

Hazing *from A1*

locker room while another varsity member attempted to thrust a broomstick into the victim's rectum. The two varsity players then pulled the victim to the locker room floor, where one suspect held the victim down as the other continued the same act with the broomstick.

According to interviews conducted as part of the investigation, as well as information obtained by *The Sentinel*, it was determined that no sex crime had been committed because the victim was wearing underwear and a football girdle during the incident, preventing actual penetration by the object.

Citations to appear in court were issued Oct. 3 to both 15-year-old varsity players for harassment, a charge which contains a subsection which describes "offensive physical contact [which] consists of touching the sexual or other intimate parts of the other person."

The police department's investigation was closed Oct. 4, and the case was

passed on to Lane County Youth Services.

According to Cottage Grove Police Chief Scott Shepherd, charges may be changed by the District Attorney's office depending on circumstances. In such a case, the Cottage Grove Police Department may likely be contacted for follow-up. As of press time on Oct. 28, there were no indications that the charges would be altered.

Simultaneously, the South Lane School District conducted its own investigation, which stretched back to the beginning of the sports season, with no additional criminal acts reported by the district. However, a total of nine students received disciplinary action as a result of the investigation — with at least some being suspensions. The school district said that a majority of these disciplined students were not connected to the hazing report, but rather disciplined for other behavior.

At the most recent Cottage Grove football game on Oct. 25, a total of 14 players that had been on the Lions' preseason roster were no longer listed, however some were said

by the school district to have moved away or quit for reasons unrelated to the hazing incident.

Though the school district and the police department have completed

include the claim about the medical evaluation, but added that a member of the alleged victim's family said the accused perpetrators also placed their genitalia on the boy

could constitute unlawful sexual penetration, a Class B felony rather than a lesser Class A misdemeanor.

In the aftermath of media reports, the Cottage Grove community expressed its shock and disbelief on social media, some making claims that the incident was more severe than was reported, including allegations that nude photos of other students had been distributed.

However, no mention of recording devices was reported in the criminal case according to the police department.

"Phones are not acceptable in the locker room," said Interim Assistant Superintendent Brian McCasline. "The phone issue did not come up in the investigation."

If such actions took place, they would likely constitute an invasion of personal privacy in

the second degree, also a Class A misdemeanor.

Culture of Harassment?

The concerns raised by the community pose the question as to whether a culture of harassment exists in the high school's locker room or football program.

Information obtained by *The Sentinel* as part of its own investigation has suggested that varsity members of the Cottage Grove High School football team this year habitually exposed themselves in the locker room to younger junior varsity members to make the junior members uncomfortable. Though such behavior is prohibited under the Cottage Grove High School Student and Parent Handbook, it does not technically or necessarily constitute a criminal act.

See CGHS 8A

"During the investigation, there was no evidence that this was a long-standing pattern of behavior."

— Brian McCasline, Interim Assist. Superintendent

their investigations, some news reports and a consistent stream of online comments have given life to the worry that the investigations were not accurate or comprehensive enough.

A KEZI television report on Oct. 22 featured an anonymous "family friend" who stated that a "doctor had confirmed" that the victim had been sexually assaulted, lending credence to the claim that the crime was more serious than investigations concluded.

However, an online version of the KEZI report that appeared later did not

while they were holding him down. *The Sentinel* could not independently verify these claims.

The Cottage Grove Police Department has confirmed with *The Sentinel* that no medical exam was administered to the victim as part of the investigation, as would be protocol in the instance of a suspected sex crime.

School district officials said they had no information on the claims regarding the medical evaluation or claims that the broomstick had been inserted into the victim's rectum.

If true, the allegations

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