Halloween
Page 4



Forks and Corks
See Inside



Sports
Page 10



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Pumpkin Harvest

Photo by Susan Fortin

The first-grade students at White Pass Elementary walked next door to the United Methodist Church where the community garden is located. Last spring, the students as kindergartners planted the pumpkin seeds. The pumpkin harvest took place on Oct. 20, just in time for Halloween.

More controversy at school board meeting

By Buddy Rose
The East County Journal

Mossyrock school board directors held a special board meeting on Oct. 26 that included a workshop afterwards. The short board meeting consisted of discussion and approval of items not approved during the regular board meeting on Oct. 19, due to disruptions stemming from a large public attendance.

The workshop focused on continued discussions between the board, the superintendent and the public regarding controversies that disrupted the Oct. 19 board meeting. Board President Mitch Townsend was absent during the Oct. 26 meeting and workshop, with Board Director Teresa Ekdahl-Johnson announcing he had a prior commitment.

Action items approved during the special board meeting included an agreement between Onalaska and Mossyrock School Districts that allows Mossyrock students to participate in the Onalaska wrestling program. Other items approved included the hiring of Hailey Calderone as Assistant Middle School Girls Basketball Coach, Kori Johns as Cook's Helper, Boaz Kealy as Secondary Special Education Paraeducator and Sadie Firth as Transition to Kindergarten Paraeducator. The board also accepted the resignation of Ryan Fry, Assistant Middle School Boys Basketball Coach.

The workshop discussions

See **Mossyrock** Page 2



By Buddy Rose / The East County Journal

More than 50 parents, teachers and others attended a special Mossyrock school board meeting and workshop in the high school multi-purpose room on Oct. 26.

Veterans Wall of Honor

By Amber Brown
The East County Journal

The American Legion, Post 215 invites the public to join them in the revitalization of the Veterans Wall of Honor on Veterans Day, Nov. 11 at 10 a.m.

American Legion commander Ed Smith says that many people have been confused by the wall. "It is not a memorial wall. There are people alive and well today that have their names on there," he said.

Smith wanted to be clear about that point because some people, believing that it was a memorial wall, were upset by living people being on it. However, as a Wall of Honor, anyone who has served can apply to have their name put on there by emailing edcommander75@gmail.com.

The process of bringing the wall back to its former glory has been in the process for over a year. "In fact, we started it just before the Morton Loggers' Jubilee the year before this last Jubilee, so it's been a year and a half," he said.

The problem with the wall was "it had deteriorated to the point where the paint was flaking off and letters were falling off of the wall. It was in really sad shape. The plants hadn't been kept up and while there was someone mowing the yard, it wasn't all that was needed," Smith said.

"Harrison Christian Management really stepped up in a giant way. They funded almost all of the wall repair. I'm tickled to work with them," he said.

The person being honored on the wall will have a plaque that includes their name, the branch of the military, the time they served and usually their rank when they got out.

See **Veterans wall** Page 2

Hospital district reviews 2027 budget

By Buddy Rose
The East County Journal

Lewis County Hospital District No. 1 commissioners reviewed the proposed 2027 budget during their regular board meeting on Oct. 28. Chief Financial Officer Sarah Paul provided a comprehensive overview of the budget and changes projected that will affect next year's finances relative to those in 2026.

Paul noted the 2027 budget balances conservative revenue assumptions with intentional investments intended to strengthen Arbor Health for the future. The budget projects total revenue of $50.47 million for 2027, which is an increase of 4.2 percent over this year. With operating expenses of $49.96 million, that results in a net income for 2027 of $507 thousand, which is down from this year's total of $992 thousand. However, the budget excludes potential revenue from several prospective grants to be applied for.

There is considerable uncertainty for 2027 regarding potential Medicaid enrollment losses and subsequent coverage disruptions, said Paul. Potential Medicaid cuts nationwide could be as much as $1 trillion. With a

See **Hospital** Page 3

White Pass School discusses attendance

By Marji Ruzicka
The East County Journal

New to White Pass School District school board meeting on Oct. 19, student representatives reported on activities and perspectives with the board and the more than 20 attendees at the meeting.

Skylinn Minor-Ulrich, senior, and Clara McMahan, junior, described a fun and memorable Homecoming Week in the first year of the return to the Panther identity. They mentioned that some students are volunteering in the kitchen as a way to preview the culinary field, help the kitchen staff and earn community service hours required for graduation.

Attendance and enrollment topped the discussions at the board meeting. Mark Westley, the interim Superintendent, included a slide showing enrollment figures from last year and this year. The board acknowledged that attendance is an issue nationwide, but they would like to see better attendance rates for Panther students.

White Pass began the year with slightly higher enrollment than predicted but he hopes the line on the graph will stay steady this year, instead of the sharp drop that happened last school year.

Westley also gave an update on several consultants hired to assist the district this year. Tim RLR Consulting is providing mentor services to the administrators and recently spent two days at the district. John Johnson has been hired to complete the teacher evaluations this year, and Alex Hanson has been hired to help with drivers' education requirements for last year's students.

Westley ended with an email from the state health department after a drop-in visit that complimented staff Shawndale Minor and Emily Garber for running a clean, safe and welcoming kitchen at the school.

Mark Murphy, Dean of Students at the Jr/Sr High School, gave a shoutout to Associated Student Body (ASB) students and advisor, Christina Berryman,

See **White Pass** Page 3

Mossyrock City Council reviews budget and Comprehensive Plan

By Buddy Rose
The East County Journal

Mossyrock city council members reviewed a draft copy of the projected Fiscal Year 2027 Budget for the city during their regular council meeting on Oct. 21. The first open public hearing on that budget coincided with the council review. Public comment during the hearing consisted of a couple of budget item category questions asked by Angeleetta Hartmann that were answered by City Treasurer Jessica Bragg.

The 2027 proposed budget is very similar to the final 2026 budget. Expenditures and revenue in 2027 are balanced at $1,504,633. That is about $33,000 more than the final totals for 2026.

The budget hearing was followed by a public hearing regarding the ongoing Growth Management Update - Development Regulations. Planning Commission Chair Marcia Manley stated any proposed changes or additions to land uses in the city should be submitted as soon as possible to the Commission. Any other community feedback can be addressed in 2027 following county and state approval of the update by the end of this year. Any future changes could be incorporated through city ordinances, she said.

During the regular meeting that followed the two public hearings, Mayor Randall Sasser indicated city public works employees have been reviewing the inventory of items that are commonly used for operations at the water and sewer treatment plant to see what may be needed next year. He also reported progress with the ongoing challenge of reducing the water loss indicated by the difference between billed usage

See **City Council** Page 8