

Summer Oasis



A small group of birders explore the Klickitat Rails to Trails trail along upper Swale Creek in Klickitat County, accessed from a trailhead on Harms Road. The green of the small creek contrasts sharply with the dry lands that characterize the unirrigated areas of the valley west of Goldendale. Mark B. Gibson photo

City of Hood River to resume in-person meetings

Hood River sets June 28 for first in-person meeting

HOOD RIVER — “Get out of your fuzzy slippers, guys,” said Hood River Mayor Kate McBride at the June 14 Zoom-based meeting of city council. “You’re going to have to put on your real shoes.” The council agreed that the next meeting, June 28, will be in-person, although virtual options are being installed for both visitors and councilors. McBride commended Hood River-area healthcare workers who have vaccinated more than 70 percent of the county’s eligible population, for making it possible for groups to gather again. The Hood River County Board of Commissioners is on the same track. It will meet virtually June 21, then meet in-person — with virtual options — July 19 at

its regular works session and business meeting. The Port of Hood River’s Board of Commissioners began meeting in person June 22. The return is far from “back to normal,” however. All those attending the actual city council meetings must show proof of vaccination. Additional screens and cameras are being installed that will allow councilors to see virtual participants, and let virtual participants see councilors and reports from guests. The port is working on a similar hybrid system, although it won’t be ready for the June 22 in-person meeting. The Hood River County Commissioners are preparing a similar hybrid set-up at the meeting room at 601 State Street. Beginning July 19, visitors may attend virtually as in the past, via the Zoom webinar, or attend in person.

Wasco County plans in-person meeting July 7

By Mark Gibson
Columbia Gorge News

THE DALLES — The Wasco County Board of Commissioners will resume limited in-person board meetings in July, with a hybrid format that will allow continued access through the Zoom platform. In-person public access to the meetings, which will resume at the courthouse, will be contingent on the lifting of state restrictions. “If state restrictions are lifted, we could unlock the door,” said Kathy Clark, executive assistant to the board, during a work session — the first in-person meeting

of the commissioners since the pandemic began — held at the Wasco County Fairgrounds in Tygh Valley June 16, with commissioners and staff seated outdoors at picnic tables. Commissioners will be able to view those presenting via Zoom on two screens to either side of the commissioners, and communicate via a single microphone. One camera will broadcast the full commission during meetings for those online. A second camera will be installed facing the audience so those online can see those attending in-person, and an additional screen will give those attending in-person a

view of the Zoom interface. “All the meetings will also be on Zoom, Clark said. The core of the system is already installed, and has been tested, Clark noted. “I’m sure it will be awkward at first,” she added. “I’m confident it will be ready on July 7,” the next meeting of the board, she said. The commission also discussed the county’s extended pandemic emergency declaration, which they agreed should be allowed to expire as scheduled on July 21. The declaration acknowledges the county will follow state guidelines in regards to the emergency, and does not implement any restrictions

or policies of its own and will therefore have no impact after state restrictions are lifted. COVID-19 updates from North Central Public Health and Unified Command, which have led off commission meetings since March 2020, will also be moved off the regular agenda. At the height of the pandemic, the commission met weekly to hear the updates, but have since resumed their regular meeting schedule. Updates on the pandemic and vaccination efforts will now be made “as needed,” the board agreed.

PROJECT Improvements planned

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advanced automation system for the plant’s operations, as well as surface repairs and replacement of older components. Outside the plant, contractors replaced approximately 1,750 linear feet of existing 10-inch sewer lines with newer and larger 18-inch lines, replaced older lines with newer lines the same size, and rehabilitated 22 existing manholes. Hons said the improvements have been in the works and been planned for nearly 10 years. All told, the improvements will mark an increase in solids capacity from 20-30%, he said. “It’s nice to see all that work led to these

improvements,” said Hons. As Hons gets set to spend more time with his family upon retirement, the City of Bingen named Brian Zabel as the person to take up the mantle as one of two operators of the plant, along with Buckland. Zabel has worked with the city since the project got underway as the project inspector. “The aim and goal of [the project] is to be able to maintain with consideration for growth,” Zabel said. The project was funded through a variety of sources, with both cities of Bingen and White Salmon pitching in, along with a loan from the Washington Department of Ecology. Vancouver-based firm Gray & Osborne is leading the engineering services of the project, while TEK Construction was hired for work on the project.

Forth launches CRuSE Program

HOOD RIVER — Forth is hosting a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the launch of The CRuSE Project, a program for community carsharing in Hood River, at 11 a.m. on June 24 at the Hood River Fire Department, 1785 Meyer Parkway. In-person remarks will be provided by program partners including Kate McBride (mayor, City of Hood River), Maddy Reznick (Columbia Willamette Lock Cities Coalition), Etta Lockey (vice president, Pacific Power), Patty Fink (executive director, Columbia Area Transit), and Kelly Yearick (senior program manager, Forth). The Clean Rural Shared

Electric Mobility (CRuSE) Project is a three-year program to demonstrate a financially sustainable model for plug-in electric vehicle (PEV) carsharing in rural communities. It is funded by the U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy’s Vehicle Technologies Office. The CRuSE Project launched on June 8, providing residents and visitors access to five Honda Clarity Electric vehicles throughout Hood River at affordable housing sites, the city center, and tourist areas. Two cars are placed on City of Hood River property and one can be utilized by city

employees for business-related travel. A third car is placed near the waterfront area of Hood River to provide easy access for tourists visiting the Columbia Gorge. The public is invited to begin reserving these vehicles at the following locations: Columbia Parking Lot, Hood River Fire Station, and along the waterfront near the Gorge Paddling Center. Two additional cars are placed at affordable housing sites in Hood River owned by Columbia Cascade Housing Corporation, which includes low-income and non-English speaking residents. These vehicles will be available to reserve later this summer.

This project is made possible with contributions, collaboration and input of many local organizations including Columbia Area Transit, Columbia Cascade Housing Corporation, Pacific Power, the Hood River County Energy Council, local governments, and Mid-Columbia Economic Development District staff.

Skamania County Announces Special Candidate Filing Period

The Skamania County Auditor’s Office will open a special three-day candidate filing period from June 29 through July 1 for offices that did not have filings during the regular filing period. Online filing will not be available during this special filing period, so candidates wishing to file for office must do so in person at the Auditor’s Office during business hours (7:30 a.m. to 5:30

p.m.) from June 29 to July 1. Offices open for this special filing period include: Mt. Pleasant School District (Director Position No. 2), Mill A School District (Director Position No. 1), and Stevenson-Carson School District (Director Position No. 1). A complete list of offices and positions open for filing during the three-day period is available at the Auditor’s

Office, located at 240 N.W. Vancouver Ave., Room 27, in Stevenson, or online at www.skamaniacounty.org/elections. For more information and questions, voters and potential candidates can call the Elections Department at 509-427-3730 or send an email to elections@co.skamania.wa.us.