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WEATHER



Sunny skies with a high of 55 and a low tonight of 37.

Full forecast on A5

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Making tracks with tiny trains.

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SPORTS — B



Lions on brink of elimination.

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CGHS locker room hazing leads to citation of two students

Investigations by SLSD and Cottage Grove Police provide answers but also leave questions

BY DAMIEN SHERWOOD
NED HICKSON
NICK SNYDER & JOSHUA LEACH
THE SENTINEL

An alleged hazing incident at Cottage Grove High School has resulted in the criminal citation of two 15-year-old boys and the discipline of at least seven others following a police and school district investigation.

The allegations surfaced after a freshman junior varsity football player reported that he was harassed by two older varsity players in the school locker room.

Following an investigation by the Cottage Grove Police Department, as well as a separate

victim as being sexually assaulted with as many as 10 people present, as reported to the Eugene newspaper by what it identified as a “member of the victim’s family.”

Subsequent reports by local news stations and comments and allegations on social media have revolved around the sexual nature of the incident as well as the possibility of more victims, leading to outrage among some in the community in regard to what complainants felt were light consequences for the students who were cited.

SLSD released a letter to students and parents on Oct. 24, stating that, “the reports of rape and other sexual crimes ... are

“We had to tell [kids] to quit ... chasing people or snapping them with towels, but we never dealt with anything like this.”

— Scott Shepherd, CGPD Chief and past CGHS basketball coach

investigation by the South Lane School District (SLSD), two students were cited for harassment, a Class A misdemeanor, which carries a maximum \$6,250 fine and/or one year in jail. *The Sentinel* learned at least seven other students were disciplined, with some receiving suspensions, after the school investigation revealed other incidents that the district said were less severe and not related to the hazing incident. The school district would not comment further on the reasons for the other student reprimands due to student privacy concerns.

The case was first made public in an Oct. 21 *Register-Guard* article which characterized the

not consistent with the findings of our investigation.”

The following day, on Oct. 25, three parents protested outside the high school in response to the district’s handling of the incident.

The Case

Sources close to the investigation have confirmed to *The Sentinel* that around 11 a.m. on Sept. 27, the school district was notified of a complaint about harassment in the school locker room. When it became apparent a possible crime had occurred, school officials contacted local police. By 12:25 p.m. the school resource officer had requested a case number for the incident as

Elementary, middle school programs focus on lowering district’s high bullying rates

The relatively new ‘Buddy’ and other programs are aimed at a long-term solution

BY JOSHUA LEACH
INTERN FOR THE SENTINEL

Catherine Coffrini’s classroom, crowded but cozy, erupted when a gaggle of students marched through her front door. Brenna Fairchild’s fifth grade class entered the room, faces etched with smiles, and traipsed into the waiting arms of more than a few seven-year-olds. It was time for Buddies.

Out came the papers covered with pumpkins. Out came the crayons and began the coloring. The kids raced to build their pumpkin faces, taking turns rolling dice and drawing whatever shape the numbers told them to, peals of “Baby Shark” ringing out over the cacophony of tiny voices.

“She won,” said Boston, 11. “I couldn’t get a nose in time.”

Boston and Payton, 7, have been paired up as buddies, col-

oring pumpkins that will soon hang in Grocery Outlet.

“I’m your BFF, right?” Payton asked Boston.

“Yep!” said Boston with a wry smile.

Boston and Payton met only a few weeks ago when their classrooms were paired up as part of the “Buddies, not Bullies” program at Bohemia Elementary School. The program is designed to help build connections across grade levels and create a stronger school community. It’s one of the ways the South Lane School District (SLSD) is trying to combat bullying.

“What we really try to promote is this idea of family and how we take care of each other at Bohemia,” said Principal Heather Bridgens.

Previous reporting by *The*

See BULLYING 10A

the Cottage Grove Police Department and SLSD began separate investigations.

That night, at least a dozen varsity football players were missing from the roster of a high school football game in Cottage Grove. When asked that evening at the event, school staff would not comment on the reason for the lack of active players for the Sept. 27 game.

As part of the Cottage Grove Police Department’s investigation, separate interviews were

conducted with the alleged victim, witnesses and suspects.

Conversations with the victim led to the freshman boy being referred to a children’s advocacy group in Eugene, where a forensic interview was conducted the following Tuesday on Oct. 1.

Through the investigation, it was determined that on or around Sept. 16, a member of the varsity football team picked up the freshman victim in the

See HAZING 7A

City seeks community input for housing code changes

BY DAMIEN SHERWOOD
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The city held an open house in the Community Center on Oct. 22 to share information on recommendations made by the Development Code Audit Committee and gather input from the public.

More open houses are to follow and will present an opportunity for the community to weigh in on changes to the city’s housing code.

“They’re real informal,” said Public Works and Development Director Faye Stewart. “It’s generally a one-on-one with city staff who are present.”

Attending staff at the Oct. 22 open house explained the process for code recommendations, the reasons for the change and took comments from the public.

Stewart felt public input was an important part of the process.

“We want to protect the values that people want in our community and we want to make sure the things we’re doing don’t negatively impact their lives or the quality of life in Cottage Grove,” he said.

The passage of House Bill 2001 this year required updates to city codes and comprehensive plans around Oregon.

The bill is an effort to curb rising housing costs by increasing supply of smaller homes.

Among mandates was a stipulation that cities with at least 10,000 residents allow development of duplexes in lands zoned for single-family dwellings.

Cottage Grove has recently passed the 10,000-resident mark.

To comply with the legislation, the audit committee has adjusted the city’s code to allow duplex development on any lot where single-family homes are allowed. The city has previously allowed duplexes only on certain lot sizes in town, but the code change will

effectively allow their development in any residential zone.

The code audit committee is also taking the opportunity to address housing needs in the community as detailed by the city’s 2018 Housing Needs Analysis.

Policy recommendations from the analysis were adopted by the city in January.

The analysis reported a lack of housing across low-, middle- and high-income levels as the city’s vacancy hovers around 1 or 2 percent.

The report recommended a growth rate of 69 units per year to help the city meet a goal of

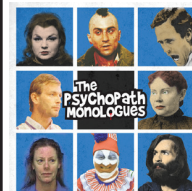
1,379 more units by 2038.

The analysis also noted that the city would be able to achieve its housing goals without expanding its urban growth boundary.

In looking for solutions, the city considered if codes or costs were hindering development in Cottage Grove, a conversation out of which the Development Code Audit Committee was born. The committee has since been exploring the impacts of modifying development code to encourage a greater range of housing mix and housing density.

See CODES 11A

UPCOMING AT OPAL



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