

Council takes bold step toward managing Underwood Community Center

By THE SKAMANIA COUNTY PIONEER

Editor's note: This story was originally published in the April 15 edition of the Skamania County Pioneer.

Community members in Underwood plan to roll up their sleeves and get down to brass tacks now that they've secured an agreement with Skamania County to operate the Underwood Community Center.

Skamania County plans to turn over management of the building when the county commissioners approve a license agreement Tuesday, April 14, as part of their consent agenda.

The council began negotiating with Public Works Director Larry Douglass within several weeks of learning that the center would be closed, effective Jan. 31. A meeting by the council on Jan. 15 galvanized residents to seek the agreement to manage the building.

Council Vice Chair Darla Johnston signed the agreement on Tuesday, April 7, following a brief workshop by the county commission to go over the details.

The agreement calls for the community council to pay the county \$1 per year in rent for the next two years with a provision that the term could be extended annually. The council would have complete control over rates, scheduling, maintenance and billing. However,

the county could use the building for public meetings without charge.

The agreement doesn't include the post office, rental house and community garden, which will each continue existing agreements or leases with the county.

The council plans to explore options for raising revenue to operate the facility, such as seeking voter approval of a parks and recreation district, Johnston said. Community council past president Sally Newell said the organization plans to celebrate the new licensing agreement sometime in the coming months. One resident has already donated workers to prune fruit trees on the site as well as do other spring cleanup.

"There is an enormous outpouring of support by our community and the volunteers are anxious to work together to make this adventure highly successful," Johnston said.

The community council was scheduled to meet at 6:30 p.m., Thursday, April 16 at the center. Johnston said attendees would hear a progress report on the tasks assigned volunteers and the details of the agreement. She said more volunteers are being sought for the effort.

"The Short-Term Committee is setting up committees to oversee the various tasks with volunteers initially, but we hope to be able to hire a paid administrator soon,"

Johnston said. "The Long-Term Committee is already at work planning the next steps for sustainability."

She said Community Enrichment for Klickitat County (CEKC) has been an invaluable asset by putting the UCC under its 501c (3) non-profit status. The council will be able to use its liability insurance. Douglass said that was a significant issue for the county.

Johnston said the council plans to have a website developed so people can reserve the building for their events. The council will also need to determine rental fees and other details.

"We still have a lot of stuff to figure out," Newell said.

The center was closed effective Jan. 31 in response to a budget shortfall. Douglass said turning the center over to the council will not only save the county money but the effort could be used as a framework for other communities to manage county park facilities.

"We're working to get the building up and going," Johnston said.

The building has only been used by the council for meetings focused on the management agreement since being closed in January.

The agreement with the county requires it to do any major maintenance and repair work, including structural, roof, plumbing and electrical work. The council

would be responsible for all regular maintenance of the building and grounds.

The agreement also includes guidelines for approved uses of the building such as for aerobics classes, craft shows and educational classes. The council is prohibited from approving rentals of the building for certain activities such as boxing events, amusement rides and professional wrestling tournaments.

The council wanted a two-year lease with an option to extend year to year so it could seek approval of a ballot measure to create a parks and recreation district. Upon formation of the parks district, it could enact a property tax to support the management of the facility.

"The community is really gungho and really volunteering to help," Johnston said.

In other community news, the Underwood Community Gardens hosts its third annual Open House, 8 a.m. to noon, Saturday, April 25. The gardens are located behind the U.S. Post Office in the Underwood Park on School House Road at the corner of Cook Underwood Road.

The event includes a plant sale and seed swap. Bird house painting and sidewalk chalk drawing will be available for kids. People will also staff small farm and garden booths. Some of the farm and garden vendors include Blue Moon Garden, Gaiter Creek Gardens, The With-



Photo by the Skamania County Pioneer

SALLY NEWELL, left, watches as Darla Johnston, vice chairperson of the Underwood Community Council, signs an agreement with Skamania County to manage the Underwood Community Center.

ered Herb and Quercus Farm. For more information, email underwoodcommunitygardens.ucg@gmail.com or check out its Facebook page. The Underwood Fire Department also holds its annual pancake breakfast, beginning at 7 a.m. Saturday, April 25.

Washougal mayor to camp by railroad tracks

Sean Guard will gather data about train frequency

By DAWN FELDHAUS
Camas-Washougal Post-Record staff writer

Editor's note: This story was originally published in the April 14 edition of the Camas-Washougal Post-Record.

Washougal Mayor Sean Guard plans to spend a week camping at 32nd and Main streets, to record the number of trains that travel through the city.

He will arrive in a travel trailer Friday by noon to also observe the type of freight the trains carry and how long they block and back up traffic onto state Route 14.

"Much of my concern is with how many long trains of coal and Bakken crude oil are passing through our city, but this is also just as much about the increasing train traffic itself, regardless of their loads,"

Guard said. "Washougal is literally split, north and south, by the Burlington Northern Santa Fe rail line. When long trains are passing through, they can

block all of our at-grade rail crossings at the same time," he added. "This just underscores our need for a second railroad overpass."

Guard, who has invited BNSF Chairman Matthew Rose to join him during the week, has received a call from Gus Melonas, BNSF regional director of public affairs, in Seattle, to meet in Washougal.

Guard said he has permission from a land owner next to the tracks to stay on their property.

"It was purely my idea, to get accurate information on what is passing through our city and what the impacts are," he said.

Guard will welcome visits from local residents, business leaders and other elected officials who want to talk about rail safety and other issues facing the city.

Rep. Liz Pike (R-Camas) told Guard she would like to camp for 24 hours in a tent by the tracks this weekend, unless there are votes to make in the State House of Representatives. The legislature's regular session is expected to end Sunday, April 26.

A Washougal City Council resolution, approved in February, expresses concern to Gov. Jay Inslee and the Washington State Energy Facilities Site Evaluation Council about oil export facility projects and an increased risk of catastrophic accidents and train traffic.

It also authorizes the city attorney to intervene in the EFSEC process "for the Southwest Washington proposed project or any other oil terminal project under consideration."

The resolution says the safety and traffic impacts of oil trains on the City of Washougal must be mitigated by measures such as eliminating at-grade crossings and providing funding for an incident response plan, enhanced safety equipment and safety training.



Sean Guard

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UPCOMING EVENTS

April 25th & 26th
Art of the Gorge

May 2nd
David Crowe Comedy Night

May 10th
Mothers Day Brunch

May 17th
Mad Hatters Tea

July 19th
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August 14th
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	3	4				5		6
7		8			9			3
		3		1				2
	2						4	
6				9		8		
5			6			2		9
4	6					3	1	
		2		8	7	6		

Fill in all 81 squares on the puzzle with numbers 1 to 9. You can use each number 1-9 only once in each nine square section, in each horizontal line of nine squares, and in each vertical column of nine squares. The puzzle is completed when you correctly fill every square.

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Kayaker drowns on White Salmon River

A kayaker lost his life in the White Salmon River on April 12. Sergeant Joe Riggers of the Klickitat County Sheriff's Department took the call at 1:44 p.m. A kayaker was reported stuck in the water and people at the scene were unable to free him. Rescuers eventually extracted the man and performed CPR, but attempts to revive him were unsuccessful. The man has been identified as Dennis Brown, 63, from British Columbia.

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