

KNND *from A8*

only are we in our own location that we own, not only are we going to have the FM up and going, but we’re going to continue building upon what we’ve worked to establish, which is live and local programming.”

A bridge by any other name...
(Originally printed Dec. 5, 2019)

The City of Cottage Grove held a ribbon cutting ceremony for the newly constructed J. Polk Currin Swinging Bridge on Saturday, Nov. 30, at 10 a.m.

The new suspension bridge replaces the previous bridge at that location, which was closed in September 2016 after engineer inspections indicated the bridge was unsafe.

The previous bridge, commonly known as “The Swinging Bridge,” but officially named the Currin Bridge, was built in 1965. The bridge was named after J. Polk Currin, an early resident of Cottage Grove and one of the first three graduates from Oregon State University. He was also a long-standing teacher and pioneer druggist.

The bridge built in 1965 was built to replace previous bridges constructed over the years at the approximate location, the first of which was constructed by Currin to allow members of the community to have access to both sides of the Coast Fork Willamette River.

The Cottage Grove City Council expanded the official name of the bridge to “J. Polk Currin Swinging

Bridge” to differentiate the bridge from other bridges that shared the Currin name.

Following the closing of the iconic Cottage Grove Swinging Bridge in 2016, community members and city employees worked to secure funding and grants and to make a plan for its safe replacement.

Hamilton Construction and the Ausland Group designed and constructed the new bridge. Construction was completed Oct. 18, for a cost of about \$804,000. The city received a grant from the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department’s Local Government Grant Program for \$200,000, with community members raising nearly \$18,000 through Friends of the Swinging Bridge fundraisers and the Roundup for the Bridge program on City Utility bills.

The new suspension design captures the historic swinging and aesthetic character of the previous bridge, as well as meets modern codes for safe pedestrian bridges. Common materials were specified and some elements, like the concrete piers and angle-iron floor beams used to hold the decking, were reused to keep the project economical.

The new bridge will retain some of its characteristic “swinging” movement and use a non-slip synthetic decking material, called pultruded fiberglass, commonly used for marine docks.

“The Swinging Bridge is an important piece of history for our community. Rebuilding it has been a great partnership between grass roots efforts, dedicated engineers, contractors

and the city. We are all excited to add the bridge back to our walkable, beautiful neighborhoods,” said Ryan Sisson, civil engineer for the City of Cottage Grove.

Local resident Dana Merryday headed up the Friends of Cottage Grove Swinging Bridge, a community group which advocated for the bridge’s reconstruction.

“It is an integral part of the Cottage Grove community because generations of local families have used it to get to school, visit neighbors and relatives, had their first date (and sometimes kiss) on that bridge, etc.,” Merryday said. “Ask anyone who grew up in Cottage Grove and immediately they will start telling you stories about their connection and experiences on the bridge.”

CGHS hazing incident leads to citation of two students

(Originally printed Oct. 30, 2019)

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



DAMIEN SHERWOOD/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

KNND station owner Cameron Reiten broadcasts from his new studio at 717 E Main Street.

Police Department, as well as a separate 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.

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 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.

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 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 while they were holding him down.

While *The Sentinel* could not independently verify these claims, it was able to confirm that the police department’s investigation turned up no other cases rising to the level of criminal action.

“At no time during the investigation did we think there were other people at risk,” said Shepherd, who added that, to his knowledge, no cases of this nature have emerged or been opened in the last two decades.

After conducting its own investigation, the school district addressed the situation publicly.

“We have modified our supervision in the locker room to make sure that coaches are within eye and earshot of students at all times,” said Interim Assistant Superintendent Brian McCasline. “We need every athlete within sight and sound at this point.”

On the morning of Oct. 25, school officials spoke to students in an assembly which addressed the issue of harassment.

“We made some assurances and told them where we’re headed, what we expect of them and what we expected of all of us in the future,” McCasline said.

Among those expectations, McCasline said, is a school district that is attentive and responsive to student reports of harassment, intimidation and bullying.

“If there are any other reports that haven’t been reported to the Cottage Grove police or the school district, then we of course would want to know that,” said McCasline.

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