

Appeal Tribune

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2019 ■ SILVERTONAPPEAL.COM

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Silverton considers plan for parks district

Christena Brooks

Special to Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

At least seven important people think a parks and recreation district in the Silverton area is a good idea.

Those seven people are Silverton's City Council, and they all voted last month to support the formation of a new taxing district to include the city, parts of the Silverton Fire District, and all of Drakes Crossing Fire District. The cities of Scotts Mills and Mt. Angel are not included.

"An aquatics, parks and recreation special district with broad boundaries would capture most users, allow citizens fair representation on the district board, and source property tax revenue across the full community of potential users," councilors resolved at their Nov. 4 meeting.

New property taxes collected in the district could operate the pool, maintain parks, develop new hiking and biking trails, and maybe even build sports fields, said Mayor Kyle Palmer.

"For me, the pool is 50 percent of the issue sur-

rounding a parks and rec district," he said. "The city also doesn't own any organized sports realty. Kids use school district property for all sports, and that's not really a plan for the future."

This is as far as the political process lets city councilors take the idea. Now supporters must gather about 1,700 signatures from property owners in the proposed park and rec district and submit those to Marion County, if the issue is to go to local voters next November.

State law allows communities to vote to form any of 28 different kinds of "special service districts" dedicated to taxing and funding targeted services such as fire, library, hospital, irrigation, air quality and other programs.

Special districts, cities and the county can only tax residents up to a combined total of \$10-per-\$1,000 of assessed property value. Silverton residents are at \$9 now, while rural homeowners pay less, Palmer said.

Adding this tax of 85 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value would generate more than \$1 million per year, according to a study completed last summer by a team from Portland State University. The tax in-

crease for the owner of a home assessed at \$300,000 would be about \$250 per year.

For city residents, there would be some savings too, though. The pool levy would be retired, and the monthly parks fees paid on utility bills could also go away, Palmer said.

The team from Portland State spent a year surveying community members, gathering information, comparing a variety of district sizes, and calculating rough budgets. The city paid \$25,000 to contract with the team, which worked hand-in-hand with a local 12-person task force.

Together they decided the Silverton area's most immediate needs include finding stable funding for the pool, developing more locations for youth sports, and helping the Senior Center offer its slate of services and programs. A 370-page report given to councilors in August spells out the group's recommendations.

On the pool: "Renewing the pool levy every five years is not seen as a sustainable method of funding for the community pool."

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Victor Point area farmers and residents are fighting against a proposed dam along Drift Creek that would flood nearly 400 acres of this valley near Victor Point and Fox roads. SHELDON TRAVER/SPECIAL TO THE APPEAL TRIBUNE

Farmers stop proposed dam on Drift Creek

Bill Poehler

Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Joel Rue welcomed a group of fellow farmers and friends into his home in Victor Point, located in a canyon between Silverton and Silver Falls State Park, in 2005.

Over the next few hours, the farmers from around Mt. Angel explained how for decades they sought ways to ensure sufficient water for their crops as their farms were under constant threat of curtailment in times of low water, such as droughts.

They laid out their plan to build a 70-foot dam and 384-acre reservoir on Drift Creek – the only main tributary of the Pudding River without one. There was one big hitch: they needed some of his farmland and his neighbors'.

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A sign still hangs across from Victor Point School after the East Valley Water District's proposal was denied by a state commission.

BILL POEHLER/STATESMAN JOURNAL

Ornaments hidden in the Willamette National Forest

Abby Luschei

Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Add an ornament to your tree by exploring the Willamette National Forest.

Some 200 hand-blown glass ornaments were hidden in the Willamette National Forest to kick off the Willamette Valley Visitors Association's second annual ornament hunt. It officially began on Nov. 29 and will last until Wednesday, Jan. 1.

Becca Barnhart, the marketing and public relations manager for the visitors association, said 40 of the 200 ornaments have been found and claimed as of Tuesday.

Ornaments were hidden along approximately 1,700 miles of trails. People who find an ornament can also register to win one of three grand prizes: dinner, an activity or an overnight stay in the Willamette Valley.

When the Sweet Home Ranger District of the Wil-

See **ORNAMENTS, Page 2A**

Salem Health reaches Oregon Health Plan deal

Jonathan Bach

Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Salem Health Hospitals & Clinics have reached a deal with PacificSource Community Solutions to coordinate benefits for patients on the Oregon Health Plan.

Salem Health, which operates Salem Hospital and several clinics across the Mid-Willamette Valley, confirmed the deal Thursday morning. Details were not immediately available.

PacificSource is a not-for-profit insurer with offices in Oregon, Idaho, Washington and Montana. The group has operated coordinated care systems in the Columbia Gorge and Central Oregon since 2012, serving approximately 60,000 members, according to company numbers.

PacificSource became the region's coordinated care organization after the locally operated Willamette Valley Community Health coordinated care organization opted against seeking a new Oregon Health Plan contract.

Willamette Valley Community Health was supposed to continue services until the end of the year. PacificSource's contract starts in 2020 and goes through 2024.

"We are pleased to welcome Salem Health to PacificSource Community Solutions' provider network, and we look forward to working together to serve the health care needs of Marion and Polk County's CCO population," said Ken Provencher, president and CEO of PacificSource.

The agreement comes after Salem Health in November bought WVP Medical Group's six primary care clinics throughout the Mid-Willamette Valley.

The tie-up nearly doubled Salem Health's clinic count from eight to 14. Now, Salem Health consists of two hospitals, the clinics and an urgent care clinic according to spokesman Elijah Penner. In January, patients will start being seen at a new, 31,000-square foot clinic in Woodburn.

WVP Health Authority approached Salem Health and asked if they would be interested, Cheryl Wolfe, Salem Health's chief executive, said in a November interview. A deal had been under construction since around May, she said.

The "driving force" behind the move was patient's access to medical care by preserving the medical practices, Wolfe said.

"We don't always make a profit on everything we do in our organization. Our clinics don't make a profit, as an example," she said. "So this isn't about profitability at the end of the day for us. This is just making sure that we're fulfilling our mission and making sure that people get the care that they need."

Salem Health offered employment to WVP workers, Wolfe said. Salem Health had 4,505 workers before the deal and was poised to have 4,722 afterward, according to Penner.

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Salem Hospital in Salem. STATESMAN JOURNAL FILE

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Vol. 138, No. 52

Serving the Silverton Area Since 1880
A Unique Edition of the Statesman Journal



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