

Port opens



The Port of Hood River opened its Electronic Toll Collection system, BreezeBy, in mid-November.

On the Waterfront

by Michael McElwee,
Port Executive Director



Michael McElwee

To many, the waterfront represents the figurative “front porch” to the City of Hood River. Its proximity to downtown, development potential and vast recreational and scenic amenities are well known. Significant community discussion has occurred over the years and many efforts have been made to initiate development. The Port understands that important community goals can be achieved on the waterfront — including jobs, transportation and recreation — and is taking key actions to initiate development momentum.

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This year the Port Commission has:

- Adopted a **Disposition Policy** that guides the circumstances when the Port’s waterfront property would be considered for development. This can be an important inducement for some businesses interested in expansion.
- Approved the **Waterfront Development Strategy** which established goals and specific implementation steps over the next five years to induce waterfront development. Several of the recommended steps are underway, including a subdivision plan to create legal lots south of Portway Avenue and modifications to existing zoning.

Please see **Waterfront** on page 4

The highly anticipated opening of the Port’s Electronic Toll Collection system, BreezeBy, occurred November 15th after years of planning oversight. BreezeBy is now “live,” and serves over 1,000 bridge patrons. BreezeBy accounts can be set up online, by phone, or by visiting the Port of Hood River office.

Now, only BreezeBy patrons can use the outside automatic toll lanes. Ticket and cash patrons must use the inside manual tolling lanes. Bridge tickets may also be turned in at the Port office for credit on a BreezeBy account.

The system opening was pushed back slightly to trouble shoot glitches in the toll collection software. According to Port

Finance Manager Linda Shames, coordinator of the project for the Port, sixty trial accounts with 130 transponders tested the system over the last few months.

“One of the things we’ve found is that logging trucks are an anomaly because of axle spacing,” Shames explains. “The system has to account for varying lengths of vehicles, and vehicles stopping on the inside lanes, but just slowing down on the outside lanes. There are lots of sequential timing issues.”

Refining these issues has been Jerry Hautamaki, Senior Engineer at HNTB’s Seattle office. HNTB has provided the Port

with comprehensive electronic toll collection services as well as the new toll facility design. Hautamaki has had a small model of the Port tolling structure at his office so he can experiment with various scenarios and revise the program software accordingly. Daily logs help Shames and Hautamaki refer to actual bridge activity and compare electronic tolling activity. “Every one of these systems is unique,” Shames says.

A recent bustle of activity at the Port office has been created with the set up of BreezeBy accounts. Over 1,000 new

Please see **BreezeBy** on page 3

Chamber returns to its “Old Digs”

The Hood River County Chamber of Commerce is leasing the former Port of Hood River office space at Port Marina Park, the same building the Chamber occupied jointly with the Port for two decades prior to its move to the Hood River Expo Center in 1996.

Chamber of Commerce staff prepares for move to new office space at Port Marina Park. From left are: Kristin Reese, Marge Edens, Erin Rue, Melanee Gillette, Genevieve Scholl-Erdmann, and Chamber Board President Ray Felton.



The Chamber settled into its new location in early December following minor renovations to the space. The lease term is three years, with options to renew.

The Chamber is leasing around 2,500 square feet in the building. While paying market rate for the 1,348 square feet for Chamber offices upstairs, the organization is leasing 1,156 square feet for the Visitor Center downstairs for a nominal fee.

“In the past, the Chamber and Port have worked in partnership to provide a public Visitor Center, and that’s the same situation with the new space,” explains Port marketing manager Mike Doke.

When the Chamber moved to the Hood River Expo Center, the Port, Chamber Visitors Council, and other local tourism businesses planned on the Expo Center becoming a catalyst for development of a conference center and hotel on the waterfront. When those plans didn’t come to fruition, the Port considered ways to better capitalize on the facility’s economic development value.

As the Port explored the feasibility of Expo Center re-use, two major concerns

Please see **Chamber** on page 3

MCCOG plans move to Wasco Business Building



MCCOG staff members will offer workforce training and employment counseling with partners at the new Wasco Business Building office. Pictured from left are: Mike Scroggs (Advisor/Instructor), Marti Kantola (CMS Director), Isabel Hanson (Advisor/Instructor), Karen Saunders (Intake Specialist) and John Arens (Executive Director). Inset: Marty Miller (Workforce Investment Act Director).

A new, convenient Hood River location will soon be available to those seeking workforce training and employment counseling. The Mid-Columbia Council of Governments (MCCOG) has leased 2,754 square feet of space at the Port's Wasco Business Building in Hood River, and plans to move in this month following interior improvements.

The organization joins Renaissance Learning in the Port's newest building when it moves from its location on 12th Street in Hood River. "We think this building will be

easier for people to find, offers improved parking, and will better accommodate the needs of our clients through our working partnerships," sums up Executive Director of MCCOG, John Arens. "Once we are relocated, we'll have a more comprehensive workforce training program available to the community."

Columbia Gorge Community College, Oregon Department of Employment, and Oregon Department of Human Services will also have a presence at the new location. "This creates a place where our organization can come together and establish a certified 'One-Stop Center' that is part of our workforce training partnership with these other agencies" Arens says. "The pieces of these services currently exist, but they will be more easily accessed in the same building."

The new nine-office Hood River site will house four MCCOG staff members, with flexible space in which partners can work, as well as room for six to twelve clients on average. The lease term is five years, with options to renew.

This partnership helps the region comply with the federal Workforce Investment Act to offer workforce training, thereby qualifying for funding the federal government allocates to states. The official designation as a One-Stop Center will occur sometime in 2008, but the important thing is the center will serve the community as soon as the relocation occurs.

The new facility will offer the only fully certified One-Stop Center in a five county region, and in theory people will be able to access all workforce development services from this one location. Affiliate One Stop locations include the MCCOG office, the State office building in The Dalles, and the Integrated Services building in Fossil. Though the Internet plays an important role in sharing employment information, Arens says his agency plans to maintain a one-on-one approach with their job seeking clients.

"Our program can provide services to adult, youth, and dislocated workers. If an individual is laid off, we have the ability to help with job retraining, or the employment department can help with a job search," Arens explains. "We also offer training on how to best prepare for the job hunt, including assistance with resume writing, and interview skills."

Arens estimates MCCOG helps 400 to 500 people a year with employment aid.

MCCOG serves Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam and Wheeler counties with various services related to workforce development, senior and disability services, transportation, grant writing, program administration, and selected educational, social, technical and environmental resources.

The organization is able to dedicate expertise and provide services more economically serving five counties than each county could on its own. The agency's main office is located in The Dalles, and in addition to the Hood River office, it operates offices in Fossil, Moro, plus a Transportation Network office in The Dalles. ●

WAAAM opens at Ken Jernstedt Airfield



The September WAAAM Grand Opening and Fly-In gave the community free admission to the museum, and welcomed hundreds of visitors and pilots in a special three day event. The Western Antique Aviation and Automobile Museum is now open seven days a week. Complete information is available at www.waaamuseum.org or by phoning 541-308-1600.

continued from Chamber on page 1

involved the Chamber of Commerce. The first was the location of the Chamber offices, while the second and larger concern related to the Expo Center venue for the Chamber's Harvest Fest, the organization's largest fundraising event attracting over 20,000 visitors over a three-day period.

The 2007 Harvest Fest was the last in the Expo Center. "We have to look at a new venue for Harvest Fest, and we'll have to rethink the event and come up with a best possible opportunity," suggests Chamber Board President Ray Felton. "It's a big thing we do with the agriculture community, but we've moved it before, this isn't the first time."

Ray Felton's term as Chamber Board President is up December 31. His two primary goals this past year have been to create the best Harvest Fest yet, and to settle staff into the new office space.

"The Chamber has been looking toward acquiring a permanent location,

possibly jointly with the Hood River County History Museum," Felton reports. "We've looked at some alternatives that are not yet nailed down, but we feel very good about collaborating with the Museum."

The Visitor Center serves 23,000 people each year, while the Chamber Visitors Council markets tourism interests.

The Hood River County Chamber of Commerce serves nearly 450 members with networking opportunities like Business After Hours; communications via its web site, weekly fax, monthly newsletter, annual Chamber Directory and County Map; welcoming via the Chamber Ambassadors; coordination of Leaders for Tomorrow youth program; political forum sponsorship and government advocacy on issues affecting business; and business development education, to name a few. In addition, it hosts annual events like Harvest Fest, Blossom Festival, Cross Channel Swim, and promotes other attractions and events. ●

Airport Master Plan focus of new County review



Future operations and improvements at Ken Jernstedt Airfield will be the focus as Hood River County reviews the airport's 20-year master plan during 2008.

The Port of Hood River, based on the recommendation of its citizen-based Airport Advisory Committee, has requested a county review. The review may lead to adoption of some plan recommendations into the county's Transportation Systems Plan, which is part of the Hood River County Comprehensive Plan.

The Port has retained Icon West Developments, and will use Century West, which wrote the master plan, for support planning services. Icon West will manage the review from the technical findings stage to public outreach.

The main airport master plan objectives include operational safety, facilities upgrades and enhancing the long-term viability of the airport. A brief explanation of each follows:

The major long-term safety consideration is the recommendation to shift the existing runway. The plan proposes moving the existing runway 550 feet to the east, away from State Highway 281. The new runway alignment would ease safety concerns to the west along the well-traveled state highway and would impact Orchard Road. This change would not include a runway extension and is not designed to increase airplane traffic or attract larger aircraft; the realignment would serve operations as they currently exist.

Please see Airport on page 4

continued from Breeze By on page 1

BreezeBy account applications have been received in just over a month's time. "People are excited it's happening. If they miss some of their favorite toll collectors, they can always use BreezeBy in the manual collection lanes," Shames says with a smile.

Shames also adds they are getting a lot of positive comments about the BreezeBy name, both within the transportation and tolling industry, as well as the community. Toll collectors have found it's easy to say and use. People have also expressed praise for the new BreezeBy logo, designed by local graphic artist Christen Dunbar. ●



the Hood River Bridge toll plaza!

- SIGN UP & REPLENISHMENT ARE EASY
- EARN 20% BONUS DOLLARS
- BREEZE BY SAVES TRAVEL TIME

How does BREEZEBY work?

Your prepaid reader card communicates with the Electronic Toll Collection (ETC) system and deducts the toll from a prepaid account.

Applying for BREEZEBY is simple.

Complete information, the application, and credit card authorization form are available at www.portofhoodriver.com. Just open the forms, print them out, and complete either the personal account or commercial account information. You can submit your application to the Port office via U.S. mail, fax, scanned image through email, or deliver them during Port office hours.

Maintaining your BREEZEBY account.

Deposits to your BREEZEBY account can be made by credit card, debit card, auto-draft account, check, money order, or in person with cash. (Do not mail cash.) Automatic deposits into BREEZEBY accounts can be set up to occur when accounts reach a predetermined low balance, and are the easiest way to manage an account. For more information, contact the Port of Hood River or visit its web site.

Go Ahead **BreezeBy**

Office hours: Monday –Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.



Port of Hood River

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continued from **Airport** on page 3



Facilities upgrades include moving future hangars, operations center and other development to the airport's north side, installing fencing along airport boundaries to limit unauthorized traffic and animal intrusions onto the airfield, and installing a low-intensity runway lighting system.



Steps to enhance the long-term viability of the airport include opportunities for airport-dependent employment, operations and maintenance of historic aircraft and enhancing opportunities for flight training, sightseeing and air taxis at the airport.

A top review goal will be alignment of airport and county transportation objectives. This project addresses

criteria that include economic development, streamlining of planning and zoning processes, and intergovernmental agreements. Currently, the county does not formally recognize the airport master plan and has not reviewed the plan's major goals.

Due to Hood River County's scarcity of employment lands, appropriate properties in and around the airport are needed to create more economic opportunities, and this process will help define those properties.

Some of master plan's goals to economically strengthen the airport may require cooperation, partnerships and intergovernmental agreements with the county. Adoption of the master plan into the county Transportation Systems Plan will encourage that process.

The Port has carefully developed the project scope of work to make it as financially efficient as practical.

This project began in September 2007, when the Hood River County Board of Commissioners initiated the review by directing its planning staff to begin the review. Much of the planning work is anticipated in the first half of 2008, depending on the county planning department schedule. ●



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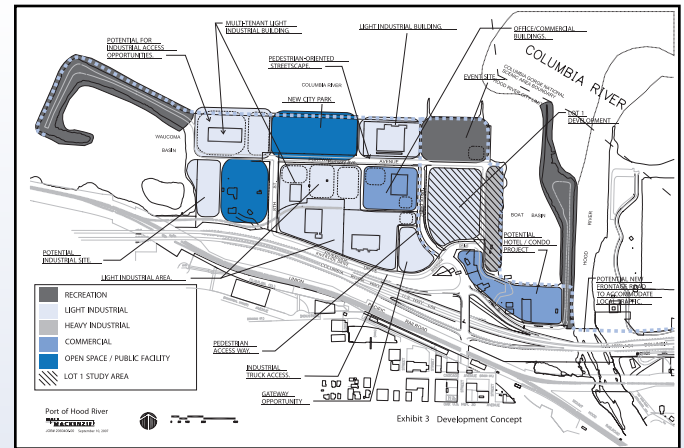
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continued from **Waterfront** on page 1

- Entered into a **Memorandum of Understanding** to explore the feasibility of moving Dakine Hawaii to Expo Center. Although the building was not sufficient for Dakine's expected growth, we are already in discussions with other local companies who are interested in this key waterfront parcel. The building will close for events in January 2008.
- Executed a **Lease Agreement** with the Hood River County Chamber of Commerce that would move the Chamber and Visitor Center to the Port's old offices adjacent to the Marina. This lease frees up their current space in the Expo Center for commercial uses.
- Authorized a **Memorandum of Understanding** with Hood River County to begin negotiations related to a new location for the History Museum. The current location just east of the footbridge is undersized and the Museum has impressive plans for expansion at North 2nd Street and Riverside Drive that can serve as a "Gateway" to the waterfront.
- Authorized an agreement with the Corps of Engineers for a **Hood River Delta Assessment**. This study will examine the long-term impacts of the Delta on the waterfront from the standpoint of navigation, recreation and habitat, and should be completed in 8-10 months.
- Completed a **Comprehensive Survey** of the entire waterfront to determine the exact location of legal lots and improvements.

- With the City of Hood River initiated a look at **Financing Approaches** to pay for needed infrastructure improvements. Mechanisms may include grant funding, tax increment financing and a local improvement district.
- Authorized commencement of the **Frontage Road Feasibility Study** to determine the potential of constructing a new road and bridge across the Hood River on the north side of I-84 between Exit 63 and Exit 64.

Each of these actions is important in its own right. Taken together they demonstrate that the Port, in conjunction with community stakeholders, is committed to initiating waterfront progress in a way that matches community expectations. Public agencies can accomplish many things to provide a boost to an area. However, in the end, development only occurs when private parties have confidence in an area and decide to invest private capital. We believe that the actions described above will accomplish this in the coming two years. As always your questions or comments are welcome at any time. ●



Port waterfront development concept by Group Mackenzie. More information is available on the Port's website.

PORT MEETINGS

Regular Port Commission meetings are held on the **1st and 3rd Tuesday** of each month in its **Boardroom at Marina Center Building** (1000 E. Port Marina Drive). The Port welcomes your questions, comments and suggestions.

PORT DIRECTORY

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