

County, city join in 'affordable' development

■ **By Gail Oberst**
For Columbia Gorge News

Hood River County is willing to work with the City of Hood River to provide affordable housing on properties along Rand Road and Wine Country Avenue. On May 17, county commissioners announced support for a joint project by adding the county's two acres to the city's seven to create a larger mixed development project including 100 low-income dwellings as well as middle-income and market rate apartments and houses.

The project is still in early conceptual planning. City Manager Rachael Fuller said bringing the county into the project planning could make it more attractive to potential developers and eventually help pay for infrastructure costs.

In an effort to provide affordable housing in the Hood River area, the city has prepared a request for proposals from tentative developers, which includes four flexible site plans, two of which include the county's property. Tentative plans will be finalized this summer. A developer will be chosen before the end of the year, and construction could begin in 2022. Residents can comment through May 30 on the four proposed scenarios at cityofhoodriver.gov/planning/780-rand-road-housing-development-strategy.

The city and county properties are zoned residential. The two-acre county-owned property is northwest and close to, but not connected to, the Rand Road property. In addition to low and middle-income homes, the city is proposing a mix of housing types, including market rate homes, improving financial feasibility for potential developers. The

county has not yet made specific plans for development of its land, beyond agreeing to participate in tentative plans with the city.

In a letter supporting collaboration on the project, County Commission Chair Mike Oates said, "The city's project represents a natural opportunity for partnership between the city and county to achieve our shared goals of providing affordable housing to the community."

Hearing set on permit timelines

Timelines for building permit activities will be curtailed, according to new zoning rules proposed by the Hood River Board of Commissioners May 17. The board read the ordinance for the first time May 17 and is set to adopt the new rules after a public hearing at 6 p.m. June 21.

The new ordinance limits the number of extensions that could be allowed for developers to complete projects. While most land-use permits would be limited to six years under the new proposed rules, the ordinance could allow an additional extension in extraordinary circumstances, such as delays in obtaining state or federal permits.

CL asks county for \$100,000

The Port of Cascade Locks is asking Hood River County for a share of the federal American Recovery Act funds that aim to offset pandemic losses. Hood River County is slated to receive \$4.6 million over the next two years.

Bridge of the Gods, built in 1940, lost more than \$1 million in toll revenues during the pandemic, according to Jess Groves, Port

of Cascade Locks president, in a letter to Hood River County Commissioners May 18. In the letter, Groves asked the county for \$100,000 to address the revenue loss coupled with increased expenses to provide safety for employees and visitors and help local businesses.

County Administrator Jeff Hecksel said the commissioners heard, but didn't act on the request. The county has not yet received funds or decided how the funds would be spent, Hecksel said.

"The port did apply for and receive some funds from the state to support local business during 2020," Groves said of the first round of federal stimulus funds paid last year. "The port passed this money directly to over 20 Cascade Locks businesses to help them keep their doors open and retain employees."

Cascade Locks' Port has also applied for \$217,000 in federal and ODOT relief funds available to public agencies that operate toll bridges. "But with this partial revenue reimbursement, the port continues to feel the economic impact on its budget and ability to fund critical needs," Groves said.

The Port of Cascade Locks Commission purchased the bridge in 1961. Today, the bridge is owned and operated by the Port of Cascade Locks. Revenues from the bridge tolls pay for maintenance, painting, inspections, and bond repayment.

Kingsley Reservoir campground on tap

Hood River County's Forestry Department is seeking \$100,000 grant to build a campground and day-use facilities at Kingsley Reservoir. The county approved the grant application to the Oregon Parks



The City of Hood River property on Rand Road, above, is slated for development for affordable housing. Hood River County owns a two-acre property nearby, to the northwest, and has expressed support for a joint housing project incorporating both properties. Contributed photo

and Recreation Department. County Recreation Trails Program will include funds request funds to complete a lakeside loop trail around Kingsley Reservoir to enhance public access for both overnight campers and day use visitors.

The Board of Commissioners approved a resolution that sets the project value at \$125,000, including the county's rock donation.

The Kingsley Reservoir campground is listed as a high priority project in the county's Recreation Trail Master Plan. The reservoir is approximately 13 miles southwest of Hood River.

The reservoir has been closed since 2017 to improve irrigation infrastructure, which raised the lake's water level 11 feet, flooding the former campground.

Public access was planned to reopen in late 2019, but

permitting delays have extended the outlook. The Farmers Irrigation District, which uses the reservoir, provides water to 5,800 acres of land on the west side of the Hood River Valley.

Hecksel said the reservoir campground may reopen by June of 2022.

Valle Moretti and Kelley tapped

In other action, the Hood River Board of Commissioners appointed Leticia Valle Moretti to the county's planning commission. Valle Moretti, of Hood River, described herself as born and raised in Pine Grove, the daughter of migrant farmworkers. Valle Moretti has been a longtime community volunteer including the Hood River County Transportation District, the Historic Columbia River Highway Advisory

Committee, One Community Health, and several other health-related and LatinX outreach organizations. Commissioners also recommended Peter "Gil" Kelley, to represent Hood River County on the Columbia River Gorge Oregon Investment Board. The governor makes the final appointment to the board, which helps set economic investment policy for the region. Kelley, an independent adviser, said he has headed up planning a development for several West Coast cities and continues to act as a consultant to clients from his home in Hood River.

The Hood River Board of Commissioners next meets June 7 and June 21 for its regular sessions.

'Timberline Vodka' launched

Hood River Distillers, the oldest and largest importer, distiller and marketer of distilled spirits in the Northwest, has announced the launch of its newest brand, Timberline Vodka, according to a press release. Created in Hood River, Timberline reflects the spirit and love of the outdoors and those who thrive in it — the "Outer Class."

Timberline Vodka is distilled with a balance of grain and 14 different varieties of non-GMO Pacific Northwest apples. Distilled in a dual-column, 2,000-liter pot still at the highest standards of purification, this vodka is then cut to 80 proof with glacier-fed spring water from Mount Hood. The expert distillation team, with their depth of knowledge, talent and skills, kept the minerals present for an epically clean vodka that echoes its origins, said a press release.

"With 46 levels of purification, we are really using only the most premium, tightly cut spirit in our production process," said Master Distiller, Joseph O'Sullivan. "After many rounds of continuous testing, we perfected the balance of grain, apples and finished with the high-quality water we are so fortunate to have in Oregon. We are very proud of this incredible-tasting vodka."

Aligning with a dedicated interest in preserving the Pacific Northwest



Timberline Vodka is Hood River Distillers newest brand.

environment, Timberline Vodka is partnering with the Portland-based non-profit organization, The Freshwater Trust. The Freshwater Trust's mission is to preserve and restore freshwater ecosystems in the West.

Timberline Vodka's packaging was inspired by the iconic Timberline Lodge and a love of the outdoors. The custom glass bottle with unique canvas label looks at home on a back bar or table

in any of the historic lodges of the West. The brand was designed by the award-winning Sandstrom Partners, whose portfolio includes the highly successful Aviation Gin, Bulleit Bourbon and St. Germain brands, among others.

A distinctive feature of the packaging was the creation of a collectable label series: The Hiker, The Snow Goose and The Skier. There is only one Timberline Vodka, but there are three distinct labels that represent it.

"Timberline is a very unique vodka, and the brand and packaging reflect this," says Senior Marketing Brand Manager Keri Meuret. "The subtle tint of the bubble glass, custom bottle shape with embossing complete with canvas labels provide a vintage charm. It's a blend of rustic and contemporary."

For hiking, skiing, sunset wandering, or whatever opens your door, Timberline serves as a constant symbol and reminder that even when sequestered to the inside, the outside is where it's at. Timberline Vodka is now available for purchase in the Hood River Distillers' Tasting Room and a growing list of Pacific Northwest retailers. It

is available in both 50ml and 750ml sizes, and the 750ml bottle retails for \$24.95.

About Hood River Distillers

Founded in 1934 and headquartered in Hood River, Hood River Distillers is the Northwest's largest and oldest importer, distiller, producer, bottler, and marketer of distilled spirits. Timberline Vodka, Big Gin, Batanga Tequila, Easy Rider Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, Trail's End Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey finished with Oregon Oak, Clear Creek Distillery, Sinfire Cinnamon Whiskies, Lucid Absinthe Supérieure, ULLR Nordic Libation, Yazi Ginger Vodka, Double Mountain Hopped Whiskey, Lewis and Clark Premium Spirits, HRD Vodka and the complete line of Monarch® distilled spirits are distributed across the country.

For the complete product portfolio and more information, visit www.hrdspirits.com.

CORRECTION

In last week's article on Pony Espresso, *Columbia Gorge News* mixed up the names of the owner of Summit Excavation LLC and the owner of the building which will house the future restaurant. Jake Strain owns Summit Excavation LLC, while Russell Kramer owns the Blue Barn RV Park and the building.

Jake Strain and Angela Cooper plan for a soft opening of the restaurant upon signing the lease for the building. Strain and Cooper announced the name of the restaurant — The Revel Hideaway — upon signing the lease of the building. Cooper wanted to emphasize that "all kids are welcome" at the ranch. "It's the neighborhood that's welcome," Cooper said. *Columbia Gorge News* regrets the error.

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