



Crestline Construction crews work in early 2020 to replace water main lines in the downtown core of White Salmon. The City of White Salmon recently approved closing the project, and secured a USDA loan that funded the project with a \$2.73 million water revenue bond.

White Salmon Enterprise photo/file

## White Salmon accepts water main project as complete

By Jacob Bertram  
Columbia Gorge News

The City of White Salmon approved the closing of United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) loan documents and acknowledged the Jewett Street Water Main Improvement project as complete during a special meeting of the city council last Thursday.

As part of the final closing process, White Salmon City Councilors unanimously approved a resolution and ordinance issuing a water revenue bond in the amount of \$2,731,000. The bond will then be used to secure the USDA loan and pay back the principal payments on the USDA loan which funded the water main project.

The bond has a lifetime of 40 years and will bear a 1.75-percent interest rate on the unpaid principal amount, which the city will pay back monthly, according to the ordinance.

In total, the project, with construction performed by Crestline Construction and project management by Walla Walla-based Anderson Perry & Associates, underwent six change orders and had a final price-tag just shy of \$3 million, with the city

contributing \$266,739.68 from its own coffers.

During the meeting, Councilor Jan Ransier questioned why the meeting was labeled as a special meeting, to which City Clerk Jan Brending said it was about timing, saying if the action had waited until the Mar. 3 council meeting, the city would have had to pay more in interest due to the different closing deadlines with USDA and North Cascade Bank, the city's interim financier.

"So the timing here is very tricky," said Brending. "It's not uncommon to have a special meeting, particularly for these USDA loans."

The issuance of a water revenue bond replaces the interim financing with a permanent financing solution, said Scott McJannet, representative with K&L Gates, which prepared the bond paperwork.

"It's a very clean resolution and USDA came through very nicely this week adjusting down the payment schedule and the interest rate, so you're well-packaged in," said McJannet. In council documents, an email from a USDA representative shows that the USDA office for Rural Development amended the

original terms and conditions to show a decrease in the bond's interest rate, amortization factor, and principal amount, which cut the city's agreed-upon monthly payments by just over 65-percent. The city was originally approved for a \$3.19 million bond.

The approval of such action items mark the culmination of a years-long effort to replace water main lines that run along Jewett Boulevard in White Salmon's downtown core. The project saw 12-inch water mains replace thinner lines, which were nearing the end of their service life and had been historically a source of leaks. The replacement of those mains with larger ones help for fire flow, according to project documents, and decrease water pressure, which city officials cited as a health hazard to City staff working on the system, and exasperate the leaks.

Additional fire hydrants were installed along Jewett boulevard and pressure-reducing valve systems were installed on Jewett Boulevard, Vine street, and Oak street.

## With snowcat's help, officers track down suspect on forest road

Staff report  
Columbia Gorge News

A lengthy pursuit by OSP cruiser, county SUV, and snowcat resulted in the arrest Feb. 26 of a 52-year-old Madras woman in the snowy forested area about five miles off Eightmile Road.

Trooper Jonathan Swiger was heading south on US 197 near milepost 12 at 2:55 a.m. when a black Jeep Wrangler heading northbound crossed into his lane, nearly crashing into him head-on, Swiger reported in an OSP log entry. The Jeep Wrangler then nearly crashed head on into a log truck that was behind Swiger, he reported. He turned around and overtook the Jeep at milepost 7, the driver of the Jeep was traveling approximately 85 miles per hour before turning west onto Eightmile Road. Swiger activated emergency lights and siren but the driver kept going at approximately 60 mph, failing to drive within her lane, Swiger reported.

"Due to the reckless driving I observed prior to attempting to stop the driver, I decided to engage in a

pursuit as I believed she was going to continue driving recklessly," he said in his log report.

The driver went west on Eightmile Road, north onto Walston Grade Road, and back south on Pine Hollow Road towards Eightmile Road. Swiger lost visual of the Jeep on Pine Hollow Road and began checking the area for the vehicle. He saw fresh tracks in the gravel heading west on Eightmile Road, Walston Grade, and Pleasant Ridge Road and followed the tracks to the forest boundary. The tracks continued west into the Mt. Hood National Forest on USFS Road 4440.

Wasco County Deputy Ray Randall arrived and Swiger told him the OSP vehicle did not have enough clearance to continue.

About five miles from the forest boundary, Randall's SUV got stuck in the snow and the tracks continued.

"I know this area very well and suspected the driver was also stuck a short distance from us," Swiger said. A snowcat driver from the Columbia Gorge Power Slidders responded to assist

and the operators located the Jeep and driver about a mile west of where Swiger and Randall were stuck.

They were picked up by the snowcat and provided a ride to the Jeep's location. The driver was attempting to get the Jeep unstuck by driving it back and forth. The driver was taken into custody without incident, Swiger said.

"The driver admitted the reason she attempted to elude was because she knew she had a warrant for her arrest. The driver told me the reason she crossed into my lane was she fell asleep," he reported. The snowcat operators hooked up to the Jeep and transported officers and arrestee to USFS Road 44 where they were met by Wasco Deputy Nolan Ward, who transported the driver and lodged Jody Lee Speck, 50, at NORCOR on charges of attempting to elude, reckless endangering, reckless driving, and the parole violation.

The Jeep, which was a rental, was towed for safe keeping. The snowcat operators took the officers back to the stuck patrol SUV and pulled it out.

## Chuck Thomsen: one-day GOP walkout 'just to make a point'

By Kirby Neumann-Rea  
Columbia Gorge News

State Sen. Chuck Thomsen (R-Pine Grove) said he and fellow Republicans will be in attendance as scheduled, virtually or in-person, when the Oregon Legislature's work week starts March 1.

Thomsen described as symbolic the one-day walkout on Thursday by 11 State Senators. The Hood River County legislator characterized the walkout as being a statement about what the GOP feels is excessive executive authority by the Democratic Gov. Kate Brown regarding COVID regulations. "We'd (Republicans) like to help out but they have taken that power away. It was a one-day deal just to make a point," Thomsen said. He added that "everyone was doing committee work, they just didn't show up for the 11 a.m. roll call."

According to a story in the Portland newspaper *The Oregonian*, the 11 absent GOP Senate caucus members signed a letter to the governor in which they insisted she "immediately reopen schools because science says it's safe," and increase the amount of COVID-19 vaccines available to older Oregonians, especially in

rural areas.

"Our previous efforts to bring these issues to your attention have gone unacknowledged. Thus, we are protesting today's floor session. In this show of solidarity with Oregonians who are being failed by the current direction of your policies, we hope this action conveys the importance of these issues."

Thomsen has booked a motel room for two or three nights per week in March as the Senate and House members move to a twice-weekly schedule.

Through February, the legislators were scheduled to hold business one day a week at the Capitol, on alternating days in order to reduce the number of legislators and their staff needed to be present in the building. Eastern Oregon legislators have not been expected to be physically present, due to the coronavirus and the restricted working conditions and schedules that come with it. Where quorums are needed, the "close-in" legislators — Willamette Valley and Portland — have shown up to make sure of quorums, he said.

Thomsen said he has been to the Capitol only once since the session started, a day he preferred to make personal

contact rather than the usual phone or Zoom.

As of this week, the Senate will gather Wednesday and Thursday and the House on Monday and Tuesday, according to Thomsen.

Legislators have conducted business remotely, and Thomsen, a pear orchardist, attempts to maintain distinct "Salem" hours while working from home. He joked that it does not always work, saying, "Everyone expects me to do two full-time jobs," since he is present at the Eastside Road ranch almost all the time.

Thomsen also said he has been surprised and disappointed at the lack of apparent participation via Zoom in the business of the Legislature by rural residents.

"It's really difficult working bills virtually. The lobby's not involved, agencies are not necessarily involved," he said. "We had 300 people sign up to talk about one gun bill and we made it through between 50-100 and that's all the time we had."

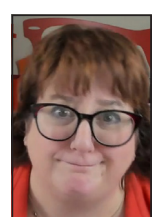
"You don't get all that public testimony. I thought more people would get in on Zoom, and it would be easier for the Pendleton or Ontario people to go on, but I'm seeing less public input."

## Nationally-known speaker comes (virtually) to TD

Series begins  
Friday, March 5

The Dalles Area Chamber of Commerce has teamed up with the Small Business Development Center at Columbia Gorge Community College to bring nationally-known speaker Beth Z to The Dalles. She will be presenting "29 Tech Tools to Create Cool Content for Social Media."

Anyone interested is invited to sign up for a two-part session for \$10 (usually \$39). The series is scheduled for March 5 and March 12 from



Beth Z

7-8 a.m. "The most popular posts on social media are pictures and videos, and with a few easy (and free!) tech tools, you can transform your messages into share-worthy graphics that will put your organization out in front," said a press release. "This action-packed session will give you dozens of sites and apps that will help you elevate the quality of your social media

posts and other material." Takeaways from these sessions include making professional-level multimedia pieces in less than two minutes, adding depth and interest to your boring social media posts, transforming ordinary photos into works of art, and creating infographics for little to no cost.


Sign up at [thedalleschamber.com/nerdy-z-virtual-event](http://thedalleschamber.com/nerdy-z-virtual-event). For more information, contact The Dalles Area Chamber of Commerce at 541-296-2231 or [marketing@thedalleschamber.com](mailto:marketing@thedalleschamber.com).

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