

# The Dalles Chronicle

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## Wasco County opposes short session passage of cap & trade

**Timing, lack of transparency cited**

By Walker Sacon  
*The Dalles Chronicle*

The Wasco County Board of Commissioners unanimously passed a resolution in opposition to the passing of cap and trade bills during the Oregon legislature's short session on Thursday, Feb. 27 at the Wasco County Courthouse. County Commissioner Scott Hege said the resolution was about the timing of these bills and was not a resolution on climate change or environmental legislation in general. Around 100 people gathered in the courtroom and more than 30 people addressed the board. The majority of those who spoke supported the commissioners' opposition to cap and trade. The Dalles farmer Matthew Chaisson asked the commissioners

to pass their resolution and said the cap and trade bills were "bad bills" that lacked transparency. "Remember, you guys work for us. Not for Portland, Salem or other governments," Chaisson said. "We want to know today where all three of you stand." Steve Mounds, who said he "put out more carbon than probably anyone in this town" during his career with Portland General Electric, said he opposed the commissioners' resolution. "There is a global glut of fossil fuels right now," Mounds said. "This is your last really good shot. Your kids' future is on the table." Bruce Schwartz said Wasco County residents are split on this issue and said the commissioners shouldn't take a stand either way. "What you decide has no effect on the bill, but it certainly has an effect on us," Schwartz said. "You guys need to be dealing with our parks and roads and the homeless." Commissioner Steve Kramer



Wasco County Commissioners Kathy Schwartz, Scott Hege and Steve Kramer prepare to begin a special session to consider state legislation on cap and trade Feb. 27 at the Wasco County Courthouse. The commissioners unanimously passed a resolution in opposition to Oregon Senate Bill 1530, better known as the cap and trade bill. Walker Sacon photo

said he had received 146 emails about the issue, 137 of which were opposed to cap and trade. "We're looking at this because

people asked us to after other counties have," Hege said. The board's resolution made Wasco County the eighth

individual county in Oregon to join the 14-county Eastern Oregon Counties Association in opposition to cap and trade.

## D21 picks Chenowith for dual immersion

By Neita Cecil  
*The Dalles Chronicle*

A dual language immersion program taught in Spanish and English will start at Chenowith Elementary in the fall, in one kindergarten classroom, the D21 school board decided Feb. 27 in a 5-2 vote. Moments earlier the board had rejected, by a 5-2 vote, a proposal by board vice chair Jose Aparicio to start the program a year later, in fall 2021.

Based on applause, that postponement idea was popular with the crowd at the North Wasco County School District 21 board meeting. About 50 people were in attendance for that portion of the meeting.

After the board voted to approve the plan, some people left in obvious disappointment, while a Hispanic woman stood up in the front row and said, "We really want to thank you from the bottom of our hearts."

In dual immersion programs students are taught classroom content in two languages. One study of a million students found dual language students performed well above the general student population on standardized tests.

Proponents also said it is a way to honor Spanish as a language worth speaking and knowing, and it was a sensible direction given the large Hispanic student population here.

High school Advanced Placement teacher Mary Jo Commerford, who speaks Spanish, said having dual language programs will bring in Hispanic teachers who will be role models for students. "Students will see bilingualism as a coveted gift and not a problem to get rid of," she said.

Voting to implement the plan in the fall were board chair John Nelson and board members Rebecca Thistlethwaite, Dawn Rasmussen, Michael Sullivan and Solea Kabakov. Voting against

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## Honk! Jr. ahead



The Dalles Civic Auditorium is bringing children's theater to the community with "Honk! Jr.," under the leadership and direction of Gail Farris and Nancy Moon. Performance dates are March 13-14, 7 p.m., and Sunday, March 15, for a 2 p.m. matinee. Doors open a half hour before each show. Tickets are \$10 adults, \$8 seniors and students 12 and under and free for children under three. Performances are in the theater at The Dalles Civic Auditorium, 323 East 4th Street, The Dalles. Tickets will be available at the door or in advance at Klindt's Booksellers, 315 East 2nd St., The Dalles. Photo courtesy Nancy Moon

## Urban Renewal Agency looks to future

By Mark Gibson  
*The Dalles Chronicle*

The Dalles Urban Renewal Agency will continue its work, but will eschew building ownership and redevelopment in favor of planning and overseeing needed and significant infrastructure projects in the future.

That consensus was reached by the board during a special meeting Feb. 27 in the city hall council chambers following presentations that explored the viability of returning a portion of their tax funding to other districts or disbanding the agency permanently or temporarily. "We are asking, 'Where does the

board want to go from here?" said Steven Harris, the city's planning director.

The discussion was sparked by recent questions from the board regarding the agency's options going forward, specifically in regards to the impact it and the enterprise zones it oversees have had in reducing tax revenue for other taxing districts in the county.

The agency receives the bulk of its funding from property taxes. It does not levy its own taxes, but receives a portion of assessed taxes; as a result, funding received by other taxing districts is proportionately reduced to fund the urban renewal agency. In the 2018/19 fiscal year, the

agency received \$1,894,373 in revenue, \$1,640,729 of which was tax revenue.

As a result, Wasco County saw a \$92,459,270 reduction in revenue; the City of The Dalles, \$278,811; and Mid-Columbia Fire and Rescue, \$194,201. Additional districts saw a proportional decrease, except for Columbia Gorge ESD and Northern Wasco County School District 21, which were not directly impacted as their funding comes from the state.

Harris told the board the agency could not be terminated with debt,



Bob Delaney

so debt held by the agency would have first have to be either paid off or transferred to the city by ordinance.

Temporarily disbanding was also considered, but faced similar restrictions. That possibility was raised looking forward to 2022, when the 15-year enterprise zone agreement with Design, LLC, the first Google data center built at Port of The Dalles, expires. The current agreement cannot be renewed, noted Staci Coburn, a board member representing the Port.

Wasco County Assessor and Tax Collector Jill Amery said the facility and its content is currently assessed

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