

Interest in early childhood education sought for Lyle, Dallesport area

By AMBER MARRA
The Enterprise

Three entities are exploring the possibility of bringing an Early Childhood and Education Assistance Program (ECEAP) back to serve the Lyle and Dallesport area, but are in need of qualifying parents to express interest first.

The Mid-Columbia Children's Council (MCCC), Lyle School District, and Educational Services District 112 have been working together to reestablish Lyle and Dallesport ECEAP.

That area's ECEAP was nixed when the arbitrary and across-the-board cuts known as the sequester took effect in 2013-2014. Now that the three entities are attempting to form a partnership to bring it back for next school year, income-eligible parents expressing interest in taking advantage of the program is vital to its return in Dallesport, according to Matthew Solomon, executive director of the MCCC.

"One big 'if' is if there is enough income-eligible children in that area. We need at least nine-to-10 kids that are eligible, or we can't go to the state to ask for the money for (ECEAP) because we can't justify the need," Solomon said.

To get the program started, there needs to be at least 10 income-eligible families expressing interest as soon as possible.

Income eligible parents of 3- or 4-year-old children should contact Julie Larson, parent-student community engagement specialist with the Lyle School District, immediately if interested. She can be reached at (509) 365-2211.

When it comes to ECEAP, "income eligible" means a family has to be 110 percent of the federal poverty level or below. For example, a family of four that makes \$26,235 per year would qualify as 110 percent of the federal poverty guideline and therefore be eligible for ECEAP.

According to Larson, children from outside the Lyle and Dallesport area would be accepted into the program, but they might not be eligible for transportation to the ECEAP facility, if it comes to fruition.

"Any child that's in foster care would be a priority, children with disabilities are welcome and we'd be ready to accommodate them, plus we would have bilingual staff," Larson said.

But all of that is dependent on a few things. As previously mentioned, the

school district, the MCCC, and ESD 112 need to know that there is a need for the return of an ECEAP in the Lyle-Dallesport area, then if 10 or more families do express interest the three entities have to apply for the funding from the state to form the program and get it going for next school year, according to Solomon.

"There's a lot of 'ifs.' If the state of Washington and the legislature provide us with funding for expansion of ECEAP we'd also have to see which particular design the funding could support. We're not sure if it would be a three-day model, like we run in Goldendale, or five days per week, which is unlikely unless they really increase the amount of funding we get per child," Solomon said.

Larson said programs like ECEAP and Head Start are important for 3- and 4-year-olds because it gets them ready to enter a structured learning environment.

"They develop really valuable social skills and they learn to interact with their peers and get a lot of really good exercise and support for their health, like meals, and they learn basic academics, like the alphabet and how to write their names, how to handle books and



Photo by Amber Marra

POSEIDON ESSEX and Ella Zaugg explored the letter F by creating flowers in Shelly Spadaro's kindergarten class at Dallesport Elementary last Thursday. The Lyle School District, Mid-Columbia Children's Council, and Educational Services District 112 are exploring options for bringing an Early Childhood and Education Assistance Program (ECEAP) back to the Lyle and Dallesport area. ECEAP serves as an environment where 3- and 4-year-olds can learn basic social and academic skills before entering the kindergarten classroom.

that school and learning is fun," she said.

Larson hopes that if ECEAP is established it can be close to Dallesport Elementary School so the children in the program can occasionally get a taste for

what goes on in a kindergarten classroom before initiating their academic career.

"Some kids are anxious when they hear about school, so it can reduce that. The nice thing about being so

close to Dallesport Elementary would be that kids can interact and get a sense of what kindergarten will be like, which is all part of preparing them to be successful in school," Larson said.

City, county officials restart riverfront park discussion

By SVERRE BAKKE
The Enterprise

Is a riverfront park in White Salmon's future?

City and Klickitat County officials are in the initial stages of discussing the possibility of a lease or a lease-purchase agreement for some 800 feet of undeveloped riverfront acreage that sits between the Columbia River shoreline and the BNSF Railway main line east of the Hood River Bridge.

Mayor David Poucher made a new pitch to the County Board of Commissioners on Jan. 6 concerning the narrow strip of land that the county now holds through tax foreclosure. City officials wanted the County Board to give the city the land a few years ago. Now, it wants the county to entertain a lease or lease-purchase agreement

for the property, contingent on the city's ability to secure necessary agreements for access to the water.

"What we would like to do is some kind of long-term purchase agreement," Poucher told The Enterprise last week. "The City Council likes the idea because it could offer a range of recreational opportunities for the residents of the community."

According to the city's Shorelines Master Plan, the property in question is designated as a Conservancy Environment, "and could only be used for recreation," Poucher said.

City officials approached the County Board a few years ago with a request that the county deed the property to the city as the site for a future park. The County Board balked at giving the land away because of the amount

owing in taxes to local junior taxing district. Commissioners took the position that the city had to pay the back taxes, interest, and penalties owing on the land. The city declined the offer because it did not have money available to acquire the property.

Commissioner David Sauter of Lyle said the County Board was "ambivalent toward anything other than a sale" when city officials first broached the idea.

Since then, the County Board has reconsidered and has indicated to Mayor Poucher that it is "open to the idea of a lease or sale" because "it would be nice to get the taxes paid back."

At this juncture of the preliminary talks, "the ball is in the city's court," Sauter said. "But I'm pretty confident something is going to happen if the city can work out ac-

cess with the tribe and the railroad."

Poucher said City Administrator Pat Munyan Jr. will be meeting on the ground with BNSF representatives in the second week of April to discuss access through BNSF facilities to the waterfront.

"That's the big one," Poucher said, "Can we get across the railroad side of it?"

He said BNSF has preliminarily indicated its interest in working with the city to resolve its access issues.

"What we're hearing from the railroad folks is, 'You know, this sounds doable. Let's go look at, scope it out, talk about it, and see where we can go,' Poucher noted. "We're keeping our fingers crossed and trying to build a relationship with BNSF to help us get this done."

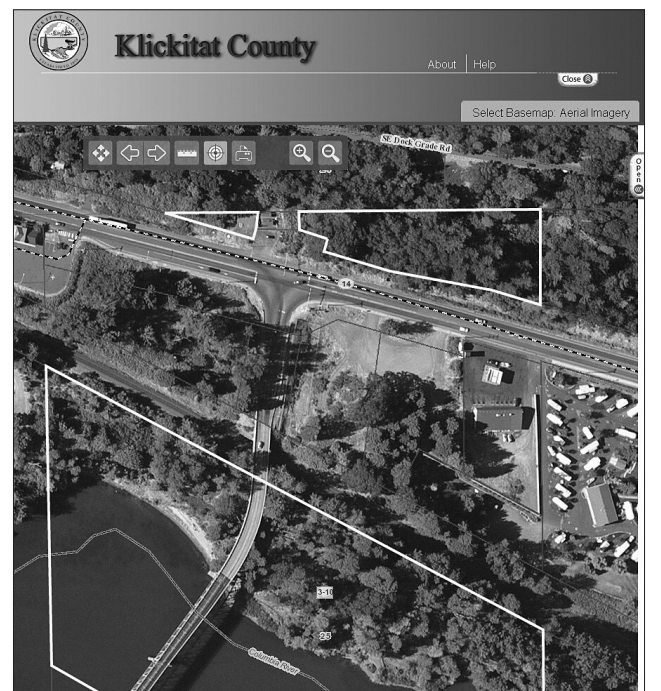


Photo courtesy of Klickitat County

PHOTO outlines property where the City of White Salmon would like to put a riverfront park. Discussions with the county and BNSF are in preliminary stage.

First government-owned pot shop opens in North Bonneville

The North Bonneville Public Development Authority (NBPDA) announced the opening of The Cannabis Corner, the nation's first government owned and operated recreational marijuana store on March 7.

Operating under Washington's marijuana law, I-502, and licensed by the Washington State Liquor Control Board, The Cannabis Corner sells a wide variety of marijuana, marijuana-infused edibles and liquids, and related glass paraphernalia. The NBPDA will use the rev-

enues from the store to support public safety within the city of North Bonneville.

North Bonneville Mayor Don Stevens says, "The city formed the NBPDA to ensure that marijuana sales are done in a way that maximizes the benefits to our community while minimizing any negative consequences." While the city looks to benefit from the endeavor, he says "the revenues will certainly be helpful, but our first priority is public safety."

Noting that the PDA regu-

larly sends representatives to Skamania County's drug prevention committee, Board President Tim Dudley expressed his desire for the NBPDA to be, "a strong proponent for responsible use of marijuana through education of our customers and an alliance with drug treatment efforts."

Mr. Dudley went on to explain that "the NBPDA is an entirely separate legal entity from the city," but that "it can serve as a model for other cities in Oregon and Washington who want to

take control of the debate and situation rather than sitting on the sidelines."

The store will be open seven days each week, from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.

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