



Gridiron coach sees positives from 7-on-7. See Page B-1

Mariposa Gazette



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School district could get over \$5 million in state bond funds

By MATT JOHNSON
Sports/Education Editor

A much anticipated meeting to discuss the Mariposa County Unified School District's Long Range Facility Master Plan (LRFMP) was held last week.

Eric Hall, a Southern California-based consultant hired by the school district to update the plan, which was originally created in 2013, presented his findings and recommendations at Thursday's school board meeting. The board eventually approved the plan, which will serve as a guide for improving the district's infra-

structure over the next several years.

During the course of Hall's presentation, he told the board that the district can expect to receive "in the range of" slightly over \$5 million in Proposition 51 funds from the state, in addition to the \$24 million received from Measure L, the recent school facilities improvement bond.

Based on preliminary projections, the district could receive \$1.5 million in new construction funding and \$3.8 million in

'The state, we have no control over.'

—Superintendent Robin Hopper

modernization funding from the state.

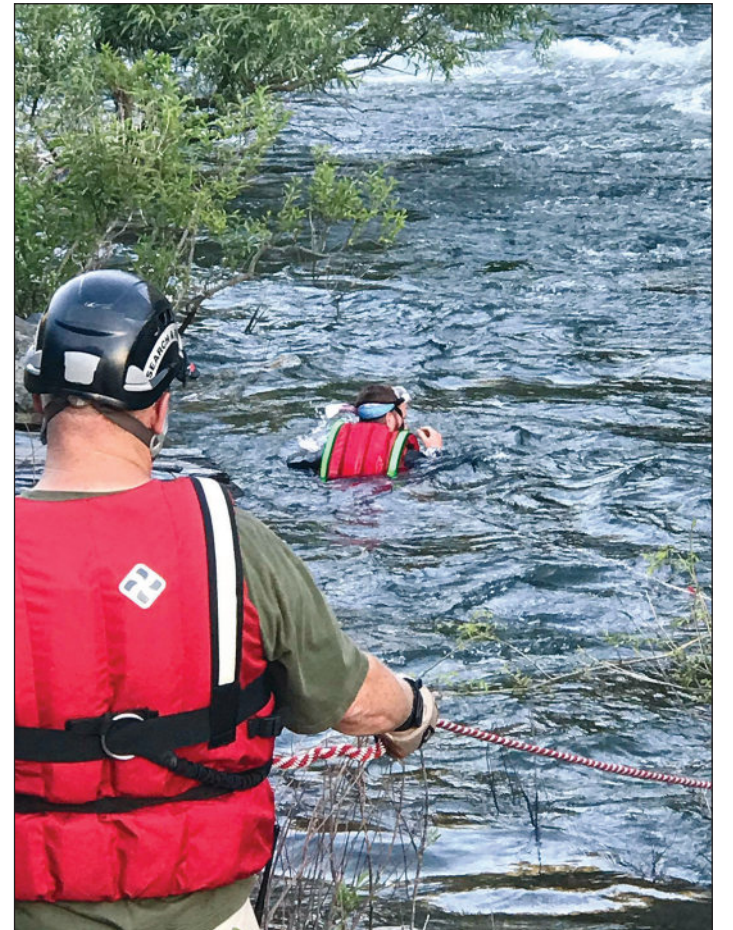
Hall said the district's filing of the applica-

tion to become eligible for Prop 51 funds will be complete in the next 90 days.

"This is underway," Hall said. "We're in the process of filing."

Superintendent Robin Hopper weighed in, saying "we need to get everything we can get done, done, so we're

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Submitted photo by Mariposa County Sheriff's Office. Members of Mariposa County Search and Rescue are shown looking in the Merced River for Ronnie Cole, 19, of Mariposa, who went missing last Friday afternoon.

Mariposa teen is still missing after plunge into river

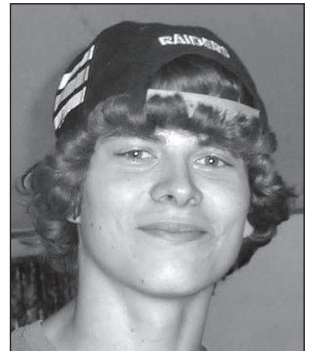
By Gazette staff

A Mariposa teen remains missing after apparently falling into the Merced River last Friday.

According to the Mariposa County Sheriff's Office, Ronnie Ray Cole, 19, apparently went missing from Cable Rock at Briceburg at around 2:45 p.m. on June 23.

The report said Cole was at an area known as Cable Beach which is about 1.5 miles from the Briceburg Visitors Center. Investigators were told he was with two female friends when they went to that area.

The two females told deputies that he went into the water wearing blue jeans and black shoes. They said after he jumped into the water, he surfaced and was swimming toward the shoreline when they lost sight of him. The two females got into their vehicle and at-



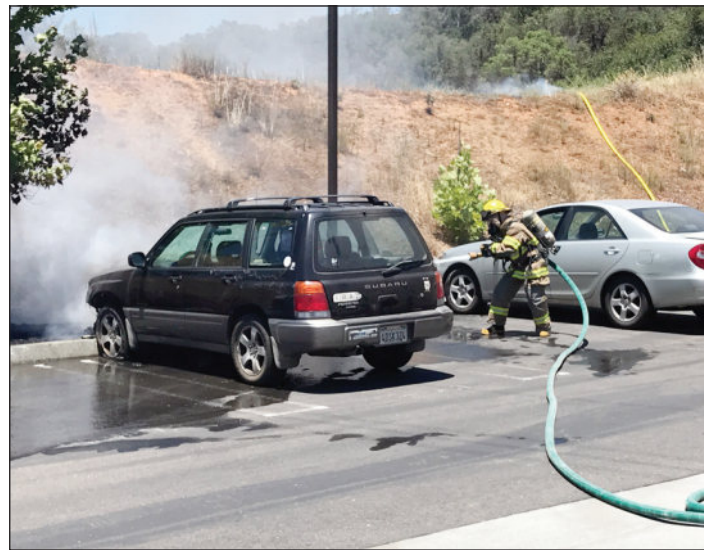
Ronnie Cole

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Photos by Greg Little. Above, crews work on a fire that broke out Monday afternoon near the Mariposa County Human Services building on Highway 49 North in Mariposa. Below, this car also burned in the blaze. A CAL FIRE firefighter is shown extinguishing the fire.

Pair of Monday fires are doused



CAL FIRE has new, free app

By GREG LITTLE
Editor

Hopefully, Monday was not an indication of things to come this summer.

Two wildfires broke out on Monday, just two hours apart. The first happened near Mariposa County Human Services on Lemee Lane. That area is also home to the CAL FIRE headquarters in Mariposa.

Jaime Williams, public information officer for CAL FIRE, said the fire was reported at 1:03 p.m. and burned approximately four acres. Air support was called in and there was a single retardant drop by a CAL FIRE aircraft. The fire was contained at 1:55 p.m., said Williams.

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Increasing patient count is topic at JCF board meeting

Issues of performance reviews, contracts also part of the discussion

By GREG LITTLE
Editor

How to address the issue of being able to see more patients as well as certain hospital district policies were key points discussed during a meeting last week.

The John C. Fremont Healthcare District Board of Directors held its monthly finance meeting during which those issues were addressed.

The issue of how to see more patients came up during the discussion of the district's finances, where Chief Financial Officer Matthew Matthiessen reported the district has been hiring more employees, which is driving up expenses.

"What is driving it?" asked board mem-

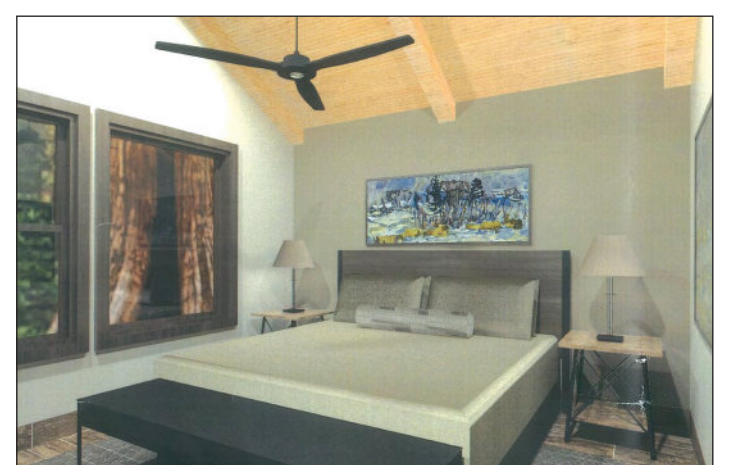
'We know where we need to be but we are not there yet.'

—Matthew Matthiessen, CFO

ber Dr. Joseph Rogers about the number of full-time employees, which rose to 179 in May.

Matthiessen said they are hiring more clinic employees as well as more nurses in

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Submitted photo. Shown is a bedroom in the proposed Tenaya Cabins project.

Tenaya Cabins project gets approval by board

By GREG LITTLE
Editor

The final step in approving a major resort development in Mariposa County took place on Tuesday afternoon.

The Mariposa County Board of Supervisors, by a 5-0 vote, approved the final Environmental Impact Report for the Tenaya Cabins Project in Fish Camp.

The vote came after a lengthy discussion, including several

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FUNDS: Officials move ahead with plans

Continued from Front Page

in the pipeline and we're waiting and ready." Hall confirmed that, for a number of reasons, it could be over a year before the district finds out exactly how much in funding it will receive from the state.

Part of the reason it could take so long is because the Office of Public School Construction — which will be processing the applications — is understaffed, with just 31 employees and 160 vacancies in the department. In addition, Gov. Jerry Brown has been slow to enact the process.

"The state, we have no control over," Hopper added. "We have no control over the legislature or the governor, and when they're going to go out for bonds and how much they're going to go out for."

There had been hope that the district would be able to leverage up to \$24 million in state funds, but Hopper said "that would have been a pipe dream."

Needs prioritized

The Long Range Facility Master Plan contains a number of items, including enrollment projections, classroom capacity analysis and more, but much of the time spent during Hall's presentation focused, naturally, on facility improvements.

"What we know is the sites have a lot of needs," said Hall. "We're about creating a climate where teachers can teach and students can learn. Facilities are a big, important part of that."

Hall said 305 projects were identified as needs throughout the district, but "recognizing that you can't do 305 projects if you don't have the resources to do that," the Superintendent's Facility Advisory Committee, which is made up of board members, teachers, administration and community members, held an exercise at one of their recent meetings to help prioritize the needs at each school site.

Each school principal was asked to brief the committee on their site's top five needs.

"All of the school site representatives, namely the principals, had also done a lot of work to get input from their councils, their PTAs and their other stakeholder groups and teachers, of course," said Hopper. "I think we got a lot of input."

Each member of the committee received five colored dot stickers, and they "spent" those on various projects at school sites.

Three of the dots were green and two were red. The green dots could be spent on each

member's own site, while the red dots were spent on other sites.

Community members who represented no specific school site each received five red dots.

The school sites which received the most dots were Mariposa County High School (17), Mariposa Elementary School (17), Greeley Hill Elementary School (12) and El Portal Elementary School/Yosemite Park High School (12).

Hall suggested creating a master plan for the high school itself.

"This is your flagship," Hall said of MCHS. "This is your community center in many ways."

Some of the other items Hall discussed were:

- One of the committee's recommendations was that roofing, rain gutters and drainage were issues at all sites and are priorities across the district, as was security (cameras, lighting, etc.).

- Hall recommended conducting an asset management study to look at surplus property. Specifically, Hall said an architect could "potentially" look at the condition of the district's portable buildings and what should be done with them.

"There is no reason to maintain them and spend money on them through your facility plan, through Measure L, if you don't need them," Hall said.

Hall said the portables have value, and the district could seek to sell them.

"Believe it or not, there is a market for them," Hall said. "You can put them out on the market for sale and sell them to the highest taker. ... You're not going to get a dollar on the dollar for them, but there is a market for them."

What is the next step?

Hopper said the Long Range Facility Master Plan will help the district move forward "incrementally."

"We have to use this as the foundation to move forward," Hopper said. "It can't just be a static document. It gives us a lot of guidance."

Following the meeting, Hopper told the GAZETTE the next steps are "dividing up the work and who will be in which roles" in moving forward with facility improvements.

One of the other matters will be conducting the assessment on the portable buildings and determining their future, a process that will "begin right away, as soon as possible," Hopper said.

"Those are big decisions we've got to take a look at," Hopper said.



Photo by Matt Johnson

Eric Hall of Eric Hall & Associates is shown during his presentation. Hall told the school board that the district is projected to get somewhere close to \$5 million from the recent statewide school facilities bond. The Mariposa County Unified School District is already set to receive \$24 million thanks to Measure L, the local school facilities bond.

The district has already begun to move forward with smaller projects, including improvements on the MCHS roof and upgrading the HVAC systems at MCHS and the alternative education site on Silva Road.

Hopper said the district will continue to look at "other quick start projects in the next several months."

The complete Long Range Facility Master Plan is available at the district website (www.mariposa.k12.ca.us/2016-17meetings) under the 6-21-17 agenda packet link.

District to implement new LCAP

In other business, the 2017-2020 Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) was approved by the board.

The LCAP is a three year planning document that is updated annually. It describes how the school district intends to meet its goals. Those goals are based upon input from a variety of entities.

"I'm pleased with it," Hopper said. "It's really always about trying to do the very best for all of our students."

Two of the requests made from individuals

during a public hearing for the LCAP, held on June 15, were an increased focus on special education training for teachers, and a focus on strengthening the music program district-wide.

The district responded to those concerns by adding a goal of tracking district-wide special education trainings through an online registration system.

"You have the ability much easier to track who is taking which training, and how many participants," Hopper said.

Hopper said she feels the district is "moving more and more in the right direction and we've got a good handle on it."

"I think it's a challenge to completely satisfy every community member's wishes and desires, but we strive to ensure we are listening and doing the very best to have all the programs — enrichment and intervention programs — for our kids," Hopper said. "I feel this LCAP is the best we've had."

Matt Johnson is Sports and Education Editor of the Mariposa Gazette and can be reached at matt@mariposagazette.com.

HOSPITAL: Board address many issues, including various policies and procedures

Continued from Front Page

the emergency room in order to not have to use "traveling" nurses.

Board member Phil De Bry pointed out "costs are going up," but the district is not getting more patients.

Matthiessen said several groups of people are meeting on a regular basis "to address the issue."

De Bry said it is "imperative" the doctors are involved in the discussions.

Matthiessen said they are involving the providers, but also pointed out when the providers are involved, they are not seeing patients.

"Ultimately, the mission here is to take care of the health care needs of the community," said Matthiessen.

He was then asked about why providers can no longer take new patients, something that is shining a negative light on the district.

Matthiessen said the providers need to see more patients and that has to be done through efficiencies in the system.

"We know where we need to be but we are not there yet," said Matthiessen.

Board member Linda Pribyl said she was concerned about the "downward trend" of revenue coupled with the hiring of more employees.

"We have some ground to make up in a hurry," said Matthiessen.

Chief Nursing Officer Theresa Loya said there are many issues to address, including finding providers for patients who were seeing Dr. Grace Ang. Ang left the district, citing what she said were conflicts with hospital administration.

Board members asked if there was a time in which the groups are targeting in addressing and fixing the issues.

"No, we don't have a time line at this point," said Matthiessen.

Another issue that arose was about performance reviews for employees. It was reported people have not had reviews in a timely manner.

Chief Human Resources Officer Martha Robichaux confirmed they are "behind" in performance reviews.

"Can't we take a serious look at our evaluation process?" asked Pribyl.

That's when board member Sally Uribe brought up the issue of a memo that was written by Carl Casey, the former controller for the district who recently retired.

That memo was written by Casey on May 10 and discusses several policies, including salary ranges, performance reviews and executive compensation. It was presented to the Policies and Procedures Committee.

Uribe said the items were scheduled to be discussed during a policy committee meeting last week and asked if it was going to be placed on the regular board meeting agenda which was scheduled for Wednesday of this week.

Pribyl did say they would "report out" to the full board about what happened at the policy committee meeting.

In that memo, Casey had several recommendations.

One was how administrative salaries are determined. He said the previous policy of administrative salary determinations used to include approval by the board of directors. However, in January of 2016, the policy was changed and left administrative salaries at the discretion of CEO Alan MacPhee and Robichaux, the director of human services.

"I recommend that HR Policy 3.1 be revised to again have salary ranges approved by the board of directors," said Casey in the memo.

He also said salary ranges should be made available to all employees, something he said isn't happening presently.

"It seems astonishing and disingenuous that employees would not have this information readily available," wrote Casey.

Casey then addressed the issue of performance reviews.

Casey said for the past three years, performance reviews have resulted in pay raises for employees at around 2.5 percent.

However, he said "C-Suite" employees have received increases of 5-10 percent.

"C-Suite" refers to administrative employees who

have the title "chief."

Casey wrote that he believes the board should follow the human resources policy and "apply it equally to all employees, other than the CEO, who has an employment contract."

He then went on to address the issue of executive compensation.

The policy was revised in March 2016 and states, "The CEO is responsible for establishing and maintaining a competitive compensation program for key executives of the organization."

He wrote the compensation program does not have to be approved by the board of directors.

That, he said, "gives the CEO a blank check to pay key executives whatever he chooses to, with no transparency or accountability to anyone. This policy allows for the possibility of favoritism as well as collusion between the CEO and key executives. This is by far the most egregious HR policy I know of in the district, and I strongly recommend it be deleted."

He further wrote that "many department managers and other employees have long suspected that C-Suite members are treated differently than the other 98 percent of the employees in the district and they are correct. This policy is what allows that to happen."

The entire memo is on the district's website and can be viewed at http://www.jcf-hospital.com/docs/Jun_2017_P_and_P_pkt.pdf.

Major contracts

Another issue discussed by the board was two major contracts.

One was with EmCare, which is the group that provides physicians for the emergency room department.

The contract's due date came into question at the meeting.

The contract which was in the board packet had the month of "October" crossed out and penciled in with "September," and initialed by MacPhee.

However, under the "term"

section of the contract, it said the agreement began at midnight on Oct. 1, 2015, when it was originally initiated.

That is a key point because the contract states that should either party want it terminated, there has to be written notice no later than 90 days in advance.

If, indeed it is September, that meant any notice of cancellation would have to have been by the first of June. But if it is October, it would be by July 1, which is this Saturday.

Rogers said as far as he was concerned, the contract is for Oct. 1, not September. The board agenda, too, indicated the renewal date was Sept. 30 of this year.

Board clerk Kym Brownell said she used that date on the agenda based on the date in the contract, which was October.

"Why is this just now coming to us?" asked Uribe.

She did not receive an answer.

There was also discussion about having the board review the large contracts well in advance. The other large contract is with a group of

hospitalists.

De Bry said he thought it would be "wise" for the board to receive a report from the administration about the contracts and if they were working or not.

MacPhee said the "prior board" had "no interest" in reviewing the contracts and "they just moved forward."

Pribyl, who was a member of the previous board, said, "I just want to make sure I know what I am approving."

"I think there have been a lot of shenanigans going on," said Uribe.

Uribe added she had requested "some documents" related to the issue that she would "share with the board." She did not give any more specifics.

The ER contract, too, was scheduled to be on the board agenda this week.

Matthiessen said he would work to get a report to the board about how the contract has been working.

Matthiessen said although there is not penalty if the board opted out of the contract, the language does state that if that happened, EmCare would terminate services within 14 days. That, said Matthiessen, could be a major problem for the hospital, which would have to find a way to fully staff ER doctors in just two weeks time.

Greg Little is Editor of the Mariposa Gazette and can be reached at greg@mariposagazette.com.

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