

# Foundation launches Spring Pledge Drive

**North Wasco County SD21 foundation sets \$10,000 goal**

THE DALLES — The North Wasco County Education Foundation has launched a new Spring Pledge Drive, with a goal of raising \$10,000 to bolster their programs that support the North Wasco County School District 21.

“As we all know, this past school year has been incredibly difficult for students, teachers, parents, and others in our community,” said a NWCEF press release. “Learning and mental health has suffered tremendously. Yet, with students getting back into the classroom, there is a palpable sense of hope that is in the air, much like the spring blossoms that are starting to bloom. The foundation is encouraged by the incredible generosity of The Dalles community and beyond that contributed more than \$38,000 last year to the COVID Relief Special Fund and the Classroom Mini-Grants raffle. The positive impacts of those dollars can be viewed by reading their 2020 Annual Impact Report.”

Funds will be used towards

the following programs:

- Expand their Classroom Mini-Grants program, which offers small grants of up to \$500 for educators to bring creative, innovative, and necessary projects to their classrooms to enhance learning. The Foundation provided seven of these grants in the fall of 2020 and will provide eight of them in the spring of 2021. They want to offer even more of these grants to make a much bigger impact.
- Launch a new Golden Apple Awards program to provide meritorious awards to two teachers, one classified, and one administrative staff person that show exemplary leadership, effort, creativity, and compassion in their work. They will award four outstanding individuals each year in late spring.
- Enhance the capacity of the Foundation to fundraise and write grant applications to bring even more resources into school district 21.

The deadline to donate to this fundraiser is May 1. Tax-deductible donations can be made by mailing a check to 3632 West 10th St., The Dalles, OR 97058.



## Club Practice

The Hood River Youth Lacrosse club was out practicing their skills on fields at the Port of Hood River recently. Athletes wore helmets and protective gear — including face masks due to the COVID pandemic — as they took advantage of warming spring weather.

Kirby Neumann -Rea photos



# HOUSING

## Current average more than \$500k

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days after the second reading is approved. The date of the second reading will be set after the first reading April 12. The council may allow additional public input at that meeting.

Although new rules aim at encouraging developers to fill in city lots with smaller and less expensive housing for middle income locals, there's no guarantee builders will jump at the chance, or that locals will buy the homes, councilors pointed out. However, if new rules are approved, middle home development could begin as early as this summer, said City Planning Director Dustin Nilsen.

“The readiness of developers to act on the new legislation will really be the determining factor on whether building could begin in the summer,” said Nilsen.

Currently, average home sales in the 97031 zip code exceed \$500,000. Because Hood River is a seller's market — there are more buyers than sellers — most homes sell for more than the listing price, according to Realtor.com, an industry market-watch site.

Using data provided by its planning department, March 29 the council members worked to address concerns raised by public testimony in March. Council members said they hope building code changes will make more efficient use of urban residential land by supporting development of diverse and creative housing types compatible with existing neighborhoods,

providing opportunities for smaller dwelling units within existing neighborhoods, and increasing opportunities for home ownership.

If they build them, who will come? Among public testimony in the past few months were worries that less expensive housing in desirable Hood River will attract non-locals looking for a second home, or current owners looking to build more short-term vacation rentals. Realtors in addition testified that building codes, even if they inspire more building, may not drive prices down.

Aiming to keep the code flexible enough to attract building while maintaining the integrity of neighborhoods, council made the following revisions to earlier code changes. The latest proposed changes were not unanimous, but a majority of the council approved them in

each case:

- Small home developments encouraged — New codes set the size of middle-income developments at no more than six units on 15,000 square feet in the residential area. Those developments can be mixed duplexes and single homes, with additional allowances if the units are 800 square feet or smaller. Those allowances will be included in the April 12 reading.
- Short-term rental codes clarified — Currently, the city grants short-term (vacation) rental licenses in the Residential zone only to owners of their primary residence. The same rules will apply for new middle-income housing in residential zones. However, when the new ordinance is approved, those same rules will apply to the C-1 or commercial zone. Currently, the primary

residence requirement does not apply in the C-1 zone. New rules are intended to limit or prohibit issuance of short-term rental licenses to owners of new middle housing dwellings.

- Devil in the details — Where most councils found disagreement were in the details — from porch roof size to parking configuration — which aimed at attractive, yet neighborly, construction. All agreed that clarity and flexibility in the code will be most attractive to developers, but some disagreed on what was, or was not, clear and flexible.
- Beginning of the beginning — Although the changes to the ordinance will be read and possibly approved in April, the new codes can be adjusted in the future, based on results, councilors pointed out. Councilor Erick Haynie suggested a periodic review

be a part of the updated ordinance, but the rest of the council suggested instead that reports come back to the council regularly, outside of ordinance requirements. Haynie had also asked for a longer evaluation period, but the suggestion failed to earn support. With a 6-1 vote, Haynie dissenting, the council directed Nilsen to update the document for the first reading of the ordinance.

- Modifications to the ordinance may be available to the public before the 5:30 p.m. April 12 meeting. The date of the final reading will be set at that meeting. Documents related to the ordinance, including minutes and public testimony, are online at [cityofhoodriver.gov/administration/meetings](http://cityofhoodriver.gov/administration/meetings). Summaries have been in past issues of the *Columbia Gorge News*.

# SOLAR

## Informal meeting to be held April 14

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Goldendale.

The movement has gained momentum — within the past month, Klickitat County Commissioners voted 2-1 to enact a moratorium on solar projects connected to the BPA substation. If the vote went the other way, Wagner said, “We as citizens would have woken up with a solar farm in our backyard.”

With the moratorium, residents say they feel like they have a chance for their voices to be heard.

“Having this moratorium shows people can come together and stand against something that is unjust,” said county resident Rocel Dimmick. Dimmick also voiced concerns that a project sited on the land would remove farmable land for decades and cut county residents out of the majority of the benefits if solar farms are

not be taxed under industrial rates and its energy output does not stay in the county.

Kerry Scherer moved to the area from Camas recently. While her land would not be directly affected by solar projects near Knight Road, she got involved, she said, because “I have a belief that good farmland is rare.”

“They're wasting a resource and that's the part that aggravates me,” Scherer said.

Klickitat County Commissioner Dan Christopher visited with demonstrators, and spoke with Columbia Gorge News. Wagner affirmed that the group has found support with Christopher, who championed the motion to enact the moratorium.

Christopher would not comment directly on what he hopes comes out of the moratorium, saying he wants to hear the opinions coming from the public hearing, yet signaled that he “would prefer solar in the tumbleweeds.”

“An issue like this transcends party,” Christopher said. “When somebody's planning something in

somebody's backyard, that person's opinion should have more weight.”

Christopher said that the demonstrations signal a lack of trust in the process.

“I don't think government does a good job of listening to people,” Christopher said. “If government did a better job with town halls, word would spread and we wouldn't have these surprises.”

But, he said, “You have to actively know what's going on in your government.”

He said about the person who had his land surrounded in the Lund Hill site, “his family leased all the land.”

C.E.A.S.E. is hosting an in-person informational meeting 6:30 p.m. on April 14 at the Goldendale Grange. The group is asking those interested to RSVP since space is limited.

County Commissioners will take public testimony regarding the moratorium in two separate hearings, scheduled for 2 p.m. and 6 p.m., Tuesday, May 4.

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