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WEATHER

Partly sunny with a high of 59 and a low tonight of 43.
Full forecast on A5

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State of City addresses challenges, accomplishments

The City also joins local leaders in denouncing events in D.C.

By DAMIEN SHERWOOD
DSHERWOOD@CGSENTINEL.COM

Mayor Jeff Gowing delivered the State of City Address at Monday night's city council meeting, outlining the peaks and valleys of tumultuous year.

Gowing spoke of the city's many challenges last year and noted that despite a historic pandemic, wildfires and the passing of a councilor, the community exercised resilience and adaptability as it found ways to move forward.

"I was so proud of the way the citizens of Cottage Grove responded to all the challenges of 2020," he said. "It really makes me proud to call Cottage Grove home."

Though starting 2020 off on a



DAMIEN SHERWOOD/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

Members of council who were voted in last November took their oaths of office during Monday's city council meeting.

high note with the city's giveaway of hundreds of trees to replace those lost in the previous year's snowstorm and the rebirth of the South Lane County Resource Guide, this was soon starkly contrasted with a public health crisis

which fundamentally changed the community's social and economic architecture.

"Some of the changes we've made will likely endure beyond the pandemic," said Gowing. "One of the changes that I hope does not

become permanent is the closure and damage of our local small businesses. Those small business represent real community members, parents, friends and neighbors to all of us, whether they are owners that have a dream to run a small business and serve the needs of the community or employees [who work] at those businesses."

The mayor entreated the community to continue supporting local businesses to help restore them to pre-pandemic stability.

Gowing also praised the city for swiftly moving to mitigate local financial insecurity as the pandemic hit.

The city designated \$100,000 in loans last year and used a portion to match state funds for grants for local businesses.

"We were able to provide 11 grants to Cottage Grove

See CITY 7A



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CITY OF COTTAGE GROVE

City workers were forced to unclog the wastewater treatment plant's screen last week.

City reminds residents that 'wipes clog pipes'

By DAMIEN SHERWOOD
DSHERWOOD@CGSENTINEL.COM

A recent issue surfaced at Cottage Grove's Wastewater Treatment Plant that left city workers a bit flushed. The issue?

Tissue.

According to the city's statement, the crew at the treatment plant had been struggling the previous week to treat the high flows of wastewater coming to the plant.

Upon investigation, the crew discovered a screen had become plugged with disposable wipes and other non-biodegradable items restricting the flow of wastewater.

During a break in the rain, the crew began to clean out the

plugged screen and discovered the extent of the problem – the screen was covered with a blanket of material one foot deep by five feet wide and 10 feet long.

As a result, an expected flow of 25 million gallons of water per day had been reduced to about seven.

Fortunately, the flows to the plant had receded and the plant was able to process all the wastewater that came through the system.

In the interest of preventing future flow problems, the city issued a simple reminder to the community: "wipes clog pipes."

The message stressed that city residents hooked to the city sewer system not flush items down the

toilet that don't belong in the sanitary sewer system.

The wastewater treatment plant is designed to treat waste such as urine, feces and toilet paper only.

The city is asking residents not to flush paper towels, facial tissues, disinfectant wipes, diapers, baby wipes, fats, grease or oils even if the products have been marketed as flushable.

City Manager Richard Meyers said he understands that the inclusion of facial tissues on the list may come as a surprise.

"Facial tissues and Kleenexes are not supposed to be flushed and can plug up the system because they're a little more fibrous. They're a little

See WIPES 6A

SLSD adopts 'All Students Belong' rule

By DAMIEN SHERWOOD
DSHERWOOD@CGSENTINEL.COM

In the wake of intense clashes on the streets of the United States last year sparked by the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police, public education policy in Oregon has shifted to address concerns of discrimination on campuses.

On Monday, South Lane School District (SLSD) officially took action to move in concordance with developing state policies.

During its Jan. 11 meeting, board members voted to adopt the state's "All Students Belong" policy, a temporary rule in Chapter 581, Division 22 in the Oregon Secretary of State Administrative Rules.

Among its stipulations, the All Students Belong rule prohibits hate symbols and specifically targets the swastika (outside of a religious context), the Confederate flag and the noose.

"This issue is probably one of the most critical things we can address in meeting our commitment to the young people that we're here for," said SLSD board member Jerry Settlemeyer during the board meeting.

The state's temporary rule took effect on Sept. 18, 2020, and required districts to adopt and implement policies and procedures that prohibit the use or display of hate symbols within any program or school-sponsored activity except where used in teaching curricula that are aligned with the Oregon State Standards by

See SLSD 5A



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