

Forest parking fees considered

HOOD RIVER — The Hood River County Board of Commissioners is considering an ordinance to establish a parking permit program for Post Canyon. If adopted, designated fee parking zones on county forest land would be identified with the goal of managing recreational use in the county's tree farm, according to a press release from the county.

A public hearing on the proposed resolution is scheduled for the Oct. 18 meeting of the Hood River County Board of Directors.

Fee parking zones would be added to properties in county forestlands near popular recreation areas including Post Flats, Seven Streams, Family Man, Binns Hill, Kingsley Reservoir and Pinemont.

Zones would be clearly established by signs and information. Revenue from the program would be dedicated to support the County

Tree Farm recreational use and maintenance of the trail system.

Annual or daily parking permits would be purchased for \$30 or \$5 respectively, valid for all county fee parking zones between dawn and dusk. It is expected that permits would be available for purchase online as well as with one or two vendors in town. A kiosk to purchase daily permits may also be considered.

Permits would be required year-round for all hours that the zones are open for all licensed vehicles, including motorcycles or motorbikes.

Parking validation numbers or permits would need to be clearly displayed through vehicle windshields or on vehicles without windshields.

Failure to comply with parking fees would be subject to warning or citation. The County would operate, manage and provide oversight

of the program, including investigating observed or reported violations, issuing warnings or citations and general enforcement of the program.

Daily and annual fees will be established within the county fee schedule, which is reviewed as necessary by the Board of Commissioners.

A fee parking program has been discussed by the county with input from recreational trail and forest advisory committees over the past year. A first reading of the ordinance occurred at the Sept. 20 board of commissioners meeting.

A second reading and public hearing will occur at the Oct. 18 meeting which begins at 6 p.m. A decision is expected to be made by the board this fall and the program could begin in spring of 2022.

For more information, visit hoodrivercounty.gov.



Parking fees have been proposed for popular trails in Hood River County forestlands. The second of two public hearings on the proposal is scheduled for 6 p.m. Oct. 18. Contributed photo

Bingen City Council enacts water payment plan

By Jacob Bertram
Columbia Gorge News

Bingen water customers may be eligible for a payment plan on late water bills.

Under an ordinance approved by Bingen City Councilors at their Oct. 5 meeting, water customers who are 30 days past due on water bills with a minimum charge of \$300 may request a payment plan if they meet the following criteria: If they are on a fixed income and receiving all applicable city discounts; if they incurred severe financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic, water leak, or medical emergency/condition; or if their water cannot be shut-off due to the health conditions of the persons living on the premises, or due to the age of the occupants.

Customers who meet the criteria will be receiving a letter from the city notifying

them past due bills, and two options they make take to satisfy the fees, according to Bingen Deputy City Clerk Dena Riggleman.

Customers can either contact Bingen City Hall to enroll in the payment plan program or contact WAGAP to enroll in a similar program, according to the letter sent out to city utility customers.

Under a WAGAP-Bingen partnership program, customers behind on water and sewer payments since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic may enroll in a CARES Act-funded program to fund their water and sewer debts.

Customers do not have to demonstrate hardship to receive funds under the Bingen-WAGAP partnership, nor to determine eligibility under the new payment plan program, Riggleman said.

The ordinance was enacted in conjunction with a statewide moratorium on

utility late fees and shutoffs that expired Sept. 30, said Riggleman.

"For the past 18 months, the city was not charging late fees or implementing water shut offs for past due utility accounts. However, the monthly base fees and water usage fees were assessed to the account each month," the letter said. "These balances will continue to compound if payments are not made on the account."

The basic terms of the payment plan, according to the ordinance, will require customers entering the payment plan to fully pay off their outstanding balance within one year; if a balance is outstanding past one year of the plan, minimum monthly payments will increase to \$100 until the balance is paid off.

Any variation of the terms of the arrangement must by

REFORM Officers risk decertification

Continued from page 1

standard," Mosbrucker wrote in the Sept. 20 essay.

Mosbrucker said the more stringent standard creates uncertainty when an officer can respond to a situation. That uncertainty, she said, has led to situations where officers will wait "around the corner" during a call for a mental health crisis. While before the changes it was law enforcement's responsibility to respond to such calls,

the new rules have made it more difficult for officers to intervene, and instead of an officer responding, she says it may be a social worker or fire and EMT services who approach a person during a crisis. That an unarmed first responder is the responsible party, she said, is putting them in harm's way.

"Some (law enforcement officers) will respond but they're risking decertification," Mosbrucker said. "They're trying to be there even though there's not a crime."

Mosbrucker admitted the Republican Party in Washington does currently not have the political power

to call a special session — which would require two-thirds of legislature's votes, or the governor's signature to proceed; however, her party is working on a suite of legislation to submit for consideration during next year's regular session. One priority for Mosbrucker is to see the reasonable suspicion standard back to practice; as well, she said she hopes to see more training options, more de-escalation tactics, and a return of community policing — "in which officers get out of their patrol cars every shift, engage with the public, and show how they are people who truly care about others."

Mid-Columbia Medical Center names new board trustee

THE DALLES — Healthcare executive Anthony Masciotra, Jr., MBA, CPA, has been elected to the board of trustees of Mid-Columbia Medical Center, effective immediately.

"I am so pleased to welcome Anthony to the board of trustees," said MCMC CEO Dennis Knox. "He brings a wealth of knowledge and perspective to our board and will be an incredible asset as we continue our work ensuring MCMC is meeting our community's growing health and wellness needs — now and in the future."

Masciotra is the chief executive officer of the Oregon Health & Science University Practice Plan, a 2,100-member group of physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants and other licensed independent

providers who are integral to all aspects of clinical care at OHSU. He also serves as chief ambulatory and professional practice officer at OHSU Health and is a member of the School of Medicine senior leadership team.

Prior to joining OHSU in 2016, he was CEO of UNM Medical Group, Inc., the faculty practice plan supporting the clinical providers and employees within the University of New Mexico's School of Medicine. Prior to that he served chief financial officer at UNM Cancer Center and has also for Lovelace Health Systems, Cigna Healthcare, Baystate Health Systems and Ernst &



Anthony Masciotra, Jr.

Young. Masciotra is a member of the Academic Medical Group Leadership Roundtable and the Group on Faculty Practice of the Association of American Medical Colleges and is a member of several professional organizations including the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, Medical Group Management Association and Healthcare Financial Management Association.

He earned a Master in Business Administration from the University of New Mexico Anderson School of Management and a bachelor's degree from the University of Connecticut.

Founded in 1901, Mid-Columbia Medical Center is a nationally recognized hospital dedicated to serving residents of The Dalles and its surrounding communities.

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