



2020 graduation to be a huge community hug

The Columbia Press

A communitywide celebration honoring Warrenton High School's 2020 graduating class is in the works.

Parents, teachers and local business leaders are organizing an event that will abide by social distancing requirements in which the entire town can participate.

"We are working on a plan for graduation that will be held on the original graduation date of June 5," Principal Rod Heyen told school board members. "We will be working on trying to use as many of the traditional aspects of a normal graduation ceremony, with the new social distancing guidelines that ODE (Oregon Department of Education) has given schools."

School board Chair Debbie Morrow also began reaching out to community members and families.

Ideas include a parade of the seniors in cars and goodie bags filled with encouraging letters, artwork and, perhaps, treats or gifts.

"I think the kids have processed it through better than us parents," Morrow said. "I've cried a bucket of tears over this."

See 'Graduates' on Page 5



A dozen signs supporting local grads stand near the Warrior statue downtown.

How to help give a hug

- **Send a card or write a letter** of encouragement to seniors, which will be reproduced and given to each graduate.
- Children can **create pictures** with well wishes, which will be reproduced and given to each graduate.
- Businesses can **donate 55 small gifts**, such as AA batteries, key chains, lip balm, adult coloring books, coupons for a free taco or game.
- **Make 55 small craft projects** – such as a Christmas ornament with each graduate's name.
- **Donate cash** that organizers can use to purchase or make gifts.
- **Drop off or mail** any of the above items to the Warrenton-Hammond School District office, 820 S.W. Cedar Ave., Warrenton OR 97146. Make checks out to the school district.
- **Sponsor a graduate** for \$25 in a special section that will run June 5 in the Columbia Press with each graduate's photo. Info: 503-861-3331.

School district furloughs 35 in uncertainty over state funds

BY CINDY YINGST
The Columbia Press

The Warrenton-Hammond School District furloughed 35 classified employees, placed a temporary freeze on hiring and is making other belt-tightening moves as the COVID-19 pandemic decimates the budgets of schools and local governments.

On Wednesday night, the school board gave preliminary approval to a 2020-21 budget that includes \$11.7 million in expenditures with an expected \$12 million in revenue.

Schools in Oregon had expected a bit of a windfall in the coming year as businesses pay the state's brand new Corporate Activity Tax. The Student Investment Accounts each district created to spend the money were to help the most vulnerable students achieve success.

Warrenton-Hammond had expected more than \$900,000 in SIA money. But with the virus unleashing fiscal agony on so many businesses, it's unclear how much new money will come. And funding from the Oregon Lottery and marijuana taxes is expected to drop as well.

In addition, payments to the Public Employee Retirement System and for health insurance rose markedly.

"It is in this context that we have built the budget," Superintendent Tom Rogozinski told board members. "It's not overly dire, but it's not overly optimistic, either. ... We've created an opportunity for us to be agile."

See 'Budget' on Page 8

Pandemic turns political as some reject the rules

The Columbia Press

Pandemic-inspired restrictions imposed by politicians have led to anger, defiance and the politicizing of a health crisis.

As more businesses require masks or limit the purchase of meat or toilet paper, some frustrated shoppers have rebelled.

A man from Ocean Park, Wash., was cited for harassment after he became rankled over Costco's limits on meat purchases. He yelled obscenities at employ-

ees and spit on a store manager, police said.

Retail stores report problems with shoppers who refuse to wear masks or stay separate from others, and who belittle or threaten employees attempting to get them to comply with health and distancing rules.

The longer the economy is closed, the more angst erupts.

Last weekend, protesters tore down barricades to get to the beach in Seaside.

An even larger protest over closures is planned this weekend.

A rally planned for noon Saturday at the Turnaround is expected to draw hundreds from out of the area. Police issued a statement saying they're prepared and working with all sides to ensure a safe and peaceful demonstration, but warned residents to use caution and decorum.

The city will close vehicle and bike traffic on Broadway from Columbia

See 'Pandemic' on Page 4