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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 30, 2019

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Lane County on alert for measles, influenza

By Damien Sherwood
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Health officials and hospitals brace for potential measles outbreak as first case surfaces in Oregon

Lane County Public Health (LCPH) has issued a general health alert after 22 cases of measles were confirmed in Southwest Washington — and one in Portland last Friday.

The department is encouraging the public and medical professionals to watch for symptoms and take steps to reduce the virus's spread.

Individuals with confirmed cases were reported by LCPH to have traveled throughout the Portland Metro area during their communicable period, prompting health officials to issue a warning down the



COURTESY PHOTO

PeaceHealth South West Medical Center in Clark County Washington is among the hospitals responding to an outbreak of measles, which was officially confirmed in Oregon's Portland area last Friday.

I-5 corridor.

"Given the proximity of these cases to Lane County, the amount of travel that

happens daily between us and the greater Portland Metro area, and the particularly contagious nature of

measles, we are concerned about the risk of exposure," said Lane County Senior Public Health Officer Dr.

Patrick Luedtke in a press release.

Clark County Public Health has so far confirmed at least 31 cases this year alone. The county is located directly across the Columbia River from Portland, including Vancouver, Wash.

Measles is a highly contagious virus which can cause a high fever, cough, runny nose and red, watery eyes. Two or three days after symptoms begin, tiny white spots may appear inside the mouth, an early sign of infection. This is followed by a rash of flat, red spots which cover the body and are accompanied by a high fever.

The rash and fever will typically run their course after a few days, though in rare cases it can cause encephalitis (infection of the brain), pneumonia, and low birth weight in babies born to infected women.

See MEASLES 6A

SLSD board set to address Latham, new priorities

By Damien Sherwood
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Sometimes no news is good news; particularly when talking to your auditor.

In a special session Jan. 22, the South Lane School District (SLSD) Board heard from Albany-based accounting firm Accuity, LLC, who reported no major financial findings in its audit of the district's previous fiscal year.

Though the district ended the year with a negative net position of \$7.7 million, auditor Kori Sarrett reassured the board, "You are very similar to other school districts in the state of your size. That negative is coming from PERS liabilities. ... We expect that the PERS liability will stabilize and we will stop seeing it grow as much as it has been," Sarrett said.

"There's really nothing we can do about it in the short term," said the district's business supervisor Phil Scrima. "Long-term, it's an issue."

A clean bill of health for the SLSD's financial books is more good news for a district whose financial integrity with the community has paid off in previous years, as with the passing of a 2016 bond which saw the construction of the new Harrison Elementary School and other projects.

And a new project may be just on the horizon.

On Jan. 7, the board decided in a 5-2 vote to close Latham School after months of deliberation on the issue.

In last week's meeting, Interim Superintendent Larry Sullivan elicited ideas from the board regarding the Latham School transition.

A desire to honor the school's history and community was thematic to the input.

"I think there should be some reference to the history of Latham," said board member Merlene Martin. "The history of Latham is very important to our town."

See SCHOOL 6A

City Council votes to enter IGA with LTD

By Damien Sherwood
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The City Council voted unanimously on the direction of Cottage Grove's transportation options Monday night.

At issue was an intergovernmental agreement between the City of Cottage Grove and Lane Transit District (LTD) in which LTD provides funding to the city to cover the cost of operating a Mobility on Demand (MOD) Pilot Project. Councilor Kenneth Roberts was absent from the vote.

MOD, a transportation service billed as having "an infinite number of on-demand stops" in Cottage Grove, launched Jan. 14 and is slated to continue through Feb. 2, 2020. The service allows passengers to book trips anywhere within the city by using a mobile app, the website or with a phone call. Passengers can schedule their pick-up and drop-off times and locations for the cost of \$1 per ride.

As part of the project, local transportation service South Lane Wheels has been contracted by the city to provide the operational end of the MOD program with two of its shuttle buses.

The need for the MOD project comes with a planned reduction of trips by LTD to the Cottage Grove area. The city's Route 98 loop is scheduled on Feb. 3 to end service of four weekday trips and slightly alter another two, greatly reducing LTD bus options for midday commuters.

Because failure to approve the agreement would end the MOD Pilot Project and no more changes to the LTD route can be made until June, approval of the agreement was a forgone conclusion for many.

"We're between a rock and hard place on this



PHOTO BY PETER MCLAUGHLIN/BUSDRAWINGS.COM

A Route 98 bus heads to Cottage Grove. Trips down the Cottage Grove loop will be reduced starting Feb. 3, though the new Mobility on Demand service is expected to pick up the slack.

one," said Mayor Jeff Gowing in an agenda session on Friday.

"If you don't adopt the MOD, you don't have the loop and you don't have the connector route," explained City Manager Richard Meyers at the same session. "If you do the MOD, you may not have the loop, but at least you have the MOD there."

Entering the agreement was delayed at the

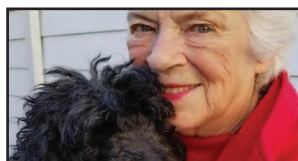
previous City Council meeting to address minor concerns and a slightly revised contract was presented Monday night, notably with a requirement that LTD obtain written consent from the city before any contractual changes are made.

According to the agreement, LTD is providing \$146,760 for the cost of operating the MOD system with South Lane Wheels.

See LTD 9A

COLUMNIST

Saving Jimmy
Mary Ellen "Angel Scribe" shares the story rescued dog Jimmy



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HOUSING

CG receives grants
Two CG housing projects among those to receive Housing Improvement Grants. PAGE A3

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