

Wasco County to seek support from Gorge Commission

By Mark Gibson
Columbia Gorge News

THE DALLES — Wasco County Commissioners will seek to “turn the page and go forward” in their relationship with the Columbia River Gorge Commission even as they seek to address systemic problems and lack of support for the county’s role in land use planning, enforcement and management, the board agreed during a work session June 16.

The Gorge’s National Scenic Area (NSA) has been in federal protection since 1986. New proposed revisions to the NSA plan include added protection for streams and wetlands and new guidelines for farm stands, wineries, short-term rentals, recreation developments and dwellings, among others. The revisions will go into effect as soon as each county adopts the regulations into their respective ordinances.

In May of this year, officials in Wasco and Hood River counties expressed frustration with the significant costs associated with managing NSA rules, as compared to the reimbursement counties receive from the state. At a May 5 public hearing, the Gorge Commission, Friends of the Columbia River Gorge and others associated with

the NSA offered to work with the county in integrating the new NSA guidelines into county planning documents, and advocate for additional state funding.

As of June 16, the county has 270 days to complete the process, under state law, and planning staff at Wasco County expressed frustration at the lack of follow through on those promises of support.

A draft letter detailing county concerns and frustrations intended for the Gorge Commission was reviewed during a work session held in-person at the Wasco County Fairgrounds.

Commissioner Kathy Schwartz, while acknowledging the problems and frustrations of the situation, said she found the letter overly divisive. “I’ve only had two and a half years [working with the Gorge Commission], but I’ve observed problems and both sides,” said Schwartz, the newest member of the Wasco County board of commissioners. “I think we will be more successful if we turn the page a bit and just move forward. I think the tone needs to be more relationship building. This letter is exactly the opposite.”

She agreed, however, that the Gorge Commission needed to follow through with the support offered the county

when the commission agreed to undertake correlating county and NSA land use regulations and guidelines.

County administrative officer Tyler Stone noted that planning staff has requested support of the Gorge Commission to address conflicts between county, state and federal guidelines, but their requests had met a stone wall of silence. “We have actively tried” to get Gorge Commission support, he said, even offering to pay for facilitated mediation, but those efforts have failed. “We have put in thousands of hours into this,” he said of the planning update process. “We have tried [to get their support], it’s just not there.”

Commission Chair Scott Hege said, “We need to say [in the letter] that we are moving forward on the commitment we made, but it’s a two way street — they also need to move forward on this. They [the Gorge Commission] need to sit down with the planners and work through the problems.”

Gorge commission staff is not the problem, they are working will with county planners, noted Commissioner Kramer.

“It’s not the staff, it’s the board,” Kramer said. Having negotiated with the Gorge Commission for many years,



A sign for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area greets northbound drivers heading into The Dalles on Highway 197. Large portions of Wasco County are bound by county, state and federal land use laws and guidelines, all of which are managed by local county planners. Mark B. Gibson photo

Kramer said he was not confident a request from the county would be effective, regardless of the tone of the letter. “They’re going to throw it out the window without reading it,” he said. “It goes on and on for years and we are still not going forward. It’s crazy.”

Hege agreed the Gorge Commission board had “not been supportive of some of the things we need to do.”

They needed to respond to county land use planners when changes or clarifications were brought to them, and they were not doing so.

He said those who support the Gorge Commission should also be advocating for funding to cover the significant investment Gorge counties are making in implementing NSA rules. “It’s reasonable to be paid for the work we are doing. I want the

ends to meet on this program. It is a state and federal program and we are having to subsidize it.”

In the end all three commissioners agreed to have Schwartz revise the letter in hopes of inspiring improved relations and better results going forward. The revised letter will then be brought before the board for approval.

TD council approves housing code amendments

By Alana Lackner
Columbia Gorge News

THE DALLES — The Dalles City Council voted Monday to pass an ordinance amending many sections of the city’s land use code to increase housing supply in The Dalles.

The ordinance, General Ordinance No. 21-1384, updated the city housing code to fit with state standards, including House Bill 2001. According to the official website of the state of Oregon, HB 2001 is a statewide bill that intends to increase housing in Oregon by permitting middle housing — a term used to describe a range of attached or clustered homes such as duplexes and triplexes — in

residential areas. Before the bill, these types of housing were previously outlawed in many neighborhoods.

In order to comply with and build upon HB 2001, the ordinance updated many of the city’s policies regarding middle housing:

- Duplexes will be exempt from all maximum density requirements in The Dalles.
- Detached duplexes will be allowed, as will duplexes with side entries.
- Minimum off-street parking will be reduced for all middle housing including townhomes.
- Developers will be encouraged to convert single-family housing to duplexes, and requirements and standards for this transition will be created.

• The temporary family hardship provision — which permits an RV or manufactured home to stay on a lot when a nearby family member is needed due to a physical or mental disability or impairment — will be allowed for duplexes.

• The minimum lot size for duplexes can no longer be any larger than the minimum lot size for single-family homes.

• Duplexes will no longer have subjective design requirements like “traditional” or “appearance of a single house.”

city from growing outwards.

Several community members attending the meeting spoke out in support of the ordinance. No community members spoke in opposition.

The city council approved the ordinance unanimously.

In other business, the city council voted 4-1 to opt into the servicing group created by State Accident Insurance Fund (SAIF) and Citycounty Insurance Services (CIS). The Dalles already has workers compensation through SAIF, but joining the servicing group will allow them to receive a 9% discount.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Subdivision lots platted

THE DALLES — Four riverfront lots are among 16 lots approved by the Wasco County Board of Commission Wednesday for a new phase of the Lone Pine Village subdivision east of The Dalles just west of The Dalles Bridge over the Columbia River.

The new lots are the second phase of a three-phase development of the subdivision. Development of the property has been underway for more than 10 years.

Also approved was the second and final phase of Park Place, located west of Sorosis Park off scenic drive in the area of 20th Street and Radio Way. The second phase includes 20 additional residents lots. The first phase of 13 lots have mostly been built.

USFS contracts with Wasco County for law enforcement

The United States Forest Service entered a patrol agreement with the Wasco County Sheriff’s office that allows them to patrol Mount Hood National Forest roads and lands within Wasco County. The annual intergovernmental agreement saw a \$10,000 increase in payment to the county, for a total of approximately \$28,000. “That’s a good thing,” Sheriff Lane Magill said. “We are expecting a very busy year (in the forest) this summer.” Otherwise, it is the same agreement entered into in prior years, he said.

SOLAR 100-megawatt project proposed

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authority to apply conditions of approval of the project, such as implementing environmental mitigating tasks for the developers to follow.

The proposed project, should it be granted approval through the county planning department, would be the second solar facility sited in Klickitat County. The first, Lund Hill Solar Project, is also owned by Aurora Solar and sited nearby. Lund Hill Solar Project, once construction is completed, is slated to generate up to 150-megawatts of electricity — at the time of approval, it was the largest solar energy installation in the state by a magnitude of more than five.

Although the EOZ code does not spell it out, based on work done before

approval of Lund Hill Solar Project, planning officials could request public comment on the project. Lund Hill Solar Project received comment from federal, state and county agencies, homeowners, and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation before its approval was announced in September 2019.

Based on the comments received, Lund Hill Solar Project received 63 separate conditions of approval, such as requiring the company to prepare and implement a process for protection and for unanticipated discovery of cultural resources, as well as traffic and environmental mitigating directives.

A community meeting on the proposed project was held earlier this month at

Bickleton Grange Hall, and another is planned for the near future.

Avangrid Renewables Communications Manager Morgan Pitts said the company appreciated the opportunity to provide information to the community.

“We have a long history in Klickitat County, beginning with our Big Horn Wind Farm in 2006 and continuing through to the Lund Hill Solar project, currently under construction,” Pitts said. “Bluebird is an excellent site with a good solar resource and proximity to existing necessary infrastructure. We appreciate the strong partnerships we have built with members of the community through the years and look forward to making this project a success.”

TD city approves reconstruction of W. 15th St.

By Alana Lackner
Columbia Gorge News

THE DALLES — The Dalles City Council approved a contract for the reconstruction of West 15th Street by Granite Construction at their meeting on Monday.

The contract is for \$629,629 and encompasses three blocks

between Liberty Street and Garrison.

The reconstruction will include the implementation of a new base for the street, repaving and the construction of new ADA compliant ramps on certain sections of sidewalk.

The project will cost \$40,227 more

than was originally budgeted. This is because there was a section of curb and gutter that needed to be rebuilt to improve drainage throughout the area.

The needed \$40,000 will come out of the fund for the scenic drive

stabilization project next year, which currently has \$400,000. Next fiscal year’s budget has \$140,000 unallocated, which they will use to pay the amount back into the fund.

A start date for the construction was not given.

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Historic GRANADA THEATRE

Dinner, Trivia, Entertainment at the Historic Granada Theatre.

Upcoming events include:

Heat wave this week will force us to cancel movies this coming weekend. The Thing! To be rescheduled!

July 2 National Act Concert! Love & Theft w/band! Only \$60 tix! Also a dinner option!

July 3 John Wayne, North To Alaska!!!

And just announced: Legends in The Dalles Music Festival featuring Marshall Tucker Band

July 17th, outdoors at Lewis & Clark Festival Park The Dalles.

And for all info crosscheck @ GranadaTheatredalles.com.

“I have appreciated everything. They take fantastic care of my mom. The people there are friendly, and I brag about them all the time.”

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