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SOLAR FARMS COMING TO AREA

\$1B development spree to benefit Marion, Polk counties



The Cypress Creek Renewables solar energy farm is seen under construction near Silverton on Oct. 17. Five new solar farms are planned to be built in Marion and Polk counties. ANNA REED/STATESMAN JOURNAL

JONATHAN BACH
STATESMAN JOURNAL

A national solar energy company is betting nearly \$1 billion on an Oregon development spree, including five new solar farms in Marion and Polk counties.

Cypress Creek Renewables, a developer that sells electricity to utility companies and already operates seven solar sites in Oregon, is building farms near Salem, Silverton, Gervais, Turner and Grand Ronde.

Cypress Creek, which operates in 15 states, has its largest group of farms in North Carolina, where more than 100 are either operating or under construction, company officials say.

The Marion and Polk county farms will cover about 12 acres each, producing enough energy to power some 450 homes. They should be churning out electricity by year's end or shortly afterward, company officials said. The farms will sell energy to Portland General Electric, which will send it to its utility ratepayers.

The Willamette Valley's population density is such "that solar's needed in this area as part of the renewable energy mix," said Cypress Creek spokeswoman Amy Berg Pickett. "So it's good to site solar where the energy is going to be used."

Company officials say they try their best to hire local workers to build the farms and believe the projects will create "hundreds of good-paying jobs" in Marion and Polk



Aerial photo of a solar installation near Silverton. JEFF DAYTON/CYPRESS CREEK RENEWABLES

"We will not be blanketing the state with solar. No solar company will, because there's no avenue for that."

BERG PICKETT, REGARDING THE FUTURE OF SOLAR FARMS WITHIN THE STATE

counties.

In 2016, slightly more than 4,500 people worked in solar energy jobs in Oregon, up 50 percent from 2,999 in 2015, according to the Solar Foundation, a Washington, D.C., nonprofit.

Cypress Creek started working in Oregon in 2014. Six farms are generating electricity in Malheur County and one in Deschutes County. At some of those sites, the company took advantage of a taxpayer-fueled effort by state officials to increase renewable energy supplies.

During the 2016 session, Oregon lawmakers

approved the formation of a Solar Development Incentive program to stimulate solar energy construction. It works by paying companies half a cent each month for every kilowatt-hour of electricity they produce. Payments expire after five years.

Under the program, Business Oregon, the state's economic development agency, plans to pay Cypress Creek \$2,035,225 for four of the solar projects in Deschutes and Malheur counties. About \$246,000 has already been paid.

Otherwise, the agency isn't giving the company

any loans or incentives, spokesman Nathan Buehler said in an email.

Cypress Creek is also taking advantage of federal solar investment tax credits, which allow the company to deduct 30 percent from the amount it's invested in a solar project, according to the Solar Energy Industries Association.

In September, while writing to two U.S. congressmen chairing a subcommittee on energy and power, Cypress Creek Chief Executive Matt McGovern said, "In Oregon we have 17 projects either

See SOLAR, Page 2A

Silverton voters to decide on 2 measures

Residents to see gas-tax, pool levy on ballot this fall

JUSTIN MUCH
STAYTON MAIL

Typical of off-year elections, this fall's Marion County Voter Pamphlet is a thin publication.

But a glimpse inside shows that Silverton's per-capita piece of the ballot is significant with two measures placed before voters.

Silverton voters will decide on a gas-tax and a pool levy. In a recent Appeal Tribune "Your Turn" opinion piece, Silverton Mayor Kyle Palmer said both measures are important ones for the community, and he urged voters to consider them.

If approved, the five-year operating levy for the Silverton Pool calls for a \$275,000 annual tax, \$1,375,000 total, to pay for operations and maintenance. It would

replace 2013 levy that is scheduled to expire June 30, 2018.

The estimated tax to property owners is \$0.3659 per \$1,000 assessed value; the tax bill for a home with an assessed value of \$200,000 is estimated at \$73.18 per year. The tax revenue would mirror that of the expiring 2013 measure, which also levied \$1,375,000 over five years.

The backgrounds shows that operations and maintenance costs for the pool, built in 1939, are not covered by current municipal taxes. In 2003 Silverton voters passed a 10-year \$1.2 million bond for pool improvements. The expiring maintenance and operations bond followed, passed in 2012 and implemented in 2013.

See VOTERS, Page 2A

If approved, the five-year operating levy for the Silverton Pool calls for a \$275,000 annual tax, \$1,375,000 total, to pay for operations and maintenance.

Silverton mulls smoking ban, nudity, Eugene Fields

JUSTIN MUCH
STAYTON MAIL

Several ongoing issues of note will be on the agenda at Silverton City Council's next meeting, 7 p.m. Monday, Nov. 6, in the council chambers of the Silverton Community Center, 421 S. Water St.

Among the anticipated agenda items are the closing date for the sale of the Eugene Field School purchase, a code addressing public urination, defecation and nudity, and a ban on smoking in the downtown core and city parks.

The foundation for the staff work on those agenda items was largely established during the council's Oct. 16 workshop meeting. Other workshop topics included speeding radar,

expansion of a utility assistance program updating the city's long-range financial plan.

The council heard from Public Works Director Christian Saxe about issues with the Eugene Field site and removal of hazardous materials; asbestos and lead paint "in and on the structure" in addition to an underground heating-oil tank, which must be removed with the surrounding soils.

Saxe noted that abatement contractors' initial estimates for the asbestos removal are in the \$150,000 range and the storage tank in the neighborhood of \$30,000.

"Due to the excessive quantity and locality of lead paint...in the haz-

See ISSUES, Page 2A

Old Silverton H.S. stands for now

CHRISTENA BROOKS
SPECIAL TO THE APPEAL TRIBUNE

SILVERTON – What will happen to the 78-year-old section of the abandoned building connecting the two halves of Silverton Middle School?

Nothing for now. The old Silverton High School, built in 1939, was

deemed seismically unsafe many years ago and now serves as storage space, sandwiched between the two newer wings occupied by the middle school.

Steel beams support the old brick building; they were installed during the \$2.6 million renovation that created the

middle school campus in 2016. These and firewalls were added to protect staff and students next-door, not to preserve the building itself in an earthquake.

Four years ago, tear-down costs were estimated at \$800,000, Supt. Andy Bellando said.

Rising construction

costs and the fact that much of the middle school's infrastructure – such as its computer network and intercom systems – runs through the old section convinced Lorin Stanley, maintenance and facilities director, to recommend letting the

See SCHOOL, Page 2A

	#1-Robin Kuhn 503-930-1896 Closed in 26 days! Salem MLS#723978	 \$255,950
	#2-Cynthia Johnson 503-551-0145 Country Retreat! Silverton MLS#724439	 \$485,000
	#3-Joe & Dana Giegerich 503-931-7824 Picturesque! Scotts Mills MLS#715417	 \$795,000

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- » Breaking news
- » Get updates from the Silverton area

PHOTOS

- » Photo galleries

INSIDE

- Contact Information.....2A
- Life in the Valley.....4A
- Public Notices.....2A
- Sports.....1B



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