

# Foley Fire



A small home at the west end of Foley Lakes in The Dalles burns Wednesday afternoon, April 21, 2021. Crews from Mid-Columbia Fire and Rescue and Dallesport Fire Department responded to the fire. Homeowner William Hardy, 67, said everyone was able to exit the home without injury, but noted the house was a total loss, and was uninsured because of its age. "I've lost everything," he said as he watched his home burn. He lived in the house for seven years. Cause of the fire was not immediately known. Mark B. Gibson photo

# CGCC board candidate addresses past felony

By Mark Gibson  
Columbia Gorge News

Columbia Gorge Community College position 1 candidate Frank E. Polehn pled guilty in June 2010 to attempt to commit a Class A felony, the sexual abuse of a minor, but told *Columbia Gorge News* Friday, April 23, his conviction should not stop voters from supporting his candidacy.

"In reality no, I went to jail for something I didn't do," he said. Pleading guilty was "the easiest way out of the situation," he explained. As a board member he would not be working directly with kids, and if he did others would be

present.

After serving time in prison, Polehn was arrested for a probation violation in 2015. He said that arrest was because a councilor had "accused him of lying," a violation of his parole, and he served an extra two months, he said.

Polehn then provided the *Columbia Gorge News* with a prepared statement, titled "How to become a felon by not doing what one is accused of." In that document, he describes estrangement with his wife and the allegations made against him. Faced with a 22-month sentence, he wrote, "I decided the best choice was to go to

prison knowing I did not belong there in exchange for the knowledge it would be shortened to about 18 months for good behavior."

He said he pled guilty, but it did not go as he was told it would.

"I think there was unethical abusive attacks by higher powers involved. But I lack solid evidence as to where it came from. In short, I pled guilty rather than fight the accusations. I am still confident I made the best choice to a no win situation."

Additional information on his candidacy can be found on page 11.

# Next White Salmon Superintendent selected

McGeeney hired as 'great fit' for district

By Jacob Bertram  
Columbia Gorge News

The White Salmon Valley School Board voted unanimously to hire Dr. Sean McGeeney as its next superintendent, district officials announced in an April 23 news release. McGeeney is the Executive Director for P-12 Programs for the Yakima School District.

Recruiting firm Northwest Leadership Associates conducted the district's national search for a superintendent. The search yielded 11 applicants for the position, five of those were from out of state. Although three candidates were chosen to interview for the position, one of them accepted another position the day before White Salmon Valley's interviews.

Following a request for comment, McGeeney said in an email exchange: "I am humbled and honored to have the opportunity to

be the new superintendent of White Salmon Valley Schools.

"I am excited to partner with our students, staff, families, and community and look forward to hearing from and engaging with everyone as full partners in ensuring every student succeeds. My family and I are excited to move soon and establish new friendships, enjoy the outdoors, and contribute in many ways in our community. Go Bruins!" McGeeney said.

McGeeney and Keith Harris, assistant superintendent for Dickinson, N.D., interviewed for the position April 22. The interview process consisted of a day of touring, interviewing with students, participating in a community forum, and interviewing with the school board.

The interviews and the



Dr. Sean McGeeney

community forums were observed, either live or via Zoom, by nearly seventy district staff and community members, district officials said. Observers ranked the candidates and provided written feedback to the school board.

"We were pleased to have two strong candidates to choose from. We love McGeeney's passion and think he'll be a great fit for the district," Board Chair Paul Mosbrucker said.

The school board met in executive session immediately following the interviews to review the input from the community and staff, and to discuss the merits of the two candidates.

After a lengthy and considerable discussion, the board selected McGeeney as the district's next superintendent, according to a press release.

# ENGAGEMENT Teachers adapt, collaborate

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out their answer or they can leave me audio recordings," Hume said.

"They can record themselves answering it and discussing it or explaining how they did something, and I've just found that's been so much more enlightening to really help me know what they understand and what they're able to do," she said.

Knowles, in his 29th year with the district, said his file cabinet full of multiple-choice tests may never be used again.

Ell and Mobley have been working with another teacher to develop curriculum including "social-emotional learning" (SEL) items. Ell said students may not be able to make-up for time lost this year in terms of academic content, but they have gotten stronger in other areas — especially those

involving technology and communication.

One student contacted Mobley on a day off to ask for help with an assignment, she said in the past she might have had to seek that student out.

"That level of self-advocacy is a huge skill, and it's really hard to ask for help," Mobley said.

Knowles, Hume, Mobley and Ell are part of a "Professional Learning Community" group and have compiled an online list of tools for teachers from apps and websites to articles about teaching philosophy. They listen to podcasts and read educational journals, sometimes ideas come from social media. Ell hasn't been able to get Knowles onto TikTok yet, but she's not giving up.

Knowles said he has been studying the concept of "learning loss" during the pandemic.

"If the goal is to have kids retain an important finite amount of information in their brains then I think we've lost ground that we can't get back, but if the goal

is to equip them for dealing with their lives — whether it's through SEL, self-advocacy or figuring out how to deal with something they don't know — then I think we've actually moved forward pretty well," Knowles said.

He credited Ell, Mobley, Hume and many other teachers in the district with being comfortable trying new things. He said that willingness to adapt and collaborate was key in finding success this year.

"We really didn't have a map going forward, I think we just sort of left a trail behind us," Knowles said. All four teachers continue to meet with others throughout the district one Saturday a month to share resources and provide one-on-one help to teachers who need extra help with some of the new technology.

Hume said helping other teachers with technology offered some of the professionally fulfilling "Aha!" moments they normally would have experienced with students.



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# TIMELINES May 17 workshop scheduled

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a permit, according to Eric Walker, director of the county's community development department.

As proposed, the initial approval and extension time period would begin when all appeals are finished. If projects are not completed in time, the developer would have to reapply for their permit.

The current proposal was prompted in part by appeals surrounding the Apollo Land Holdings' DeeTour Amphitheater and Hotel project, beginning in 2013. Part of that project was denied by the Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals and returned to the county for revision. Other lengthy projects mentioned at the April 19 Hood River County Commission meeting included Walmart's expansion project in the City of Hood River, which spanned more than 20 years.

In March 10 public comments to the county's Planning Commission, Hood

River resident Bonnie New endorsed limits on extended permits, suggesting the lack of limits is counterproductive. "Repeated and repeated and repeated extensions ... waste county staff time and resources at a level that angers us county taxpayers," she said. Heather Staten, of Thrive Hood River, a local land-use advocacy group, said that the group appealed the DeeTour project after the county approved the fourth permit extension.

Although they agreed that clarity in the permitting process is warranted, not all commissioners agreed with the proposed time limits recommended by the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Karen Joplin said she felt some of the ordinance changes seemed "agenda-driven" to slow projects or stop development. Commissioner Bob Benton pointed out that limiting the process to six years favors large corporations that can afford to re-apply and supported the timeclock for permits that start after the last appeal. Benton also cited a potential conflict of interest, as he is among local investors in the DeeTour/Apollo project.

Changes proposed to five articles in the County Zoning Ordinance impact development rules for projects outside of farm and forest zones by extending initial approval periods up to four years, affecting subdivisions, property line adjustments, and bed and breakfast facilities. New rules set to be adopted in the farm and forest zones, including dwelling permits, follow state guidelines which in some cases allow less time for completion than the county allows.

Once staff updates the ordinance, the commissioners will hold another work session to consider it for inclusion in the new ordinance, tentatively set for May 17.

A copy of the proposal is on the county's website, in the Board of Commissioner's April 19 meeting packet.



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through Sunday, May 16, 9 p.m.

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This year's event will support Skyline's Breast Health Program. This essential and life-saving program provides assistance for breast cancer screenings and diagnostic tests for under/uninsured individuals — regardless of age or gender. It also supports the purchase of the latest breast health technology, which is vital for early detection.

**IMPACT**  
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