

The OREGON OBSERVER

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Photo by Jim Ferolie

In 2007, severe flooding led the Village of Oregon to buy six houses along Florida Avenue and shut down the street for good. Now there's hardly any evidence a street was ever there, in the clearing next to the drainage ditch.

After the flood

A decade later, fixes continue to hold

BILL LIVICK

Unified Newspaper Group

A heavy storm that hit the village in the early morning of July 10 dumped 4.6 inches of rain in a little over four hours.

It caused flooding on North Burr Oak Avenue and sewer backups in several homes.

But the damage would almost certainly have been more severe if not for measures the village took a decade earlier, in the wake of what many recall as the worst flood in Oregon's history.

The rain began to fall Saturday, Aug. 18, 2007, and by the next day the storm had deluged the village with almost 19 inches of water.

It forced the evacuation of seven families – five living on what was then Florida Avenue, one on North Burr Oak Avenue and one in the lower half of a duplex on Prairie View Street – and caused flooding in various parts of the community.

The catastrophic event didn't claim any lives. But it led village officials to vow to fix the problem.

Acting on a study of the village's stormwater management conducted by Ruekert and Mielke Inc., they decided to buy all five homes on Florida Avenue and one on North Burr Oak – at a cost of \$1.1 million, using county and state grants, stormwater utility funds and future developer fees, but no tax dollars – and remove them from the Badfish Creek floodplain. They also eliminated Florida Avenue and restored the area as green space.



Photo by Jeremy Jones

In 2007, severe flooding led the Village of Oregon to buy six houses along Florida Avenue and shut down the street for good. With cars unable to navigate the street, some people took creative ways to get around.

But moving the homes wouldn't prevent future flooding. So in the spring of 2008, village officials also decided to spend \$2 million to replace a stormwater inlet near Kwik Trip on North Main Street and more than 1,700 linear feet of a 72-inch corrugated metal culvert that channels the creek east beneath downtown Oregon and eventually out of the village.

"The flood of 2007 was probably the worst we've ever had, and it was one of the most difficult things

to resolve because it took such a long time," said former public works director Mark Below, who led the department for 25 years and has lived in Oregon for more than 60 years.

It took the village more than two years to acquire and remove all six properties – a much shorter period than Village President Steve Staton initially had anticipated.

Village administrator Mike Gracz recalls the event and its aftermath

Turn to **Flood**/Page 12

Oregon School District

Managing its growth

OSD task force explores options for new schools, configurations

SCOTT DE LARUELLE

Unified Newspaper Group

The Oregon School District has around 4,000 students, but by the time this year's kindergarteners graduate, that number is projected to have risen to around 6,000.

Facing this 50 percent increase by 2030, it's just a matter of time before the district must expand its footprint by adding new schools or expanding existing ones.

In February, the district created a growth task force to explore how to deal with the expected explosion of growth.

The task force has met nine times so far, with a goal of making a recommendation to the board in February 2018 in three areas: population projections, how those projections would affect current building and grade

Task force members

- Jim Hagstrom, Town of Dunn
- Kerri Modjeski, Town of Oregon
- Bob Eveland, Village of Brooklyn
- Julie Eisele, Village of Oregon
- Carlene Bechen, Town of Oregon
- Tracey Leider, OEA President
- Phil Van Kampen, Town of Oregon

configurations and where and when additional buildings would be needed.

It's so far established a solid projection of student enrollment increases based on research from district consultant Mark Roffers, and it will take the next few months to determine those other two recommendations.

"I don't think it's if new facilities are required, I think it's a question of

Turn to **Growth**/Page 10

2017 tax rate approved

School board to vote on final 2017-18 budget next month

SCOTT DE LARUELLE

Unified Newspaper Group

As more information trickles in from the state and other sources, the Oregon school board continues to move closer to finalizing its budget for this school year.

At Monday night's annual budget hearing and public meeting, district electors approved a mill rate of \$11.62 per \$1,000 of equalized assessed

value, or around \$2,324 on a \$200,000 home. That's about \$22 less than at last year's mill rate of \$11.73.

School district property taxes are slightly more than half a home's overall property tax bill.

The mill rate could drop as additional budget data comes into the district, said business manager Andy Weiland, who provided a "50,000-foot view" of the district budget and economic outlook during the budget hearing that preceded the annual meeting. He said with state funding and the

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