

Council fills gap for senior center growth

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

MONMOUTH — The Monmouth Senior Center expansion is back on track and might get started as early as next week, said City Manager Scott McClure.

The project, which has been in the planning and fundraising stage for about 15 years, came in over budget when it was put to bid earlier this year.

The city council decided at its April 19 meeting to fill the gap of about \$100,000 of the \$520,000 project, McClure said.

The council considered waiting to make the decision until the budget committee meets on May 10, but McClure said contractors, Medcalf Construction, of Salem, could not guarantee the bid after May 1.

“Prices likely would have gone up” if the council had waited any longer, McClure said.

The expansion is in response to increased use of the senior center. “What it came down to ... is we were getting too congested,” McClure said. “You tried to get a new class going and there just wasn’t space or time for it.”

When it came to big events, the limitations on the restroom facilities became more noticeable.

“The nice thing is, too, with the center, is it functions as more of a regional center,” McClure said. “We serve Inde-

pendence and Monmouth, and some outside the area, from Dallas and West Salem.”

McClure said the one-time expense to help the expansion along won’t hurt Monmouth’s budget too much.

“It affects the ending-fund balance,” he said. “It isn’t like we had to cut \$100,000 out of operating budgets, it just drew down the reserve. We’re still in not-bad shape.”

The project was awarded a \$90,000 grant from the Ford Family Foundation, \$40,000 from the Meyer Memorial Trust, \$30,000 from Oregon Community Fund and \$15,000 from the Collins Fund.

The 2,133-square foot addition is expected to be completed this year.

DSD looks OK after \$1M loss

Dallas schools keep gains in spite of shortages to 2015-16 budget

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — The Dallas School District will manage its unexpected budget decrease without having to lay off employees.

A combination of changes in the district’s fifth-year program, how the state calculates poverty rates and declining enrollment added up to a \$1 million loss to the district this fiscal year, ending on June 30.

But that doesn’t mean that pink slips will be needed to balance the budget.

“The positions that were reduced in the budget were done through attrition and reassignment of staff, not due to layoffs,” said Superintendent Michelle Johnstone at the first meeting of the district’s budget committee on Monday.

Programs added in the last two years will remain intact, as well.

The proposed budget continues electives at LaCreole Middle School, increased special education support and better access to technology added in the 2014-15 school year.

Full-year kindergarten, music instruction at Lyle and Oakdale Heights elementary schools and more special education staffing at Dallas High School added in the current year will continue.

Johnstone presented the

2016-17 budget on Monday, which reflects a smaller general fund of \$31.6 million compared to \$32.7 million in the current year. The overall budget is \$47.3 million.

Resources to purchase more mobile devices and increased bandwidth throughout the district are in the 2016-17 budget.

Employees will see a 3 percent cost of living increase, per contracts signed in 2014-15.

However, the district’s contingency will be reduced by approximately \$650,000 to \$1 million, a figure district officials had hoped could be higher in anticipation of increased Public Employees Retirement System rates.

Johnstone noted highlights, including an improved graduation rate, a successful application for a seismic improvement grant for Whitworth Elementary School, beginning development of a “career technical education” (CTE) center at the high school, and “stem” (science, technology, engineering and math) programs at Whitworth.

“We are on the move, and we are on the move doing the right things for kids in terms of CTE as well as the stem programming,” she said.

The next budget committee meeting is May 16 at 6 p.m. at the district office, 111 SW Ash St., Dallas.

Monmouth joins HEAL cities

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

MONMOUTH — The city of Monmouth has become designated as a Healthy Eating, Active Living city.

Independence and Dallas are already HEAL cities.

Phyllis Bolman, Monmouth city recorder, said she attended a Willamette Valley HEAL cities forum in November and thought it would be a perfect fit for Monmouth.

“This means that Monmouth makes a commitment to provide healthy choices and more active living choices for people,” Bolman said.

The city qualified for the program because it has pedestrian and bicycling improvements in its transportation system plan, Bolman said.

“We have our walking trail at Madrona Park, and we have agreements with Central Youth Sports to provide fields for them over by the public works building,” she said.

Being an official HEAL city means Monmouth will be able to apply for grants to improve its walking and biking trails, Bolman said.

“The city’s role in building healthy cities is to encour-



EMILY MENTZER/Itemizer-Observer

The nearly half-mile walking path at Madrona Park is often used by residents — including parents who watch while their children play soccer in the fields.

age staff and residents to eat healthier and give them choices for that,” she said.

That doesn’t necessarily mean the city will recruit healthy restaurants, but it does mean Monmouth leaders will support new or existing farmers markets, Bol-

man said as an example.

Councilor Marshall Guthrie said there is no downside to being a part of the program, adding that it will open the door to personal, financial and intellectual support in adopting initiatives to improve the qual-

ity of life for Monmouth citizens.

The program is funded by Keizer Permenante and implemented through the Oregon Public Health Institute.

For more information: ci.monmouth.or.us.

Dallas begins weed abatement

DALLAS — The city of Dallas has started its annual program of identifying the various nuisances caused by weeds, grass, and debris and working with residents to eliminate those hazards.

It is the responsibility of each property owner to cut down or destroy obnoxious vegetation.

The city code is enforced throughout the growing season from spring through early fall. For more information, call Dallas City Hall: 503-831-3510 or to report concern, 503-831-3568.

"Let's fix our streets"

"stop the decline"

"many streets in poor condition"

"sounds affordable to me"

"time to do something about it"

"keep Dallas a great place to live"



"streets are badly in need of repair"

"join me in voting yes"

"promotes civic pride"

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