

Hood River News

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Saving the Slough

Sometimes the lowest points need our highest vision. Credit to Arthur Babitz for putting his research skills and his passion into calling our attention to an important opportunity to protect our environment while enhancing our sense of history.

Babitz blended his knowledge of two things that only seem disparate — local history and storm water management — to present his “Saving the Slough” proposal Monday to City Council. Babitz rightly sees ways the city and other entities can work together to improve the habitat as well as human connection to what he called “a piece of local history” — the wetlands at the northeast edge of downtown.

Babitz gave what he called a “preliminary analysis” for saving the slough, which is jointly owned by Port of Hood River, ODOT, and Union Pacific. Babitz, who was mayor from 2008-14, said the small lake and surrounding marshland, totaling about 4 acres, is the last vestige of riverfront property from the 19th century, when it was a high traffic zone — as in the landing area for cross-Columbia ferries and riverboats that carried passengers and cargo up and down the river. Babitz laid out the basics of a plan, which will undergo further consideration by the landowners, to remove invasive vegetation such as Himalayan blackberry, canary grass and black locust, and bring in native species such as rose, Oregon grape, flowering currant and buckwheat.

Babitz’s vision is worth getting behind. Union Pacific needs to get on board, but the Port and ODOT pieces are the largest portions of the property, and since these are public agencies it should take little time or effort to get the city, port and state agency to take a walking tour together and formulate the start of a plan for what Babitz said is the most immediate concern: getting rid of the cattails, canary grass, blackberries and other species, and bringing in ones that belong there and will be beneficial to this long-stressed micro-ecology. Babitz also believes in the pathway’s potential as a natural habitat showcase and improved pedestrian conduit between downtown and the waterfront.

The slough seems like an unassuming, if not neglected, place. A canary-grass choked pond has its own beauty, especially when heron and red-winged blackbirds hang out there, as they often do. The slough is located just north and east of Mount Hood Railroad, next to downtown. A city pedestrian path runs between the pond and Interstate 84, accessible from the Second Street overpass. The path takes in the wetlands and then loops under the freeway to the waterfront.

One way to accomplish that connection is to turn to Art of Community, aka “Big Art,” the outdoor gallery of large sculptures arrayed around downtown Hood River and the waterfront.

More Big Art sites are to be added in August for the 2015-16 gallery, including some sponsored by the City of Hood River. For next year, or for the 2016-17 iteration, why not place “Big Art” along the path? It could go at the head of the trail — at the Second Street overpass — or to the east, perhaps where it meets the Hood River and curves underneath the overpass. The urban/natural setting such as this is always an intriguing setting for artistic expression. This would especially be the case if combined with benches, interpretive signs, and a viewing platform, as Babitz envisions.

Such a location would be interesting on its own but it would also tie in, literally, to the way Art of Community is gaining a better connection, as a tour, between downtown and the river.

By the way, printed copies of the map can be obtained at the Columbia Center for the Arts at Third and Cascade and at the Chamber of Commerce Visitors’ Center next to the marina, and the current gallery of Art of Community sculptures will remain in place through late August. The deadline to vote in the People’s Choice is Aug. 15.

To cast your ballot, go to art-of-community.com; look for “voting” tab at top right.



—CHESHIRE CAT GRIN
PERSIAN

Our readers write

Draw your point by Monday

Are you ever frustrated with the 350-word limit for Hood River News letters to the editor? Have you ever had a strong opinion about something going on in our community or the world, and wished you had a strong way to express it? Here is your chance! The Hood River County Fair is coming right up.

The Hood River News sponsors an editorial cartoon contest for adults and teens at the fair. Take that strong thought, that idea, and say it with an image. It is both harder and easier to draw than you might think.

Give yourself a challenge this weekend! Entries are due at the fairgrounds on Monday, July 20, from 1-7 p.m. or by Tuesday, July 21, 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. The Hood River News might just publish your entry.

I dare you... Give it a go!

Karen Harding,
Art Dept. Chair
Hood River County Fair

Editor’s Note: Karen is right: We will publish the winning creation.

Red and gray areas

Probably wiser to take the longer and broader view: We should not necessarily be judged or judge by our party’s affiliation.

After all, it was a Democratic governor who presided over the raising of the Confederate flag over South Carolina and a Republican governor who has presided over the lowering of the Confederate flag in South Carolina.

Steve Nybrotten
White Salmon, Wash.

Keep talking about pot

Tax dollars are hard to come by in a rural county with limited opportunities for job growth.

Marijuana legalization brings the potential, when done responsibly, of economic boom with a financial ceiling that we don’t fully comprehend. With official state oversight, businesses selling legal marijuana have been slowly adding dollars into our local economy. I support a slow change from where we have been, to where we are going. But let’s keep moving forward through the challenging points.

I’ve heard real concerns about how best to incorporate marijuana into existing society. Issues like protecting our children and helping drug abusers will have to be a part of our continued conversation here in White Salmon, Klickitat County and elsewhere as the legalization of marijuana takes hold. I support an ongoing dialogue by all sides rather

than more prohibition, moratoriums and bans. (Web search marijuana moratorium in Klickitat County for more information.) This is just the beginning of legalization. Let’s keep working together towards our uncertain future.

Avery Hoyt
White Salmon, Wash.

‘He Ran’

A news conference I would like to see:

“Mr. President, when you were in extensive negotiations with the leaders of this dangerous foreign country, I understand they were extremely apprehensive sensing you would be as hard-boiled and hard-nosed as President Reagan was with Russia. What exactly did you do to genially force them to see things your way?”

“I Ran.”

Bill Davis
Hood River

Beach Bash kudos

The last weekend of June ushered in a new activity for the Columbia Gorge Windsurfing Association — Beach Bash 2015. We started with

our Pray for Wind party Thursday night, followed with a wonderful outdoor concert Friday at the new waterfront amphitheater. Saturday offered non-stop action at the Event Site, flat water in the morning for stand-up paddle boarding, strong winds in the afternoon for windsurfing and even body boarding on some good swell. A huge success, Beach Bash was a celebration of beach life here in Hood River.

I’d like to note a special thanks to our executive director, Greg Stiegel; Greg worked tirelessly to plan, manage and supervise the event. When Greg wasn’t working the event, he and his band were on stage entertaining the crowds. Up early to set up, staying late to take down and clean-up — truly a heroic effort.

Thanks too for all our sponsors, a list of names can be found on our website:

GorgeWindsurfing.org. Lastly, if you enjoyed the free concert or any part of Beach Bash and would like to make a tax deductible contribution to the CGWA, our address is P.O. BOX 182, Hood River, OR 97031.

The board of the CGWA looks forward to welcoming back Beach Bash in 2016.

Michael Schock,
CGWA Board President
Hood River



Photo by Kirby Neumann-Rea

MICHAEL SCHOCK and Greg Stiegel at the Pray for Wind Party.



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