

TRAFFIC

\$7 million is proposed for trails

Continued from page 1

areas, including smaller houses on small lots and duplexes. To see the entire middle-income housing additions, visit www.cityofhoodriver.gov/administration/ordinances.

Not coincidentally, the council is now seeking developers for the 7-acre plot the city purchased last year that would provide apartments and mixed-value houses for residents. April 12 the council began the search process by looking at flexible plans for the property that could include up to 100 apartments, and 25 or more homes of various sizes. Staff at the city and County of Hood River are talking about coordinating development of an additional two-acre county plot west of the 7-acre plot, which could expand development options. The council discussed a range of financing sources, especially for the affordable apartments, to entice developers to build according to city housing goals. Among apartment financing resources for developers are city, state and federal grants and loans, and waiving system development charges and property taxes.

The council directed staff to send out a request for qualifications, which begins the competitive search for a qualified developer. After choosing a firm, the council



An undeveloped 6 acres on the west side of Hood River has been approved for development by the city. Gail Oberst photo

would review plans for the development with public input. If development proceeds as planned, construction could begin in 2022, but City Manager Rachael Fuller warned that there are still “many unknowns.”

Westside plans linked to trails, bike paths

The council April 12 approved more than \$34 million in improvements to the city’s roads and trails on the west side, an addition to the 20-year transportation plan.

Councilors said improvements to trails, sidewalks and bike paths are among priorities, but MariRuth Petzing, an immigration attorney and Hood River resident, said the transportation plan spends most of the proposed west side budget improving access for motor vehicles, Petzing testified. “Invest in a healthy and sustainable future now,” she said.

The planning commission forwarded its recommendations to the council based on more than 20 public hearings and a public survey to

Rate Increases	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Single Family	+1.00%	+1.00%	+1.00%	+1.00%	+1.00%
Multi Family	+0.00%	+0.00%	+0.00%	+0.00%	+0.00%
Commercial	+3.50%	+3.50%	+3.50%	+3.50%	+3.50%
Industrial	+8.50%	+8.50%	+8.50%	+8.50%	+8.50%
Irrigation	+18.00%	+18.00%	+18.00%	+18.00%	+18.00%
Total	+2.84%	+2.99%	+3.16%	+3.34%	+3.54%

2026 Revenue Req.	Amount	% of Total
Single Family	\$1,835,549	50.7%
Multi Family	107,287	3.0%
Commercial	1,213,375	33.5%
Industrial	78,259	2.2%
Irrigation	383,702	10.6%
Total	\$ 3,618,172	100.0%

A graph shows how rates will be increased over time.

Graphic courtesy City of Hood River

which more than 100 people responded.

More than \$7 million of the total is proposed for pedestrian and bike projects including sidewalks on Rand Road, May Street, 22nd and 18th streets, and Belmont Avenue; trails and crossing improvements at May and State streets, Rocky Road and Westside, Post Canyon and Henderson Creek trails; bike travel improvements to May to Montello Avenue, Eugene Street, 12th to 30th streets, Frankton to Rand roads, Sherman Avenue to Belmont Drive, and others. Nearly \$28 million in road improvements include \$6.9 million in improvements to exit 62 from I-84 with state transportation funding, \$3 million improvements to Westside Drive; a roundabout at the intersection of Cascade and Mt. Adams avenues; two traffic signals on Cascade at Rand and 20th Street, and another traffic signal at Rand and Oak Avenue.

Although some projects, including the Cascade/Rand signal, are already underway, other projects will be prioritized and completed as funds arise, Fuller said.

To view a summary of the 20-year transportation plan, including the entire 111-page document, visit www.hoodrivertsp.com.

Rate increases approved

With an eye to paying for these and other improvements related to future development, the council considered increasing system development charges – water, sewer and other new construction hook-up fees – and other resources.

The council also approved water, storm and sewer rates increases that target large volume and commercial users, shifting the burden away from residential users. Monthly base rates that go into effect July 1 will increase

by about 80 cents to \$105.54 for most residential homes (3/4 inch meter). In addition to the base rate, the city will add \$2.70 per 1,000 gallons used to its rate, a 14-cent increase.

Commercial and industrial users July 1 will see monthly base rates increase from \$3 to \$50 per month depending on meter size, and up to 70 cents more per 1,000 gallons used. Commercial and industrial new base monthly rates range from \$570 (2-inch meters) to than \$4,511 (6-inch meters).

WILDFIRE

Cool, dry spring hazardous

Continued from page 1

agricultural burns, rekindled slash burns, and fires spread from abandoned campfires across the Central Oregon District, according to a press release. Limited moisture in recent weeks, combined with strong winds, has resulted in dry vegetation and fuels on the landscape.

The cool spring temperatures have reduced green-up of vegetation which typically slows fire growth in wildland fuels this time of year, the release stated. The Central Oregon District has had eleven fires year-to-date; four times the ten-year-average. These fires have burned more than 200 acres of private lands protected by ODF, the ten-year-average is less than ten acres for the same time-frame.

Hood River County Forest Manager Doug Thiesies has also warned of high fire danger, especially in lower elevation. “Hood River County fire season typically begins in June, but this year wildfires have already ignited in the area,” Thiesies said in a press release. “With fire danger heightened by lack of rainfall in April, Hood River County Forestry Department reminds the community that conditions are unseasonably dry in forest lands below 2500’ elevation.”

In recent weeks, fire crews in Hood River County have responded to multiple wildfires in the area resulting from debris burning and unattended campfires, and more dry, warm weather is expected this month.

“We ask residents and visitors to please be cautious because wildfire risk is already high,” said Thiesies. “Please do not abandon campfires. If you leave a campfire or burn pile, be sure to soak it, stir it and soak it again until there is no smoke, steam or heat — it needs to be out cold.”

In 2020, multiple fires burned in Oregon, some catastrophic, resulting in a State emergency declaration. Numerous parks and recreation areas were closed in the region, including Hood River County’s forest, Mt. Hood National Forest, portions of the Columbia

River Gorge National Scenic Area, and Oregon State Parks. The public is advised to exercise caution and follow any upcoming restrictions for everyone’s safety.

According to ODF, The current short-term weather outlook is for daytime temperatures to reach 80 degrees or warmer, with no moisture in the ten day forecast. Based on this forecast the Central Oregon District is urging landowners to pause any burning planned at this time until some precipitation is seen on the landscape and the risk of wildfire is reduced.

“We are strongly recommending landowners not burn for the remainder of this week due to weather and fuel conditions,” says Mike Shaw, ODF’s Central Oregon District Forester.

When weather conditions moderate and burning can be accomplished safely, landowners should contact their local fire department or ODF office to determine if burning is allowed and if a permit is needed. Safe burning guidelines included keeping the fire small, have water and tools available to suppress the fire if needed, never leaving the fire unattended, clearing the area surrounding the burn pile to mineral soil, ensuring the fire is out (cold to the touch) when burning is complete. Never burn during windy conditions. Additionally, revisit the burn area in the days following to make sure there is no heat remaining. Debris burning includes field/pastures and irrigation ditch burning to reduce thatch.

Campfires should be small, have fuels cleared away from the fire ring, never be left unattended, and should be completely extinguished prior to leaving. Drowning with water and stirring is the best way to be certain the fire is out.

If a fire does escape, the responsible party can be cited for an uncontrolled burn and held accountable for the suppression costs of the fire as well as any damage caused by the fire, Shaw noted.

For updates on fire dangers, call your local fire district or visit its website. Oregon Department of Forestry’s website contains a page to check for fire restrictions: oregon.gov/ODF/Fire/Pages/Restrictions.aspx or call The Dalles ODF office at 541-296-4626.

CENTER

Professional services provided

Continued from page 1

wouldn’t have happened without them so we’re very thankful for them.”

Much of the services are provided during class time, although some are scheduled outside of school hours, said Michelle Ward, coordinator of the health and wellness program.

“Now that we have this space, it’s here for (the students),” said Ward.

While 4-12 graders have immediate access to the building, district officials are working on a plan to be able to transport K-3 graders between Whitson Elementary School and the health and wellness center, said Ortega.

The building and its proximity to school will help to eliminate one barrier that keep students from seeking help, said Ward.

Another barrier to entry is cost. Students who are insured through private insurance or state insurance may pay a co-pay, while a donation from a community member has allowed some to bypass the cost of therapy

services, Ortega said. As coordinator of the program, much of Ward’s role has been to link students and families to mental health services as well as other resources for help with food, housing, and other needs.

“We want this to be a place where students feel comfort and there’s no stigma around it,” Ward said.

Reducing the stigma surrounding mental health is one of Ward’s number one goals as coordinator, “not just in the district, but the community as a whole.”

Ward has been serving as coordinator for the health and wellness program since it got started a year ago.

Acting to achieve her goal, Ward and Rita Pinchot, the district’s prevention and intervention specialist, have been busy this past year performing outreach to classes, introducing themselves to teachers, students and families in an effort to make them aware of the services they provide.

Teachers likewise have been taking students on tours of the building, Ward said.

“A lot of my referrals come from teachers,” Ward said. Some students have approached the program without assistance, and according to Ward, “that’s huge that

they have that awareness. I’m proud of them that they’re able to ask for help.”

With the completion of the health and wellness center building, everything is able to be done at the school, from setting up appointments to meeting with therapists.

“If you’re worried or if you’re anxious, school is going to be the lowest priority,” said Ward. “So we’re addressing all the barriers so that students could learn in a positive environment.”

With a concrete source of support, program partners are thinking of ways to grow the program. Earlier this year, Ward began a twice-monthly parent support group to talk about struggles, share ideas, offer one another support and spend some time just taking care of each other.

“There’s so many possibilities,” Ortega said.

Ward said that it’s a positive thing for students to be back in school making social connections, especially since there can be little to no privacy at home to do telehealth sessions.

But the signs are clear that there is a lot of work to be done to mitigate the effects of a year away from in-person learning. According to partial results from a statewide optional survey

that analyzed 6-12 graders and how they have adjusted to the COVID-19 pandemic, students are reporting symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Part of why the survey is being done, Ward said, is to have some understanding of what resources are needed to mitigate adverse effects, and with community partnerships through the school district, Washington Gorge Action Programs, medical services, local police departments and other community organizations, “the group is able to work together to help address needs.”

In preparation for opening the building, adult and student volunteers planted 200 native plants around the building. The plants were generously donated by the Underwood Conservation District and Yakama Nation Fisheries and compost was donated by Dirt Hugger. The plants will provide a beautiful outdoor area around the Center, as well as provide habitat, offer a natural screen between the Center and the road and help provide a solution to drainage issues in the area.

COVID

Households, events drive spread

Continued from page 1

Risk Levels

As a county with 15,000-30,000 population, risk is measured by the number of cases within a 14-day period. Lower risk is fewer than 30 cases over 14 days. Moderate risk is 30 to 44 cases, and high risk is 45 to 59 cases.

The lower risk category allows 50 percent indoor seating capacity at restaurants and a midnight closure. Moderate risk also allows 50 percent capacity, but an 11 p.m. closure. The high risk category is 25 percent indoor capacity and an 11 p.m. closure.

Faith institutions can have 75 percent in-person capacity at the lower risk category,

50 percent in the moderate risk, and 25 percent at high risk. Indoor gyms can have 50 percent capacity at lower and moderate risk and 25 percent at high risk.

Grocery stores and other retail stores can have 75 percent capacity at lower and moderate risk and 50 percent at high risk.

Vaccinations

Vaccination remains the best tool to stop the pandemic. Wasco County has vaccinated 34.38 percent of its population. Starting Monday, April 19, everyone 16 and older will be eligible for the vaccine. To book an appointment, visit <https://www.ncphd.org/book-vaccine> or call 541-506-2600.

Outbreak

North Central Public Health District Epidemiologist Jeremy

Hawkins said roughly a third of the current cases are from a single outbreak. All of the cases now occurring are driven primarily by spread within households and people attending gatherings of all sizes, he said.

“Early indications are that this is the start of what I would consider locally here our third surge of cases,” Hawkins said. “That would certainly track with what’s happening around the state and country.”

Hawkins is hopeful vaccination efforts “will help blunt this surge. We’ve already seen a couple different scenarios where vaccinations are working. We’ve seen cases where people in households are not getting infected if they’re fully vaccinated. And we’ve seen a couple instances of people who are pretty vulnerable otherwise who

got infected but had one dose of the vaccine and so their symptoms have been pretty minimal. Maybe headaches and a stuffy nose. A cold essentially.”

Wearing a mask, avoiding gatherings and getting vaccinated remain the best ways to reduce the surge.

For more information, please visit COVID-19 Vaccine in Oregon, contact North Central Public Health District at (541) 506-2600, visit us on the web at www.ncphd.org or find us on Facebook.)

French Onion Soup tonight?
Gourmet Take-Out And Local Delivery.
baldwinsaloon.com
541-296-5666

CAMP'S PLUMBING, LLC SERVING THE ENTIRE GORGE

- New Construction
- Industrial
- Commercial
- Residential
- Remodels
- Service & Repair
- Drain Cleaning
- Camera & Locate
- Backflow Testing
- Water Heater Installation & Repair

BONDED & INSURED
OR #177235
WA #CAMPSP938Q9
10% Veterans Discount!

541-298-2267

Quality vitamins and supplements.

DANIEL'S health & nutrition

10% off one regular priced item.

918 12th St | Hood River, OR | 541-386-7328

A&E HEATING and AIR, Inc. Your Friends IN THE BRIGHT RED VANS

Expert Service & Reliability

- Maintenance programs
- Licensed and Bonded
- Over 20 years Experience
- Factory trained technicians

Quality Sales & Installation

- Furnaces
- Air Conditioning
- Heat Pumps
- Ductless Mini-Splits and much more!

For a limited time only get up to 72 months no interest or 6 months no payments or interest with approved credit on your purchase of a new Heat Pump, AH, or Furnace.

Serving the Columbia River Gorge Since 1997
NEW LOCATION IN THE DALLES!

541-296-0701 The Dalles
541-387-3311 Hood River