

Oath of office makes fire chief's job 'official'

The Columbia Press

Fire Chief Brian Alsbury was sworn in Tuesday night during one of the city's first celebratory events since the pandemic hit.

Alsbury, 40, was appointed chief nine months ago to replace Tim Demers, who resigned amid controversy over departmental safety violations.

"Brian's been on the job for nine months," City Manager Linda Engbretson said. "The city of Warrenton has a nine-month probation period (for department heads). I'm so happy to have Brian as part of the team. He's doing a great job. He's a great leader."

Warrenton Volunteer Firefighters Association organized a party with cake for Alsbury's family, the department, and the public after the ceremony.

Since many firefighters were in the room, several spoke about their experiences helping other agencies fight the massive wildfires throughout the West.

"I've been doing this for 13 years and I've never seen such devastation," said Capt. Chris Penno, who was sent to the Beachie Creek Fire.

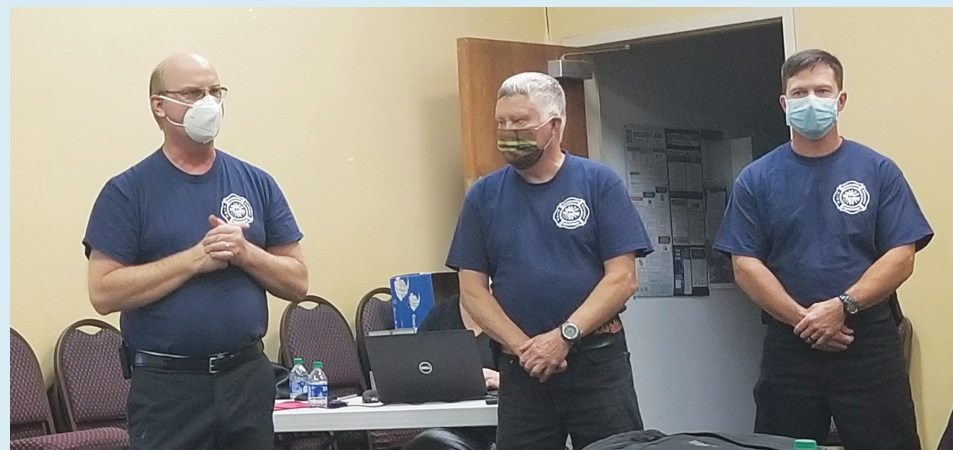
See 'Oath' on Page 8



Lynn Alsbury, former chief of the Tongue Point Fire Department, affixes a pin on the collar of his son, Warrenton Fire Chief Brian Alsbury, during the oath of office ceremony Tuesday night.

Below: Capt. Chris Penno, Firefighter Lenard Hansen and Division Chief Scott Watson talked about their experiences working the West's massive fires.

Cindy Yingst
The Columbia Press



County to get tough on unsanctioned use of its property

By CINDY YINGST

The Columbia Press

Clatsop County officials are taking a closer look at those who sell firewood and other items on county rights of way.

During a work session Wednesday evening, county commissioners talked about placing a moratorium on any activity that encroaches on county-maintained rights of way, including Ridge Road, where at least two people are selling firewood on public property.

"It's becoming pretty busy along Ridge Road," Commissioner Mark Kujala said. "We've got a lot more traffic these days that leads to the KOA, Fort Stevens and the marina."

The two firewood stands are open all hours of the day and those who operate them use chain saws and machinery that are bothering the neighbors, he said.

"In some circumstances, they've cleared brush along the county right of way," Kujala said. "It seems a little bit odd to me that they're allowed to just trim the buffer between the road and homes."

One of those operations is run by Mitch Simonsen on county right of way adjacent to the property of Allen Berry, who is running for a seat on the Warrenton City Commission.

Berry, in an interview two weeks ago, said the county is harassing him at the behest of neighbors who don't like him.

"It's a neighborhood problem and the county stuck their nose in it," Berry said.

He gave Simonsen permission to use the property as a way for the

County dealing with four COVID workplace outbreaks

The Columbia Press

Clatsop County has four workplace outbreaks, including a second outbreak at Pacific Seafoods in Warrenton, Public Health Director Mike McNickle told county officials Wednesday evening.

"It's been a very fast-moving week," he said. "We're waiting for test results of 30 that we took Monday" and 157 more tests were conducted on employees at Pacific Seafoods.

In addition, the county is monitoring 50 people through contact tracing.

An alarming 27 new cases of COVID-19 were reported by Clatsop County Public Health in the past week that ended Wednesday.

The cases were from all areas of the county and encompassed a wide range of ages.

The new cases prompted school officials to send letters to parents, warn-

ing them the district may be required to return to distance learning for all students.

"As you know, our ability to offer in-person instruction this school year is dependent on the COVID metrics published by the Oregon Health Authority each week," wrote Tom Rogozinski, superintendent of the Warrenton-Hammond School District.

"The data published yesterday

See 'Virus' on Page 4

See 'County' on Page 4