

# Armed subject shoots out street lamps in HR

At approximately 3:17 a.m., Hood River Police officers responded to a nuisance call regarding a subject yelling and throwing fireworks in the 100 block of E. State Street. Hood River Police responded to the area and found a male, later identified as Herbert Victor Blount, 38, of Tyrone, Ga., running with a shotgun. Blount began running through downtown while police attempted to give him verbal commands, said a press release. Blount continued to fire multiple rounds at streetlights as he ran away. Police officers, with assistance from the Hood River

County Sheriff's Office and Oregon State Police, began searching for Blount. Law enforcement officers located Blount near Sherman and Seventh Street; he continued to fire rounds, and one deputy was hit by shotgun pellets. The deputy was not injured, said the press release. There were also no injuries to the general public reported. Police and deputies lost sight of Blount and organized a widespread search as more resources came on scene. Personnel from The Dalles City Police and Sherman County Sheriff's Office

assisted as well. Blount was located by a sheriff's office airplane on the Indian Creek Trail at 5:41 a.m. Blount was found deceased from an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound. No shots were fired by law enforcement during this incident. Those with information related to the incident are asked to call Hood River Police Detective Erin Mason at 541-387-5256. This is an ongoing investigation.



A shattered street lamp globe lays in pieces on the sidewalk in Hood River. Photo courtesy William Cotter

# Puncture Vine control advised

City of The Dalles Codes Enforcement is addressing properties with puncture vine, commonly known as goat head, in violation of The Dalles Municipal Code. City codes enforcement officer advises property owners to not mow or use a weed trimmer to remove puncture vine as it will spread seeds and increase growth of this noxious vegetation. When removing puncture vine, dig up plants carefully, bag them carefully and dispose of them in the trash. Spraying with chemical control for puncture vine will reduce spreading.



# Scenic Waterway

Since the spring, tour boats have resumed operations on the Columbia River, and on-shore excursions to Gorge museums, restaurants and other entertainment are now back as well. Above, an American Cruise Line ship is met by a quartet of buses while docked at the Port of Hood River in a panorama by Mark B. Gibson, Columbia Gorge News. American Cruise Lines offer three cruise itineraries as far upstream as Clarkston, Wash. One also includes the Snake River. At right, the Queen of the West heads downstream past The Dalles July 4, with St. Peter's Landmark and Mount Hood in the background. Queen of the West is also operated by American Cruise Lines and has been renovated with upgrades to passenger staterooms, lounges, galley and the engine room. Photo Courtesy Gary Elkinton



# School board passes 2026 Strategic Plan

By Trisha Walker  
Columbia Gorge News

Six of the seven Hood River County School Board members met at Parkdale Elementary July 14 for its regularly scheduled board meeting. The board unanimously elected Chrissy Reitz as new chair and Julia Garcia-Ramirez to continue as vice chair for the coming school year. The meeting was a first for Jen Kelly, at large member, and Barb Hosford, position 2. Pre-meeting, the board spent time in executive session discussing the 2026 Strategic Plan, which was up for a vote that evening. "We had a great work session today and I want to take a moment to thank the board for robust conversation and engagement as we dug in on some pretty tough topics — equity, planning, facilities, goal setting and how to operate effectively as a board. I look forward to our

continued collaboration and work throughout the school year," said Superintendent Rich Polkinghorn. A recording of the work session is available for public viewing at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBaVxdaz-ow](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBaVxdaz-ow). The board later approved adoption of the plan by a 4-1 vote — voting "aye" were Garcia-Ramirez, Corinda Hankins Elliott, Reitz and Brandi Sheppard; voting "nay" was Kelly, with Hosford abstaining. Polkinghorn said the Vision 2020 strategic plan had been sunsetted at the end of the 2020 school year. Work on the 2026 plan began in October with a task force of school administrators, and then opened up for input by district stakeholders staff, students and parent groups. From March until May, those ideas were developed into seven goals, each with action steps: Identify, target and close opportunity and access

gaps; graduate students from high school ready for college, career and community success; implement relevant, rigorous and engaging learning opportunities; establish high expectations for academic and personal growth for every student; strengthen partnerships with families and the community; prioritize health and safety as a critical component of school success; and develop a highlight qualified, diverse and culturally proficient workforce. "I just want to say thank you to everyone who was involved in this strategic planning, I know that it involves not only staff from the district but volunteers; there were representatives from the

board," said Garcia-Ramirez. "It takes a lot of work and looking at every single piece and everything we do in the district, so I just want to commend you and thank you for that work." She then moved to approve the plan as presented; Hankins Elliott seconded the motion. Later, Kelly said, "My voting no was not the way I wanted to start out my school board career, but I felt like I had to do it for a number of reasons ... I believe we're on the right track and we're doing good things. I voted no, however, because I think the plan uses some politically loaded terms and ideology and I believe their inclusion is unnecessary and will propagate unnecessary

divisiveness among families and students in our district and my goal is for inclusiveness of everyone in our district regardless of their politics, skin color, culture, or what have you. My goal is to establish transparency and maintain respect and trust from all of our stakeholders." "There's some things I've been studying the last six months that put me forward into the motion of abstaining my vote today — that may have surprised you, but I know the work that's being done is incredible, but I just think we can be better," said Hosford. "And so that was my vote. It has nothing to do with content, it has a lot to do with where I am, representing my constituents here in the

valley." Said Reitz, "It was really hard to end last year without having a new plan in place because I really felt we kind of were floating and it was time, it had been five years. And we've changed, a lot, in five years. We should have new and updated goals, and places we want to be. So thank you to your whole staff and everyone who participated in creating the strategic plan that I think is really exciting for our district and the kids in our community. It really addresses the special needs of every single one of our kids that, unfortunately, sometimes in education in the past, not everybody did get to have that individualized thought."

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