

EDITORIALS

Schools, cities: time to prepare

As we continue our coverage of the pending 9.0 Cascadia zone earthquake, we asked the cities and school districts, "How ready are we?"

What we got in reply was a mixed bag, but mostly one of building collapse or short-staffed crews not having time to get ready.

We understand that some of our beautiful, old buildings in Polk County will collapse — including people's homes.

We applaud Falls City for its efforts to take its emergency plan and tailor it to its community. It is a grassroots effort to connect the city government with the school district, churches and businesses.

Everyone will have a part to play in any natural disaster, especially one of the epic proportions predicted with a 9.0 earthquake off the Oregon coast.

We will sleep better at night knowing the Polk County Sheriff's Office has already taken steps to ensure deputies and their families will have enough food for the first three days. Hopefully, that will translate to them being able to help the community in that time of need — if the roads are clear and safe for passage.

But, during our interviews, we found that too many organizations aren't as prepared as they should be. While all have mandatory emergency protocol — whatever that means — many haven't made the effort any major disaster — floods, big snow storms, or wild fire — will require.

The thing about natural disasters and emergencies is that you don't see them coming. The Cascadia zone earthquake will be an amazing, terrifying event. It will be a once-in-a-lifetime sort of experience, and being prepared is key.

There is no excuse for a governmental organization to lack a practical, understandable, concise plan for such an emergency. The warnings have been issued; let's look at the safety of the people in our care, whether it be city, schools or on the county level.

Our county is blessed with a well-led, well-organized County Emergency Management Team, as well as many others who are knowledgeable about preparedness. It is time to stop putting off making a plan because of a lack of manpower, and time to start finding volunteers to band together for the safety of students and citizens. It is past time to take the necessary steps to get grants to make seismic upgrades to old public buildings. Let's band together to get ready for whatever lays ahead.

PUBLIC AGENDA

Public Agenda is a listing of upcoming meetings for governmental and nongovernmental agencies in Polk County. To submit a meeting, send it at least two weeks before the actual meeting date to the *Itemizer-Observer* via fax (503-623-2395) or email (ionews@polkio.com).

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 9

• **Polk Soil and Water Conservation District** — 6 p.m., USDA Service Center: 580 Main Street, Suite A, Dallas. 503-623-9680, ext. 5.

• **Monmouth Library Advisory Board** — 7 a.m., Monmouth Public Library meeting room, 168 S. Ecols St., Monmouth. 503-838-0722.

• **Polk County Board of Commissioners** — 9 a.m., Polk County Courthouse, 850 Main St., Dallas. 503-623-8173.

• **Monmouth Park and Recreation Board** — 7 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 S. Warren St., Monmouth. 503-838-0722.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 10

• **Polk County Fire District No. 1 Board** — 6 p.m., Central Station 90, 1800 Monmouth St., Independence. 503-838-1510.

• **Luckiamute Watershed Council** — 7 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 S. Warren St., Monmouth. 503-837-0237.

• **Falls City Council** — 7:30 p.m., Falls City Community Center, 320 N. Main St., Falls City. 503-787-3631.

MONDAY, SEPT. 14

• **Central School District Board of Directors** — 6:30 p.m., Henry Hill Education Support Center, 750 S. Fifth St., Independence. 503-838-0030.

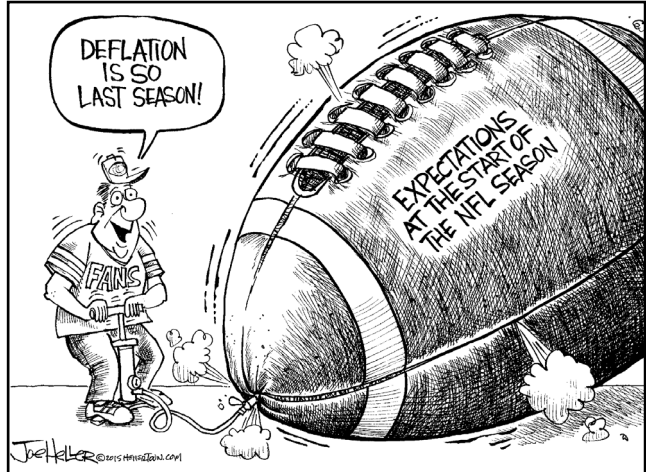
• **Dallas School District Board of Directors** — 6:30 p.m., DSD office, 111 SW Ash St., Dallas. 503-623-5594.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 15

• **Polk County Board of Commissioners** — 9 a.m., Polk County Courthouse, 850 Main St., Dallas. 503-623-8173.

• **Independence Historic Preservation Commission** — 4 p.m., Independence Civic Center, 555 S. Main St., Independence. 503-838-1212.

• **Monmouth City Council** — 7 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 S. Warren St., Monmouth. 503-838-0722.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Back-to-school event a success

The Dallas Family Night Out committee would like to thank the community of Dallas for such a great event this year.

This was our fourth annual event, which is focused on helping families prepare for back to school.

Families can attend the event free of charge and enjoy games at more than 30 local resource provider tables, live entertainment, free food, a large clothing giveaway, immunizations, backpacks with school sup-

plies and haircuts.

This year we added dental education with the help of Kaiser Permanente, Capitol Dental, and the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians.

We received a grant from the tribe that helped feed the 1,888 people that came through the event.

It takes many hours, tons of volunteers, and community involvement to make this event happen — there are too many to list but we appreciate each and every one of you.

The committee would like to give a special thanks

to James2 Community Kitchen for their willingness to help even though they had just lost their main cook and leader, Wayne Kester.

Wayne was missed at this event but not forgotten.

I just want to say a special thank you to El Pique, Dallas Community Foundation, Walmart and many other local businesses for their support to help make this event successful.

Our committee looks forward to seeing you all again next year.

*Sheri Beehner
Dallas*

GUEST COLUMN

Great school year begins

Welcome to the 2015-16 school year!

This is one of my favorite times of year, as staff returns and excitedly prepare for the influx of students.

Our buildings look amazing, the enthusiasm level is high, and we are ready for our students!

Johnstone

Let's kick off the year with celebrations in staffing, bond work, and our district goals.

First, we are welcoming 50 new staff members, 21 of whom are teachers.

Every staff member we add means more support for our students.

Please check out the summer bond work at Oakdale

Heights Elementary, Whitworth Elementary, and Morrison, where new roofs have been completed.

Thank you for passing the bond measure.

It is the support of our strong community that allows us the privilege of taking care of our kids.

As we think about the focus for the coming year, our board has set the following five important goals:

• All students will obtain a high school diploma that is appropriate and meaningful as we align to The Promise of Oregon.

• Update the long-range facilities plan with future recommendations that include developing standards for facilities inclusive of future schools by June 2016.

• Continue to improve communication efforts with students and families and

with the community.

• Continue to promote transparency with greater involvement of the budget review committee, district staff, and others in the allocation of resources to meet the mission of the district.

• Continue to focus on creating safe learning environments.

We will be reporting our progress on each of the goals throughout the school year.

As always, our focus is on the critical question, "Is it best for kids?"

I am thankful for our community of supportive and dedicated patrons, parents, and staff, and I look forward to working with you on behalf of our kids.

It is going to be a great year!

*Michelle Johnstone, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Dallas School District No. 2*

WANT TO WRITE A LETTER?

Letters to the editor are limited to 300 words. Longer letters will be edited.

Election-related letters of all types are limited to 100 words. Writers are limited to one election-related letter per election season. Election letters from writers outside of Polk County are not accepted.

Each writer is restricted to one letter per 30-day period.

Letters that are libelous, obscene or in bad taste will not be printed. Attacks by name on businesses or individuals will not be printed.

Letters to the editor that are obvious promotions for a business, products or services will not be printed.

The *Itemizer-Observer* does not guarantee the accuracy of facts presented by letter writers; dissenters are welcome to respond. Letter writers who disagree with other published letter writers should maintain a civil discourse and address the subject, not the author.

Letters, like all editorial material submitted to the newspaper, are edited for length, grammar and content.

Letters must include the author's name, address and telephone number. This includes letters submitted via the *I-O's* website. Names and cities of residence are published; street addresses and telephone numbers are used for verification purposes only.

Letters must be submitted from individuals, not organizations, and must be original submissions to the *I-O*, not copies of letters sent to other media.

Letters of thanks to businesses, individuals and organizations are limited to 10 names.

The deadline for letters to the editor is 10 a.m. Monday. Letters submitted may not be retractable after this deadline.

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