

Hood River News

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Photo by Kirby Neumann-Rea

ARROW POINTS the way: make sure you sign your ballot.

Time to Vote

Election is Tuesday, but Thursday is also a critical day for ballots

The May 19 ballot covers a lot of ground for one piece of paper.

Local elections of all stripes are covered in the Special Districts Election: schools, ports, CGCC, water and sanitary districts, and more.

If you have not yet mailed in or delivered your ballot, it's important to note that Thursday, May 14, is the last day ballots can be put in the mail with any assurance they will arrive in time for counting on Tuesday.

You could try mailing it Friday or Saturday, but you will be taking a chance on non-tabulation.

If you haven't stamped your envelope and mailed it by tomorrow, you'll need to take it to either of the two drop-off locations (and any Hood River County voter can drop it at either place): the Hood River County Building, Sixth and State, or at Cascade City Hall.

Each ballot must be filled out according to instructions and the outside envelope needs to be signed on the line indicated.

Sign only your ballot in the manner you are registered; signing for someone else could nullify that ballot.

All ballots must be in the hands of the Elections Department by 8 p.m. on May 19; postmarks don't count.

With no statewide races or ballot measures, no Congress members or presidents to vote for, the election is a relatively quiet one, but since these are local decisions to be made, it feels all the more important — and the only way anyone's vote does not count is if they do not cast it.

Our readers write

Vote Reitz

During the eight years I've known Chris Reitz, she has continually impressed me with her energy and enthusiasm for the kids in our community. One anecdote comes to mind. Several years ago, when the school district was undergoing yet another round of budget cuts—this one drastically reducing PE in our elementary schools—a community meeting was held during which Chris brought up the idea of creating a kids triathlon to raise money to provide supplemental PE programs in all the elementary schools.

I was excited at this prospect and even volunteered to help. Then, life got in the way for me—or at least that was my excuse. But Chris, despite being a busy mom of two kids (and already a member of the New Parent Services of the Gorge Advisory Board, as well as volunteering in the schools and for several local nonprofit endeavors), took the idea and ran with it. Rather than simply sitting around complaining about the cuts, Chris saw an opportunity to effect change, to make a positive difference in a less-than-optimal situation, and she rolled up her sleeves and got to it.

Anyone who has created a community-wide event from the ground up knows the herculean effort this takes. Chris dug in, recruited a bevy of able volunteers and together they worked tirelessly to create a fun, safe, inclusive event. The Gorge Kids Triathlon is now in its fifth year and has become not only a popular annual community event, but one that has raised over \$31,000 which has been divided among participating Hood River County elementary schools to be used for supplemental PE programs.

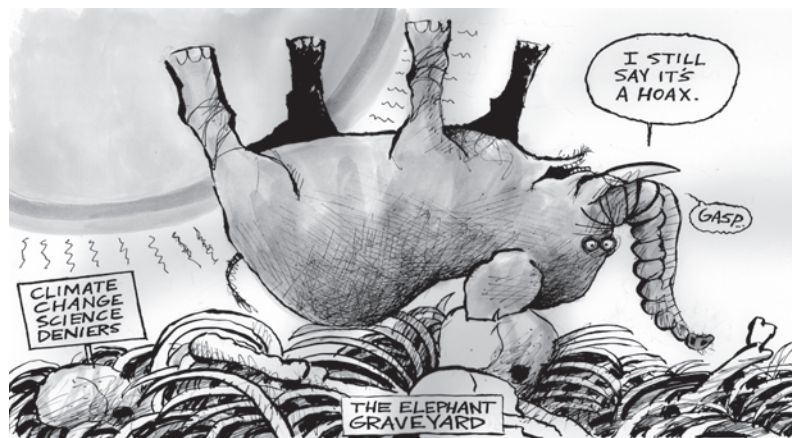
This year marks the 10th consecutive year that the Hood River County School District has been faced with budget cuts. Sadly, this seems to be the new normal. That is why we need Chris Reitz on the school board. She is smart, enthusiastic, hard-working, and able to think outside the box to find ways to make our schools better despite the "new normal." We need Chris Reitz, who has already been working hard for our kids and our schools, to join the other diligent members of the board as they work to meet the myriad challenges our schools face. We need Chris Reitz, who has proven she can roll up her sleeves and get to it.

Janet Cook
Hood River

Vote Kopecky

Please consider voting for Becky Kopecky for Position 6 for the Columbia Gorge Community College Board of Directors.

Becky is Director of Nursing at Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital. She has been involved in nursing, health care and nursing education for 20 years in the Gorge community. Her longstanding career and leadership skills, her ability to lead teams and problem solving experi-



ence, make her an ideal candidate.

Her understanding of workforce needs in the community will give great guidance on the board. Becky has a unique perspective on community college education. She started her nursing education in a community college and continued her education, obtaining a masters in nursing education. She brings a knowledge and appreciation of the needs of students to the table.

Please vote for Becky for Position 6. She will bring a wealth of experience, positive energy and exceptional ability to our board.

Marianne Durkan, RN
Hood River

Vote Valle

I'm hoping that everyone who hasn't yet voted will write in "Leticia Valle" (full name please) for the open position on the Transportation District slot. Leticia is a true emerging leader in our community (check out her show on Radio Tierra), a dedicated worker for social services, and would be a wonderful addition to the Transportation District.

Tina Castañares
Odell

Recommendations

I recently had the privilege of chairing the Columbia Gorge Community College budget committee. The committee spent 10 1/2 hours over three evenings carefully studying the proposed budget. They engaged in a spirited debate which did credit to the public budget process.

While the committee only has legal authority in approving a budget, we took the additional step of making two recommendations to the college board:

1) We recommended the board adopt a reserve policy and build those reserves to specified levels, restoring the college to sustainable operations.

2) We recommended the board direct staff to develop a budget next year in which institutional support (essentially administrative overhead) is more in line with the other community colleges in Oregon.

My personal hope is that the board and executive team take our recommendations very seriously. The underlying structural problems are very fixable, but only with direct action

from leadership. I believe a thoughtful reorganization is necessary to reduce overhead and focus limited dollars on classroom and student services. A streamlined, sustainable CGCC will be stronger, will restore public confidence, and will deliver even more effectively on its important mission.

Arthur Babitz
Hood River

Errors

I would like to correct two errors in your article printed May 6, 2015. The article was about the National Oral Health Conference at which Dr. Charles Haynie gave a lecture on community water fluoridation. The errors were by your reporter Patrick Mulvihill, not Dr. Haynie.

1. It does not cost \$6000 to fill a cavity. The \$6000 refers to the projected cost over a lifetime to maintain a tooth damaged by a cavity. Sequelae such as root canals, crowns, etc., are common and very expensive.

2. It does not cost three cents per gallon to provide a community with fluoridated water. Depending on the water system, the cost is between fifty cents and \$4 per citizen per year. Portland's estimated cost (rejected by voters) was about eighty-four cents per citizen per year. The Dalles spends about fifty cents per person per year for its community fluoridation system. Fifty cents a year times a life expectancy of 72 years equals \$36.

There are already too many misconceptions and untruths about this important public health issue.

F. Michael Clement,
DDS, retired
Hood River

Reitz for board

Chris Reitz is a perfect candidate for School Board. She is dedicated, smart, passionate and thoughtful. I have known Chris through a number of community venues. She is a consistent volunteer at the Hood River Farmers' Market. She is one of those folks that only needs to be asked to do something once, and will do a better job than was expected. Her calm and fun demeanor shines through with her interactions with kids, parents and strangers alike. She eagerly joined a market committee to brainstorm ways to increase at-

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The State of Columbia Gorge Community College

Employees 'speaking from a position of ignorance'

This guest editorial was submitted by the following members of the Columbia Gorge Community College Board of Education: MD Van Valkenburgh, Dave Fenwick, Charlotte Arnold, Charleen Cobb, Dr. Jim Willcox and Dr. Ernie Keller.

The citizens of Hood River and Wasco counties have invested time and money over decades in building up Columbia Gorge Community College so that is now recognized as one of the most successful small community colleges in the state and nation. Unfortunately, employee Tim Schell and some other instructors at our college are spreading false information to defame their CEO so that he would resign under the harassment. Even though our college president and his staff are credited with much of its success, these employees are either speaking from a position of ignorance ...

First, contrary to recent statements from Schell, there is no budget "crisis" at our college — just an annual budget process like all government institutions. This next fiscal year (starting July 1) there are relatively less support funds from the state. Sometimes there's more. Also, the president doesn't even set the budget and expenditures. The board and budget committee have that responsibility. The Chief Financial Officer has been involving ALL departments and individuals during countless meetings and open dialogue to help create the suggested budget for next year.

Second, the Hood River campus was never going to be shut down — that was misinformation. After approving this school year's budget a year ago, the CGCC board asked the president to prepare a list of possible revenue sources and expense cuts. Along with suggestions including possible layoffs and cutting classes was the potential savings of facilities closures, which the board subsequently dismissed.

Third, the board asked the president to build up reserves years ago in case of possible "rainy day" needs. During the great recession, the board and budget committee directed the president to use the reserve fund to serve the much higher enrollment of students looking for re-training. Enrollment always increases at colleges during economic down-

turns. Most other community colleges in the state didn't have the reserves so they cut employees and services BEFORE the enrollment increase. CGCC was able to delay cuts until AFTER the recession, when enrollment returned to more normal levels. That's why our college is cutting staff now. Many CGCC instructors and staff had jobs during the recession, which they wouldn't have had without the large reserve fund. CGCC graduated a record number of students during the recession who then got new jobs.

No longer content with merely voicing their rancor over not being able to choose their own boss a couple of years ago, Schell and these instructors have moved to force their opinions upon others, and are hurting the very institution they pretend to care about ... Should the community have confidence in them?

And in attempting to usurp the board's authority over the position of college president, they have not only drawn the negative attention of their superiors, but also the displeasure of the unpaid community representatives on the board.

As a business manager or owner, could you imagine having some of your employees under the protection of union contracts calling for your ouster, just because they didn't like you? This is one of the smallest community colleges in one of the smallest states, and not the Ivy-league private university they imagine themselves in. Schell and these employees are diminishing the reputation and value of the college we all locally own ...

Editor's note: this letter was written following a combination of phone calls and emails between the six board members listed. Board member Stu Watson was excluded from the process. The board members' original letter was published in The Dalles Chronicle on May 7 with three statements that, when questioned on Monday, M.D. Van Valkenburgh asked be removed as unfounded or overly harsh. Board member Charlotte Arnold, who is challenged on the May 19 ballot by Guy Fenner, said the letter was intended to "do something positive and give our students some confidence" in CGCC.

Board seems to care little about college's decline

By STU WATSON

It's nice to know that outgoing CGCC board member Dave Fenwick (in his endorsement letter May 9) applauds the commitment of three board candidates to standards of the Association of Community College Trustees. I assume he meant no disrespect, or insinuation to the contrary, about the other three candidates, myself included.

What I find troubling about Mr. Fenwick's letter is his open admission that he is leaving the board so he can apply for a job with the college. This, two days after he and five other board members signed an op-ed piece in The Dalles Chronicle — crafted without notice to me, or the public, which suggests a violation of Oregon Open Meetings Law — in which the writers thumbed their noses at the "no confidence" and "censure" votes by the faculty. Just a ploy in the run-up to contract talks, they said. They invited instructors to quit if they didn't like the way things are going, because the college could easily replace them.

One might wonder how effective a sitting board member can be if he is hoping for a positive reception to a job application after leaving office. ORS 244.040(1) prohibits public officials from using their official positions or offices to create a new employment opportunity.

Lately Mr. Fenwick has implied to me that I am not falling in line, and saluting as if that were a requirement of board service. He and several board members from Wasco County seem to believe that independent research and forming an opinion on more than the sanitized administrative report is unethical. Isn't that my job? Perhaps I should sleep through parts of meetings, as some of my colleagues do?

In the last two years, I have asked many associated with the college, "What's really going on?" In aggregate, I get a picture of a broken institution, low morale, a management focused on its own agenda and openly contemptuous of the board and faculty.

One example. The college awarded a new

three-year auditing contract to the firm that rated fifth in the college's own review process, bypassing the second-ranked firm, which bid \$108,000 less. The board approved the contract, but it was not given the evaluations or bids for comparison. A leaked document showed that we were snowed.

Information compiled by budget committee member Karen Fairchild showed that CGCC devotes 28 percent of its budget to "institutional support," while the rest of the state's community colleges average around 21 percent. The impact at CGCC means a loss of advisers and financial aid support that incoming students sorely need.

Yet given a chance to shift \$272,000 in the 2015-16 budget from administrative overhead to student services — which had been most heavily hit in the administration's budget proposal — six committee members, led by the Board members from Wasco County, effectively killed the idea.

College President Frank Toda recently told the budget committee "words matter." They do, indeed. Which is why I was distressed to hear in March from the student body president that Dr. Toda had told her "he didn't care what the faculty or board thought of him."

Actions also matter: By failing to involve the board in discussions about possible solutions to the looming budget crisis, and announcing Nov. 18 that one of three strategies to balance the budget was to close the Hood River campus, Dr. Toda left me feeling blindsided and betrayed.

This, six months after spending over \$20,000 on a consultant to guide a brainstorming process for a new building on the ... Hood River campus? When the existing building is at 38 percent of capacity? This is a ship adrift or, as one current college department director told me, "aground."

We were told Nov. 18 that the administration also hoped to correct the budget deficit by 1) seeking new sources of money, and 2) increasing enrollment.

Since then, we have seen no new sources of money, steady enrollment declines, and no ideas to reverse that. Just staff buyouts

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