

South Lane County Fire sends team to help with California wildfires

By Caitlyn May
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Using its emergency mobilization plan, through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, the Office of State Fire Marshal (OSFM) has activated its Agency Operations Center and is in the process of mobilizing 15 strike teams with equipment and personnel to assist with the Camp Fire in California.

The OSFM is sending structural task forces from the following counties: Rouge Valley, Klamath, Douglas, Lane, Marion, Linn, Benton, Lincoln, Polk, Washington, Multnomah, Clatsop, Columbia, Clackamas and Yamhill.

South Lane County Fire and Rescue sent four individuals and a type one engine to the state for 16 days.

According to Division Chief Joe Raade, the team can stay in the state for up to 21 days but a conversation would have to take place before extending beyond the initial 16-day stay.

“Once again, our neighbors in California are in need of support, and even though Oregon had a very long fire season, our Oregon Fire Service has stepped up humbly to help the state of California,” said State Fire Marshal Jim Walker.

California made the request through the Emergency Management Assistance



GARY MANLY/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

Firefighters from South Lane County Fire prepare to leave for California to assist with mutual aid efforts. Monday, a new fire had reportedly broken out near Simi Valley, Calif.

Compact a national state-to-state mutual aid system.

The EMAC request is sent directly to Oregon Emergency Management who contact and coordinate with the appropriate Oregon agency to fulfill the requests.

Raade said that while Oregon’s fire season is somewhat distinct, California faces wildfires for much of the year.

“California traditionally does have fires in the fall,” he said. “It’s much different than in Oregon where we have more moisture.”

“It’s not unusual for California to have fires until the first of the year.”

Future of community meeting place ‘Healing Matrix’ uncertain

By Caitlyn May
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For small communities, meeting places provide a sense of community, open forums and generate new ideas and opportunities.

They can also lend themselves to rumor and, in Cottage Grove, the rumor mill has been spinning about the future of the Healing Matrix — a public meeting space on 7th and Main Street with strong ties to several local nonprofit organizations.

And while the majority of the whisperings around town are false, one reality rings true: It needs a save.

Currently, the 4,000-square-foot building is owned by the Taubert Foundation, and operates as a catch-all for local groups and organizations like Sustainable Cottage Grove, Team Cottage Grove, Be Your Best, South Lane Mental Health and area veterans’ groups.

“The choices are to sell the building on the open market but they would rather donate it to someone with resources to continue it as a community space,” said Richard Sedlock, co-director of Sustainable Cottage Grove and board chair of the Healing Matrix nonprofit.

According to Sedlock, a small development team has been hosting several discussions about the building’s future with

District, with the hopes of finding an entity with the funds to run the building but preserve the community space.

“The choices are to sell the building ... but they would rather donate it to someone with resources to continue it as a community space”

—Richard Sedlock, co-director Sustainable Cottage Grove

various groups, including the city and the South Lane School

“We’ve had people from the city, the school district, the county and the nonprofits,” Sedlock said. “The school district seemed like the obvious choice but, because of the change-over in the superintendent position, they can’t commit to anything like this for a while.”

In an email response to *The Sentinel*, SLSLD Communications Coordinator Garrett Bridgens said he attended the discussions with superintendent Larry Sullivan and other SLSLD representatives to share their thoughts on the future of the Healing Matrix and added that the district recognizes and supports the role the facility plays in the community.

“We are grateful that we were invited to be a part of the discussion and are hopeful that the space will continue to be used in a positive, impactful way in our community,” he wrote.

“Nonprofits don’t usually have the big profit streams to support something like this,” Sedlock said, noting that the city did not immediately show interest in the building.

The development team has also floated the idea of donating

the building to a parks and recreation district. However, the city doesn’t currently have a parks and recreation district.

Sedlock noted that forming a district would take time — something he group is short on — but an interim agreement may help bridge the time gap.

Ideally, the owners of the building would prefer not to own the building by the summer of 2019, giving the group the remainder of this year and the spring to find a solution.

“It could be that there’s someone pretty quiet,” Sedlock said. “Maybe an advocate, but not a joiner, with some resources, who can do something.”

Sustainable Cottage Grove will be meeting at the Healing Matrix on Saturday, Dec. 1, at 10 a.m., to discuss the issue.

Interested parties can contact Sedlock at rsedlock ca@gmail.com.

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