

# HAPPY NEW YEAR!

## Polk County Itemizer-Observer

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### Falls City ends contract with SW

*Fire department, district work to rebuild without formal agreement*

**By Jolene Guzman**  
The Itemizer-Observer

FALLS CITY — The contract between Southwest Polk Rural Fire Protection District and the city of Falls City will end officially on Monday.

The two entities have been negotiating for months, while existing on temporary extensions of a contract that expired in September. Falls City Fire Chief Bob Young said Southwest will pull its trucks and equipment from the station on Tuesday (Jan.2).

That is according to a letter the district sent the city Dec. 15. Southwest Chief Fred Hertel confirmed Friday that was the case.

"I never expected it to go this far," Young said. "It's pretty disappointing. No one out here is happy about it."

Young said he attended a meeting on Dec. 11 with the Southwest board that ended with a vote allowing the contract to expire. On Nov. 30, Falls City Acting City Manager Terry Ungricht declared negotiations at an impasse.

Young said, from his perspective, the issue was

Southwest wanting to take over more of the administration of the department than he or city leaders were comfortable with.

"The city was concerned about keeping our own department," he said. "That was really the sticking point."

Hertel described it as a "cultural difference" between the two entities on which rules and regulations needed strict adherence.

"The rules vary from absolutes to best practices and everything in between," Hertel said. "We disagreed

on what those should be."

The contract had Falls City firefighters responding to Southwest incidents in the district's trucks. Young said with the Southwest trucks gone, the department is only well-equipped to respond within the city limits.

Young said he wants people who live in the district, but closer to Falls City than Southwest stations in Dallas or Rickreall, to know that they may experience longer response times. Young said those are areas that Falls City crews running Southwest engines typically arrive first.

"We are going to try to respond, but we might not be able to," Young said.

He said his department is no longer equipped to adequately respond to Camp Tapawingo or Black Rock Mountain Bike Area.

The city and the district still have a mutual aid agreement, meaning they will send crews to each other's calls.

Hertel said he doesn't believe there will be a decline in service — especially since Falls City can still respond via mutual aid.

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### IN YOUR TOWN

#### Dallas PD brings Christmas cheer

**Itemizer-Observer staff report**  
DALLAS — Thanks to an anonymous donation, the Dallas Police Department made Christmas a little merrier for 50 local families.

Inspired by a story about a donation made in another community, a member of a long-term Dallas family gave a \$5,000 donation to the Dallas Police Department. The donor — who wished to remain anonymous — asked that the money be used to help families in need and distributed through Dallas police officers.

The donation was broken into \$100 gift cards to Walmart. Dallas Police officers were given the cards and assigned the task of giving them to families or individuals who needed a little extra help. Officers began handing them out on Dec. 1. The last two were given away on Dec. 22.

"The donation from a family in our community was very generous and made a real difference for 50 families," Dallas Police Chief Tom Simpson said in a press release about the donation. "In addition, it was a fun and rewarding experience for our officers who very much appreciated the honor and opportunity to distribute the donor's gifts to various community members."

The giveaway was kept quiet until it was complete. Simpson issued a statement on Saturday about the donation and the impact it had.

"We would like to express our sincere thanks to our 'Secret Santa' who helped make this season a little brighter for several others," Simpson said. "I'll add my personal appreciation to our hard-working officers who enthusiastically took the extra time and effort to help make this a successful endeavor."

#### ODVA awards grant to universities

SALEM — The Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs awarded grants totaling \$1 million this week to expand campus veteran resource centers at 14 of Oregon's public universities and community colleges, including Western Oregon University.

The purpose of the Campus Veteran Resource Center Grant Program is to augment existing resources by funding innovative and impactful projects or programs.

### Dallas begins restructuring in city hall

*Jason Locke on leave until off Jan. 2 as his department is eliminated, reorganized*

**By Jolene Guzman**  
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — The Dallas City Council voted to eliminate the Community Development Department, and its director, Jason Locke, on Dec. 20 as part of a restructuring of city departments.

Locke is on leave until Tuesday, when he will be laid off. He has worked for the city since 2008.

Interim City Manager Greg Ellis recommended the change, and said he realized during his first staff meeting that the city had too many department heads reporting to him.

In a memo to the council, Ellis said having more than six "direct reports," or people reporting directly to him, could cause inefficiency.

"The way I'm proposing to do that is take some of the departments that are, in my opinion, should logically be in other areas and put them in those other areas," Ellis said at the meeting Dec. 20. "What that entails, basically, is the elimination of the community development department."

Community development previously included planning, the building department, facilities maintenance and the Dallas Aquatic Center. "That would entail the loss of the community development director," Ellis said. "I'm proposing that the council eliminate that department and reorganize as proposed."

With the change, planning is a

stand-alone department that includes the building division. The city is in the process of hiring a manager for planning.

Facilities maintenance will go to public works, and the Dallas Aquatic Center management will become part of the new parks and recreation department.

Parks and recreation will include park maintenance, the DAC and Recreation Coordinator Sheila Pierce. Eric Totten is the park and rec manager. The DAC supervisor position is vacant since the retirement of Tina Paul.

Ellis' proposal has the police, fire, planning, public works, and financial services supervisors reporting to him. Ellis is the supervisor of the administration department, which contains human resources, library,

parks and recreation and economic development.

"There's still a lot of direct reports, but it does eliminate some," he said.

Ellis, who started with the city on Dec. 8, said the possibility of new development projects is one of the reasons behind the swiftness of the change.

"Planning functions are currently part of community development's responsibility," Ellis wrote in his memo. "There is a high likelihood of transformative industrial and commercial development within the city beginning in the first or second month of 2018. Due to that fact alone, I believe this reorganization needs to happen immediately in order to eliminate project disruption at a later date."

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### Take a look back at top news from 2017

**Itemizer-Observer staff report**  
POLK COUNTY — The year brought good news and bad. We take a look through 2017's *Itemizer-Observers* to remember it all.

#### January

**Oregon's Retirement System:** PERS puts pressure on tight budgets for local governments

Local governments' 2017-18 fiscal year budgets have a shadow looming over them in the form of Oregon Public Employees Retirement System rate increases.

PERS officials say rising rates won't be an anomaly, continuing for the foreseeable future.

**Ella Curran Food Bank feeds thousands:** Patty Nevue is just about to her one-year anniversary as director of the Ella Curran Food Bank.

She has seen the ebb and flow of the donation cycle, and said the food bank — and all who use it — is blessed to have so much support from the community year-round.

Nevue took the job from Pat Jaffer in January 2016. She said she was surprised to see the scope of people served by the food bank.

**Snow leaves schools on thin ice:** With more than average snow in early 2017, school



STEPHANIE BLAIR/Itemizer-Observer file

One of the highlights of 2017 was the Great American Eclipse on Aug. 21. Crowds gathered at Riverview Park.

districts began to wonder if they'd have to make up snow days. Perrydale School District has called three snow days,

which exceeds the two snow days built into the schedule. Perrydale will make up one day.

Central School District has called three snow days (the Wednesday, Thursday and Friday before Christmas break)

but should still meet the hours requirement if there are no more snow days.

See Year in Review, Page 3A

<p><b>THE NEXT 7 DAYS PLANNING FOR YOUR WEEK</b></p>	<p><b>wed</b></p> <p>Join other pickleball enthusiasts across from Roger Jordan Park each Wednesday for a healthy game. <b>9 a.m.-noon. Free.</b></p> <p><b>Rain</b> Hi: 45 Lo: 39</p>	<p><b>thu</b></p> <p>James2 Community Kitchen provides a meal to all who are hungry at Dallas United Methodist Church. <b>4:30-6 p.m. Free.</b></p> <p><b>Rain</b> Hi: 47 Lo: 41</p>	<p><b>fri</b></p> <p>Kick off the New Year's weekend with the musicians at Guthrie Park Music Jam, on Kings Valley Highway. <b>6:30-10 p.m. Free.</b></p> <p><b>Rain</b> Hi: 50 Lo: 40</p>	<p><b>sat</b></p> <p>It's a great day to clean out a closet or two to make room for the new things and donate the old before year's end. <b>Free.</b></p> <p><b>Cloudy</b> Hi: 47 Lo: 36</p>	<p><b>sun</b></p> <p>This New Year's Eve, make sure you arrange for transportation if you make alcohol part of your celebrations. Don't drink and drive.</p> <p><b>Cloudy</b> Hi: 46 Lo: 37</p>	<p><b>mon</b></p> <p>Happy New Year! The <i>Itemizer-Observer's</i> office is closed today in honor of the New Year. May it be a year filled with joy.</p> <p><b>Cloudy</b> Hi: 46 Lo: 33</p>	<p><b>tue</b></p> <p>NorthWest Senior and Disability Services will offer a bilingual dining center at Monmouth Senior Center. <b>11:30 a.m. Free.</b></p> <p><b>Showers</b> Hi: 47 Lo: 35</p>
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