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Variety of factors to determine fate of Salem schools

By CHERYL WHEELER
Oregon Statesman Reporter

Salem schools open this week under a pall of uncertainty.

Most students begin school Tuesday, exactly two weeks before voters decide whether to approve a $48.6 million budget.

Youth could be out of school by mid-October if district patrons turn thumbs down on the needed tax levy of about $27 million, school officials report.

Even if voters Sept. 19 approve money, property tax reducing measures to go before Oregon voters could mean significant changes in the way schools are financed in future years — with unknown effects.

ALL OF WHICH ENSURES school business will not be as usual for school administrators.

Some things aren't changing, however. Such as the annual challenge of matching the students — estimated to total 22,847 this year — with teachers, class space, schedules, bus routes and the like.

Classes at all six junior high schools and 36 elementary schools begin Tuesday, with actual starting and dismissal times varying among schools and grade levels.

Classes at North Salem High School begin Tuesday with those at McNary and South Salem High Schools starting Wednesday. At Sprague High School, 9th and 10th graders begin classes Tuesday; 11th and 12th graders select classes Wednesday and their first day of classes is Thursday.

At South Salem High School, students this year are free to leave campus during lunch. The policy is the same at Sprague High School except for ninth graders must remain on campus. North Salem and McNary High Schools retain closed campuses.

Expected or planned overcrowding at some elementary schools has been met with portable classrooms, district officials said.

"We've positioned our portables such that we think we'll be able to house all students enrolled," said Fred King, a district facilities and construction planner. Enrollment statistics will be filtering in later this month.

OFFICIALS SAID LATE LAST week that virtually all teaching positions have been filled. Employees were hired with continuation of their jobs subject to approval of the budget.

Outside of the schools, Salem Police Sgt. Calvin Steward said officers plan a special emphasis on patroling school crossings. The hawkish policy begins Tuesday when school liaison officers will run radar speed checks at school crossings. Motorcycle officers will chase speeders.

The speed in school zones is 20 miles an hour when children are present.

Of "prime concern" to police is traffic near the new Mabel T. Sumpter Elementary School in South Salem, said Steward. Sumpter is the only new school opening this school year. There are no marked cross walks.

The school is located south of Boone Road SE and west of Sunnyside Road SE. Speed zones in the area are 45 miles an hour, said Steward. Between 30 and 60 children are expected to cross Fabry Road SE (off Sunnyside Road) alone, said Steward.

"It just makes me shudder," he added.

ON A LIGHTER NOTE, Steward said motorists already are adjusting well to the about week-old traffic light at 12th Street and Madrona Avenue SE, adjacent to Morningside Elementary School. Parents last year protested the absence of a signal at that site.

In a related area, Gov. Bob Straub has proclaimed Sept. 3-9 School Bus Safety Week.

Motorists are reminded that oncoming and following traffic must stop when bus red lights flash, unless the road is divided, said Gil Bellamy administrator of the Oregon Traffic Safety Commission. Divided means separated by grass, a fence or some other physical barrier; yellow lines don't count, Bellamy said. That means all traffic on Lancaster Drive must stop both ways for buses, he said.

The school liaison program of Salem Police Department will be beefed up this year, Steward said. All three high schools inside the city have full-time liaison officers; junior high schools have liaison officers who also spend time at elementary schools.

Two new liaison officers will reduce the load of elementary schools per officer, Steward said. He said officers, previously oriented primarily toward the Salem public schools, plan to make more frequent appearances at the Oregon School for the Blind and the Oregon School for the Deaf as well as parochial schools.

Steward said police, rather than moving towards any permanent teaching assignments at schools, will concentrate on school related problems in surrounding residential areas (burglaries, vandalism and the like).

A new position in the police department is a liason officer to coordinate activities of police, juvenile departments of Marion and Polk Counties and the state Childrens Services Division, said Steward. Former detective Sheryl Schneider is in that position.

Statesman Journal photo by Robert DeCoito

Good grief, these tie-breakers are tough. Scott Gilbert, of Creswell Middle School, Lane County, grimaces under the pressure Saturday of the third annual Spelling Bee at the Oregon State Fair. After the first 30 words in the intermediate division, Gilbert was in a spell-off for third place, losing to Jay Lockwood, West Linn. Tie-breaking words included megasporophyll and pterodactyl.

Newspaper will teach tax system

The American tax system — confusing and often cursed — will be the subject of Courses by Newspaper in its fall series, "Taxation: Myths and Realities." It will be published in the Sunday Statesman Journal.

The course is the ninth series to be funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, an independent agency of the federal government.

FIFTEEN WEEKLY ARTICLES, 1,250 words each, will be published in the Sunday Statesman Journal Insight Section beginning Sept. 24.

Jeannette Ekerun, associate director for social science at Chemeketa Community College, will instruct the taxation course. Three credits are offered for course completion.

It is the third time Chemeketa and the Statesman Journal have offered the newspaper course, the first two on oceans and law enforcement.

About 30 students were enrolled in those courses, said Ekerun. Although taxes may be less exciting than oceans, for example, the upcoming November election is expected to stimulate interest in the course, she said.

"WITH BALLOT MEASURE 6 on property taxes coming this year, it should really attract a mass audience," Ekerun said.

Ekerun received bachelor's and master's degrees from Portland State University in 1970 and 1971, respectively. In 1973, she received a doctorate from Idaho State University.

The class will meet twice during the 15 weeks and Ekerun has scheduled supplemental reading from the textbook, "Taxation: Myths and Realities," and also plans midterm and final examinations.

Coordinator of the taxation series is George F. Break, professor of economics at the University of California, Berkeley.

Salem woman injured in two-car accident

GRAND RONDE — A 21-year-old Salem woman was seriously injured about 3 p.m. Saturday when the car she was driving collided with another vehicle on Highway 18.

Elizabeth Zimmerly, 209 Myers St. S was pulled from her Volkswagen and taken by ambulance to McMinnville for treatment before she was taken by helicopter from McMinnville Airport to Emanuel Hospital in Portland, ambulance attendants and state police said.

Hospital attendants said she had head and other injuries and was in serious condition in the intensive care unit.

Read lots of dictionaries

Spelling champ 'well prepared'

By CAROLYN HOMAN
Oregon Statesman Reporter

Taking on such words as etymologist, euphonium and espionage, Stephanie Valdez, Mill City, proved her championship mettle Saturday in the intermediate division of the annual Spelling Bee at the Oregon State Fair.

Valdez, who will be a sophomore in high school this fall, said it was her first time in a spelling contest and she had prepared intensively for it.

Did she read a lot? "Oh yes, I read lots of dictionaries" to familiarize herself with words. Was it boring? "No, not really" for someone who really likes words.

She misspelled only two words out of 30 for the championship. Her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Valdez Jr., grandmother Gloria Luke, Salem, and other family members crowded around afterward to offer congratulations.

Valdez' father is the new elementary principal in Mill City.

Second place went to John Steeves, representing Harbor Lights Middle School, Bandon, and third place was won by Jay Lockwood, West Linn High, after a spell-off with two other contestants.

The tie-breaker for third was between Lockwood, Scott Gilbert, Lane County, and Tammy Collingwood, Morrow County. They had to spell renaissance, subterfuge, megasporophyll, quinquennial and pterodactyl.

Lockwood was intermediate division winner last year and Gilbert was the 1977 second place finisher in the elementary division.

In the junior division for grades 1-6, winner was Miranda Kahn, Portland. She missed four of such jawbreakers as coulomb, fluorescence, fuselage and chandelier.

She is the daughter of Stephen and Christina Kahn who run Artisan Typesetting. "We pay her to proof read," said her father. Miranda gets to read a lot since the family doesn't own a television.

Second place in the junior division went to Jennifer Walker, Lake Oswego, and third went to Teresa Shirley, Lacomb.

Champion in the senior division was Leonart Pugh, of North Valley High, Grants Pass. He missed only one, zwieback, and said that was because he'd been mispronouncing it.

The ones he spelled correctly included bouillabaisse, bourgeoisie and tachistoscope.

Pugh is the son of Bob and Eleanor Pugh and will be a senior in high school this fall.

Second place honors went to Laurie Watts, Hillsboro Union High School, and third place winner was Steve Rodian, Central High in Independence.

Science of politics leaves room for a week of 'fear and loathing'

Politics '78

Analysis & Opinion

By Ron Blankenbaker
Oregon Statesman Reporter

Clearly, the week just past was one of "fear and loathing." What was needed was a Hunter Thompson to explain it.

The fear was obvious in the panel of 21 legislators who worked out an alternative proposal for cutting property taxes to be acted on this week in a special session of the Oregon Legislature.

The loathing was obvious among many people who attended the three nights of public hearings the legislative panel imposed upon itself along with daytime exercises in the complex land of property taxes, offsets, equity, deferrals and government spending limitations.

THE LAWMAKERS HAVE reason to be scared. More than 200,000 people in this state have just learned something, a legislative staff member remarked to me in one of those continual hallway conversations that goes on when public hearings are in process.

"They've found out how to get at the power in government without bothering to go through their representatives who they don't trust," he said.

It seems plain to me that if the people have learned of "government by initiative," they won't accept promises they believe have been unkept. They can mandate the action they want with a constitutional amendment.

Whether the distrust many people feel for their representative form of government is justified isn't material. I've been to enough public hearings to know that when people loathe, they won't be bothered with any reasonable arguments that government here in Oregon has tried to be responsive.

Practiced legislators know better than to stand in the way of a good public loathing. They just let the people talk it out and go on with what they are planning to do anyway. Or that's what appeared to be the situation much of the time last week. During the day the legislators would work on their various tax cutting proposals and at night they would sit down and listen to people, many of them saying that nothing the legislators might put on the ballot will be acceptable to them.

MAYBE THIS SORT OF WALTZ is the reason many in the public appear so cynical about the representative process.

Some of the legislators, however, appear skeptical if not openly cynical about what some people in the public are saying to them. Rep. Earl Blumenauer, D-Portland, in one of last week's tax committee meetings, expressed doubt about the "message" being sent government in the form of more than 200,000 signatures in the Ballot Measure 6 petition drive.

Blumenauer said he had been to "enough county fairs" to know that many people sign petitions just to get rid of the petition-bearer and that many petitioners get signatures by telling people their signature doesn't have to mean support, "it is just to get it on the ballot so we can vote on it."

Most of us have heard the petition-signing pitch Blumenauer describes. I can add that I don't recall a successful petition sponsor announcing that many of his signatures are from people who may not support the issue.

What we wind up with in this dichotomy is the current tax cut debate.

MEANWHILE, CONFUSION at the Capitol wouldn't seem to help matters. And confusing it certainly seemed to me last week as the legislative panel struggled through not one ballot measure proposal but as many as eight.

It would serve no clarifying purpose to rehash the various aspects of these eight proposals, especially since what the legislators started with, the recommendations of Gov. Bob Straub, is essentially what they wound up with, a little extra added on.

Where it got interesting, though, was in trying to track the various authors (of record) of the various proposals.

For openers Measure 6, the 1½ percent property tax limit, is easy. It is Caldarbia's "Prop. 13," with the percent limit altered.

Next came Straub's proposal for a flat $50,000 exemption on residential property taxes, along with a spending limit on government. After that, there was Republican gubernatorial candidate Vic Atiyeh with a "cleaned up" version of Measure 6.

ATIYEH'S ACT WAS FOLLOWED by state Sen. Vern Cook, D-Gresham, who proposed the legislators forget about property taxes and instead push through a cut in the state's personal income taxes.

To that point, the authorship of the proposals seemed clear. Then came state Sen. Jack Ripper's plan No. 1 to limit residential property taxes to 3 percent of people's personal income. The measure was developed during the last session of the Legislature. Co-sponsors were Atiyeh and Sen. John Powell, D-Halsey. It never got out of committee.

Trailing Ripper's plan No. 1 was Ripper plan No. 2, a 50 percent cut in residential property taxes. But this plan was actually Straub's plan No. 1 which the governor tossed aside when a majority of House Democrats said they didn't like it in a private meeting requested by Straub. Following Ripper plan No. 2 (or Straub No. 1 if patchwork quilts are your thing), came the plan of Rep. Grattan Kerans, D-Eugene, for a 1 percent tax limit on residential property and a 3 percent limit on business property.

Although Kerans called "his" plan "fresh and innovative," I'm told this may be extreme overstatement. One legislative aide says the "1 and 3" plan has been kicked around the Capitol for at least 20 years and that hundreds of past and present legislators may claim portions of its authorship.

What the 21-member panel finally approved for recommendation to the full Legislature came in as the Hanlon-Isham-Powell plan, named after Sens. Charles Hanlon, D-Cornelius, Del Isham, D-Florence, and John Powell, D-Halsey.

What it actually was, however, was Straub's No. 1 plan for a 30 percent cut in residential property taxes on property valued at up to $120,000. Straub had initially proposed a $50,000 limit. The proposal also includes an amendment by Ripper to raise the state personal income tax exemption, and a limitation on state and local government spending, again proposed by Straub.

Of course Bismarck said it long ago: "Politics is not an exact science."

Call...
364-HELP!

HELP! is the feature that solves problems, answers questions and gets the job done. It appears daily in the Capital Journal and Saturday and Sunday in the Statesman Journal. Call HELP! 24 hours a day at 364-4357. HELP! answers questions only through this column.

In early spring I hired a landscaper to make some improvements on my backyard. He quoted me hourly wages and said he could do the job for about $450. The man who showed up to do the work was really slow and stood around a lot. I complained to the man I hired and he promised to make an adjustment on the hourly wages when he figured the bill. Anyway, when he finished the yard was in terrible shape and a lot of things we agreed on hadn't been done. Then I got a bill for $685! I complained again, reminding the landscaper of his initial estimate, saying I only intended to pay him the $450 and only after the work was done. He agreed to do some more work. I told him if he'd come over and make the bill "paid in full" I would give him a check for $650. He did some more work and I paid him but then 10 days later I got another bill from him for $122. I don't feel I owe him anything. What can I do? L.F., Salem.

We contacted the landscaper who said he quoted you an hourly rate, not a flat fee for the job. "I work all by the hour," he said. "She said I told her $450 but I didn't."

The original bill had an adjusted labor charge on it, he added, because you felt the gardener didn't work hard enough. Without the first adjustment, the bill would have been over $800. He then dropped the amount again, he said, because he didn't want an unhappy customer.

"Evidently she didn't expect another bill, but I did the work," he said. "I already gave up almost $400."

If you dispute the bill you can go several directions, according to a spokesman for state Consumer Services. Pay the bill and then fight it in court or pay it and file a complaint with the board of landscape architects. Or the Fair Credit Billing Act gives you 60 days from the postage date of the bill to complain in writing to the business about billing errors.

Call for **HELP!**
364 4357

I'd like to know the address of Universal Studios. Don Anderson, Salem.

Direct your letter to Bob Goodwin and Jack Wodell Associates, Hobart Building Tower, 582 Market St. at Montgomery, San Francisco, Calif., 94104.

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