

East Side teacher named finalist for MT Teacher of the Year

By Jason Bacaj
Enterprise Staff Writer

An East Side Elementary School fifth grade teacher is a finalist for the 2022 Montana Teacher of the Year Award, a program administered by the Montana Office of Public Instruction, or OPI.

The teacher, Chris Pavlovich, found out she made the final round of consideration at the beginning of the week. Pavlovich has an interview with the OPI on Sept. 21 and will find out whether she receives the accolade a few weeks later, according to the rough timeline on the OPI website.

Teachers must be nominated for the award. Pavlovich's name was tossed into the ring for consideration by Linda Rost, a science teacher from Baker who won the state teacher of the year award in 2020. The two got to know each other after working on a grant together.

Still, when Pavlovich learned that she had been nominated, for a moment she wasn't sure about whether she should complete the



Montana Teacher of the Year nominee Chris Pavlovich stands in her fifth-grade classroom at East Side Elementary School.

Enterprise photo by Lydia Ely

award application. After all, Pavlovich believes that teaching is a team effort and made sure to credit her fel-

low fifth grade teachers at East Side: Robin Lovec, Megan Brenna and Jodi Pierce.

“After COVID, I really thought it was important to stand up and be counted as professionals in our commu-

nities. Especially in elementary because it takes a high level of professionalism to be a teacher,” Pavlovich said.

The level of introspection and reflection isn't unusual for Pavlovich. Straight out of high school she knew she wanted to be a teacher. But Pavlovich also knew that teachers held an important role in the community and that she had to learn more about herself before stepping to the front of a classroom.

The Missouri native got on a Greyhound bus and ended up in Livingston, dropped off right in front of the Murray Hotel, she said. It was Pavlovich's first time seeing mountains. She stuck around, worked in Yellowstone National Park and traveled until she felt ready to attend Montana State University.

“I knew that teaching was both a privilege and a responsibility. And I took that very seriously and wanted to make sure I knew who I was as a human being before I did that,” Pavlovich said.

That was in 2005, and Pavlovich has been in Livingston

ever since. She's since earned a master's in science education from MSU and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. with a thesis on scientific literacy in K-12. She also launched Watershed Warriors, a watershed education program that started here in Livingston and has since grown to include classrooms in Missoula, Gardiner and even Mongolia, through the Bozeman-based Taimen Fund.

Of course, Pavlovich focused on the students in her classroom this year. She pointed out that this batch of fifth graders haven't had a year where they've been in the classroom five days a week since they were in second grade.

“We always focus on our curriculum but it's important that we're all together. And I think the kids are excited for that, too,” Pavlovich said. “Fifth grade's the dream. For me, it's the perfect age. I have all of them all day. And so we are able to focus on projects and make it interdisciplinary... it's a great grade level.”

Park County prioritizes capital improvement projects in its preliminary 2021-2022 budget

By Jason Bacaj
Enterprise Staff Writer

The Park County Commission opens a public hearing on its preliminary 2021-2022 fiscal year budget during its regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday morning.

The preliminary budget shows an emphasis on using the recent influx of federal money associated with the COVID-19 pandemic on capital improvement projects, such as the new public transit facility at the Park County Fairgrounds; resurfacing the

runway at the Mission Field Airport; and water projects in Cooke City, Gardiner and Wilsall, said Erica Strickland, county finance director.

“This next year and this past year are a little heavier on capital projects as a percentage of our expenditures... things that we don't have to worry about whether they're sustainable on an ongoing basis,” said Steve Caldwell, Park County Commission chairman. “Covid changed a lot of things. And most of the year-to-year changes, the big ones are in

one way or another Covid-related.”

Overall budgeted expenses for the next fiscal year are about 5% higher than projected revenue — \$23.7 million to \$22.5 million — for the second consecutive year.

Caldwell said this is due in part to the county using conservative estimates on revenues and higher estimates for expenses as a general rule. Strickland added that she also budgets to pay out 100% of payroll, even though the county usually only pays out 95% of payroll on average.

For the 2021-2022 fiscal year, the estimated savings is expected to be more than \$400,000, Strickland said.

Strickland said that the county is bringing in more cash reserves than years prior in part because of a six-week stretch where the county offices were shut down last year. Nobody was in the building and overhead costs dropped as a result.

“Even if we're over budget we're not going to hurt our reserve,” Strickland said. “We're actually in a very good position.”

Officials optimistic in fight against Lake Tahoe fire

SOUTH LAKE TAHOE, Calif. (AP) — The huge California wildfire near Lake Tahoe resort communities has calmed down significantly and was growing at the smallest rate in two weeks, but firefighters must stay engaged and take advantage of good weather while it lasts, commanders said Friday.

The Caldor Fire remained only a few miles from the city of South Lake Tahoe, which was emptied of 22,000 residents days ago, along with casinos and shops across the state line in Nevada, but no significant fire activity occurred there on Thursday, officials said.

“I'll sum everything up on the incident with the words cautiously optimistic, and that's as the result of a lot of hard work that you've put in now in over two weeks of being here,” Tim Ernst, an operations section chief, told firefighters.

The nearly 333-square-mile fire was not making any significant advances and was not challenging containment lines in long sections of its perimeter, but Ernst said “the risk is still out there” with some areas that remained hot.

The fire had been driven northeast on a course leading

to South Lake Tahoe for days by southwestern winds, but that pattern ended this week and containment of the blaze increased to 29%.

“Very positive trends with regards to weather, said Dean Gould, a U.S. Forest Service administrator. “That's huge for us. Let's take full advantage of it while we have this window.”

Gould said the Caldor Fire's growth rate had declined for four straight days and that its growth from Thursday to Friday morning was just 2,350 acres.

“The last time it grew that

small of an amount was 14 days ago,” Gould said. “Things are clearly heading in the right direction for us.”

Amid the positive outlook, incident meteorologist Jim Dudley warned that the air mass in the Sierra Nevada drains downslope every night and then sloshes upslope during the day and that the region's terrain of ridges and deep canyons can create winds that go in “squirrely directions.”

The fire — which began Aug. 14, was named after the road where it started and raged through densely forest-

ed, craggy areas — was still considered a threat to more than 30,000 homes, businesses and other buildings ranging from cabins to ski resorts.

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