

School board looks to move forward, discusses past

By Zach Silva
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While Krista Parent was not in the room, the former South Lane superintendent was at the heart of the school board's conversation last Monday.

It marked the first of a two-day school board retreat that focused on looking at the board's purpose and how to enter into the transition process.

The most notable transition the board is making is with the departure of Parent as superintendent. Last January, the board announced Parent would retire on June 30 following issues stemming from an anonymous letter given to the board that a handwriting expert paid by a

local resident determined was "probably" written by Parent. Earlier in 2017, it was revealed that Parent had entered into a relationship with a South Lane employee. She was cleared at the local level with the school board citing a lack of policy surrounding fraternization. Parent was also cleared at the state level of any wrongdoing. Kyle Tucker served as acting superintendent until the end of the school year and opted out of applying for the interim superintendent position.

Parent served as South Lane School District superintendent for 16 years and worked in the district for 32 years.

Interim superintendent Larry Sullivan along with Steve Kelley

from the Oregon School Boards Association led a four-hour special session as they primarily discussed the board's value and how to move forward.

The meeting reached its crescendo when the board was prompted by the question "what is being lost" - alternatively framed as what are they letting go of - from the past year as they enter a new school year. This led to each board member expressing personal feelings about Parent in an open and honest manner the likes of which had not occurred in open session over the past year.

"For me, personally, I lost any confidence in authority at the top level. And I started spending a whole lot more time thinking of what does that authority mean," said board chair Alan Baas. He continued saying, "my experience as a board member was sort of an ongoing experience of trying to figure out how an authority was being exercised that didn't somehow make sense to me for what my duty on the board was."

Baas was not alone in reflecting on the role of a board mem-

ber. "I've lost a certain amount of faith in somebody who I thought was doing a job particularly well. And I have also lost the illusion that I was doing my job particularly well. Or even adequately," said board member Taylor Wilhour. "I feel like what I've been doing in my time on the board was aligned pretty closely with what I was being told I was supposed to be doing. But in retrospect, perhaps, I and we should have been doing a lot more or a lot differently."

Throughout this period of the meeting, emotions ran high as a variety of different opinions were voiced.

"It's really hard for me to sit here and... hear people talk horribly about a person that a year ago they were giving praise to but they give no benefit of the doubt to now. I'm trying to let go of the fact that this district let somebody go after 32 years of service who no doubt ended in a bad manner but let her walk out of this district with a retirement card not signed by one of us and having guards on her in her office as she cleaned it out," said

board member Merlene Martin. "That is not how you treat somebody that gave 32 years of their life to this district. And I am ashamed of us for that."

The final member of the board to speak was Jerry Settlemeyer.

"I worked with Krista as a building administrator and we worked really well together and we really focused on getting a lot of stuff done. I lost for respect that grew over years. On two sides of the same person. Krista did some fantastic things for this school district. Some really good, solid things. Including making, in some respect, making administrators way more responsible for having to be a good school district," said Settlemeyer.

"But I also lost respect for Krista in that every year that went on, more information was controlled all the time. And I saw that happen to the school board. Saw that happen to administrators. I do not feel bad at all about losing that control. That power, that way of doing business. I do not feel good about what I truly believe Krista has done to herself in her life."

When it was all said and done, Kelley was pleased with how the board had conducted themselves as part of the process.

"One of the things I've appreciated is you've each expressed something a little bit differently in terms of what you're losing or what you're letting go of but yet you've seemed to do it with respect even if you didn't agree with the person. You let them share their loss and that was so important," Kelley told the board.

Sullivan also believed that the board was taking an important step forward.

"Part of the transition as we talked about today was identifying what we're losing. It's not just a superintendent, it's how we go forward," he told *The Sentinel* after the meeting. "And so being able to identify where we were, what we're going to let go of and where we're going, takes a lot of work and it's certainly emotional."

Parent has since taken a position with COSA as a professor and Director of Leading and Licensure.

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Cottage Grove's Run CG plans 'Beer Mile, Toga Style' run for 8•18•18

Back in 1978, the town of Cottage Grove buzzed as crews arrived to film 'Animal House,' a movie that would become an enduring, if irreverent, classic. On Saturday, Aug. 18 of this year, the town will come together to celebrate this fantastic anniversary and attempt to recapture the record for the "World's Largest Toga Party" that Cottage Grove first attained on the movie's 25th anniversary in 2003.

Local running group Run CG organizes events each year that showcase the beauty and charm of the Cottage Grove area while providing an atmosphere of fun and fitness. Naturally, the group couldn't wait to be part of this year's 'Animal House' celebration, and they're planning a race that's sure to add

excitement to the festivities.

Billed as a "Beer Mile, Toga Style" the Brew Rush will take place alongside the party at Bohemia Park beginning at 2:30 pm on Saturday Aug. 18. Several heats of runners will drink a beer at each quarter-mile interval of the race for a four-beer total. They'll have brews of three different strengths from which to choose thanks to local sponsors Plank Town Brewing, Pelican Brewing and Goodlife Brewing.

According to beermile.com, the official resource for beer mile-related activities, the earliest documented beer miles took place in the late 1980s, and the races trace their origins in part to various college campuses. In the early 1990s, the emergence of digital

communication helped foster their growing popularity and introduce a set of standard rules. Today, beer miles are more popular than ever, and the record times — four minutes, 33 seconds for men and six minutes, eight seconds for women — are impressive by any standard.

Of course, in Cottage Grove, participants will have the added challenge of performing the Brew Rush in a toga, which is required for entry into the celebration. The full registration fee, which includes all four beers, entry into the toga party, a toga kit and \$10 food voucher, is \$75. More information and registration for the Brew Rush can be found at www.runcgrun.com.

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