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Local voices delay county project

Damien Sherwood
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Residents of Sears Road won a small victory in Lane County's Courthouse Feb. 12 as the Lane County Board of Commissioners voted to delay a tree-cutting and road-widening project on the rural road.

"I'm really glad the commissioners listened," said Robin Mayall, a frequent cyclist of Sears Road who testified at the hearing. "It's ideally what public process should be. People come and speak from different points of view and the commissioners listen and they don't necessarily just rubber-stamp something - they take advisement on what people said and study it further."

Sears Road lies just past Cottage Grove city limits and is under county jurisdiction. The section of the road in question stretches from Molitor Ranch Road southward to Row River Road.

The proposed Sears Road Fixed Object Removal project began with a \$150,000 Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) grant as part of the All Roads Transportation Safety (ARTS) fund to remove fixed objects on the sides of Sears Road. The decision to use the road, according to officials, was data-driven, based on crash history and recommended by ODOT as part of a cost-benefit



A truck passes Linda Raade-Vaught's tree on Sears Road, one of 61 trees targeted by the county for removal due to safety concerns regarding fixed objects.

analysis when distributing the grant.

At the hearing, Lane County Traffic Engineer Steve Gallup presented data that counted six crashes with fixed objects between 2010 and 2016. One of the crashes resulted in a fatality and the other five in injuries.

As part of its goal to reduce fatal and severe-injury collisions, the Lane County Board

of Commissioners adopted a Transportation Safety Action Plan (TSAP) in 2017 to identify and address the greatest risks in the county. As part of this approach, fixed objects are identified as risk factors when they are within what is a considered a "clear zone," an otherwise unobstructed roadside area that drivers may use to pull to the side of the road or

safely navigate and return from if they leave the roadway.

"By creating clear zones, roadway agencies can increase the likelihood that a roadway departure results in a safe recovery rather than a crash, and mitigate the severity of crashes that do occur," read the summary of the agenda item.

The Project

To achieve this goal, the Sears Road project states the need to cut 61 trees from the road at the cost of the grant amount, \$150,000. A second phase of the project would widen the road with two 11-foot travel

See **Sears Road A6**

School routes to get safety upgrade

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Safer routes to Cottage Grove schools are on the way.

A \$1,272,143 grant from the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) toward the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program was approved by City Council vote Jan. 11.

SRTS is a nationwide effort to assist communities in identifying and reducing barriers and hazards to children walking or bicycling to and from school through infrastructure improvements and safety education.

At an estimated cost of \$1,676,512, the project will address key safety concerns on five routes to Cottage Grove schools. For most of these routes, safe sidewalks are an issue.

"In many cases, the majority of sidewalks are probably going to be replaced," said Public Works and Development Director Faye Stewart.

In the SRTS grant agree-

See **Upgrade A9**

Poet laureate to visit Cottage Grove

By Damien Sherwood
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"I really see writing as a part of something bigger, which is one's calling in the world," said Kim Stafford, reflecting on the importance of his craft. "That calling will be active, but those words and stories can enrich that action."

Stafford, Oregon's Poet Laureate and a teacher at Lewis & Clark College, is due to stop by Cottage Grove Monday, Feb. 25, to meet students, local writers and read from his works at the library.

Stafford was born and grew up in Oregon. Though his father, William Stafford, was a well-known and accomplished poet, his renown came notably late in the poet's life and Kim remembers much of his early inspiration for writing stemming from his own self-reflection.

"It was the internal world of dreams and imagination and being in nature coupled with being extremely shy when I was young," he said. "Teachers in school taught me how to

bring that forth in words."

Stafford can still name the teachers up through high school that had a profound impact on his mode of expression, and he credits them with evolving his craft.

"I think it made writing a personal friend," Stafford said. "Not a school task so much as a school companion."

Henry David Thoreau and Emily Dickinson were among his first literary influencers.

Thoreau, who famously wrote *Walden* and *Civil Disobedience*, appealed to Stafford for his independence and life as "a self-appointed student of the world."

Dickinson's writing, which Stafford categorized as "fierce and original," and her lack of need for validation through publishing evoked in Stafford the image of the courageous writer.

"For both them, there was an ambition to write wonderful things, but not an ambition to have others say, 'That's wonderful,'" Stafford said. "It's a self-di

See **Poet A10**

Bridge restoration, repairs set for spring

By Damien Sherwood
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While covered bridges receive plenty of attention in Cottage Grove, it's the city's uncovered bridges now under the eye of the city.

In a Feb. 11 City Council meeting, councilors voted to award a contract to Delta Construction Co. from Eugene to begin work on three city bridges: The Main Street bridge crossing the Coast Fork Willamette River, its downstream counterpart on Harrison Avenue and the bridge crossing Silk Creek on South River Road.

At an estimated cost of \$534,179, Delta Construction won out over rival bidder HP Civil Inc, which submitted a bid of \$647,278.

"I'm glad to get Delta in," said the Cottage Grove Civil Engineer Ryan Sisson. "They have a lot of experience with this kind of work."

The city had previously budgeted the project at \$511,500 based on an Engineer's Estimate of Construction Costs last November by OBEC Consulting Engineers. The engineer's estimate had placed the cost at \$438,426, nearly \$100,000 lower than Delta's winning bid. The



DAMIEN SHERWOOD/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

The Main Street bridge is one of three bridges due for repairs and restorations this year.

discrepancy means the city must dig into its street contingency fund or possibly push other projects into the next fiscal year.

"It's not that we don't have the money," said Sisson. "It's about what other projects we're not doing."

In a climate facing a draught of available construction personnel to meet the high demands

throughout the state, cities requesting bids on projects may find responses from as little as one or two contractors. Limited options can result in bidders setting the price, which may force cities to opt for contracts that exceed their budgets.

Repairs and restoration tasks on the bridges have been on the city's radar since a 2016 report

by OBEC Consulting Engineers identified several items as needing attention. While some work will result in aesthetic improvements, much of it will go toward infrastructural changes that will extend the bridges' lifespans.

First among the items is railing. To various degrees, each of

See **Bridge A7**

HOUSE FIRE

Firefighters end blaze

SLCGR quickly put out an upstairs fire on Grant Avenue last week

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COMMUNITY

Adopt a carousel horse

A local woman adopts a carousel horse in memory of loved ones.

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