 2018-2019 school year before the budgeting process begins. As a result, the budget will reflect the added cost of the returned day. It's possible South Lane will see the same cut day, and more removed from the calendar next year.

Before it gets that far, though, Parent informed the board that the budget process starts by assessing where the district is now. What is the district currently spending on salaries? Health CARE? Public Employees Retirement Systems (PERS)? From there, the district will have to estimate the increases to health care and PERS that come annually and account for those increases. Grants and other programs are considered, applied for and moved over from year-to-year. Then, the district starts cutting.

It's possible the district may get a small boost in funds if the school board opts to close Latham Elementary School. The topic was broached during the Dec. 4 meeting wherein Parent informed the board that the district could save approximately \$200,000 a year if the school closed its doors. The new Harrison Elementary School—funded with \$24 million in bond money from voters last May—is scheduled to open for the start of the 2018-2019 school year and could potentially absorb the approximately 90 students currently enrolled at Latham.

During the 2016 legislative session, Parent was open with the difficulties facing the district if left with the \$7 billion proposed by Governor Brown. To maintain the current level of services, Parent noted that \$8.4 would be the ideal number.

## City council closes out 2017 quietly

### Light agenda ends 2017

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The Cottage Grove City Council hardly ever draws a crowd but has, in the last year, managed to stir up controversy on a handful of topics: SDC fees, urban renewal districts and special loading zones for foster homes. But the council ended the year in much the same way it spent it; quietly, voting unanimously on items that fail to draw a crowd and could be described as "housekeeping."

Mayor Jeff Gowing and Councilor Jake Boone were absent from the meeting that last no more than an hour.

Among topics of discussion were the vacancies in the Vision Keepers group and the appointment of council subcommittees to interview applicants for the historic landmarks commission, planning commission, and urban forestry advisory committee.

### CLARIFICATION

In the Dec. 6 edition of The Sentinel, councilor Jake Boone was identified as Santa Claus. This, of course is an oversight of the fact that the actual Santa lives in the N. Pole and cannot possibly be Jake Boone.

The Sentinel regrets the misunderstanding.



Brad Cohen plays Santa's elf at the Rotary Club's annual Christmas party held at Bohemia Elementary School. Every child received a pair of gloves and children who completed a coloring page were given an extra gift. The night consisted of face painting, games and a visit from Santa. The Rotary Club does not charge for the event and it serves all children of South Lane School District.

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