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Tenino Area Chamber gets county update

Commissioner, county officials speak to group

By Dan Fisher
 News Editor

An update on activities in Thurston County was provided for members of the Tenino Area Chamber of Commerce at its monthly lunch forum held March 19 at the Sandstone Café.

The group of speakers was led by County Commissioner (and former Tenino Mayor) Wayne Fournier, and also include Ashley Ari, Thurston County's Community, Planning and Economic Development (CPED) director, Karen Weiss, the county Public Works director, Matthew Rounsley, Fournier's executive aide, and County Engineer Matt Unzelman.

Fournier is commissioner for District No. 4, which includes the southwest corner of the county including the Rainier, Tenino, Bucoda, Grand Mound and Rochester areas.

He was asked by a chamber member about the possibility



Photo by Dan Fisher
Ashley Ari (standing) of Thurston County CPED hands out material at the March 19 Tenino Area Chamber meeting.

of adding a Tenino-to-Bucoda extension to the county's trail system.

"We do want a trail from Tenino to Bucoda," Fournier said. "A feasibility study showed it would be difficult but possible."

Fournier then shifted his nar-

rative to his duties as commissioner.

"As mayor, I was always out hunting opportunities and grants," he said. "When we had a lot of money coming in, it was hard to manage. The economy is different now. People are not

spending as much anymore, but believing in this community is moving forward. I will not let a bad deal be done for this community."

Ari then took over the presentation.

"One of my favorite things is the fair," Ari said. "We are building a new ag building, a pole barn at the fairgrounds in Lacey. We went to the Feds and the state for the funds. The county is leaning into the gopher issue and looking to benefit farmers and ranchers."

Chamber President Cheryl Pearce asked how what Ari is doing affects Tenino.

"Idea' is a magical word in my department," Ari said. "Feel free to reach out to me. You'll be talking to a creative bunch when you call the CPED office."

"Coalitions of people get things done than an individual can't," Fournier said. "Where I think we can get better is advocacy work."

Public Works Director Karen Weiss said her department concentrated on roads and transportation systems, as well as all solid waste facilities.

"The county's waste and recovery center (WARC) is undergoing a renovation that

began in 2018," Weiss said. "The goal is to improve and expand, and to reduce wait times."

Weiss said the total estimated cost of the WARC renovation is \$28 million and the plan includes expansion of transfer stations in Rainier and Rochester. She added that the expansion at Rainier has been put on hold due to lack of funds, as it alone bears a cost of \$11 million.

Unzelman then gave a round-up of planned construction on Tilley Road and Old Highway 99.

"Construction should begin in 2027," Unzelman said. "We have to study collision history, safety and mobility. It will cost \$4 million. We also will replace the timber bridge on Tilley Road, with construction to begin in 2031. That road is built on log fill over peat bogs. And we're doing a Churchill Road S.E. culvert replacement, with construction to begin in 2030. A 50 to 60-foot bridge will replace the culvert."

A representative of the Nelson Family Ranch announced that tours of the ranch will be conducted March 28 and April 4 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., and the April 4 tours will include an Easter Egg hunt.

Hodgson honored at Tenino School Board meeting

Red Cross gives certificate for lifesaving act

By Dan Fisher
 News Editor

Tenino Middle School Principal Rand Hodgson was presented a Red Cross Lifesaving certificate at the start of the March 23 Tenino School Board meeting, then led the TMS school presentation for the board as the main feature of the monthly business meeting.

Sonia Nicholson nominated Hodgson for the award after a Jan. 7 incident when Hodgson employed the Heimlich Maneuver to dislodge a piece of food blocking the windpipe of a TMS student outside the main door of the school.

"It took several tries, but the blockage finally came out," said Tenino Red Cross representative Shannon Glenn, who presented the Red Cross certificate to Hodgson. "He stuck with the effort and saved a life."

Hodgson began his presentation with a call-out to the Tenino Timberland Library for its cooperation with TMS in offering programs that complement the school's curriculum for students outside school hours.

"We're getting kids ready for graduation," Hodgson said. "We've expanded our algebra curriculum and overall math classes, and expanding algebra classes to seventh and sixth grades. And our choir got a grant

to pay for performance at local senior centers."

Hodgson noted his school's 'Green Congress,' for which TMS students test local water quality and share the information with 'Green Congress' groups throughout the state, and also improvement in TMS attendance.

"We've shown great improvement in attendance over last year," Hodgson said. "We are at 87 percent in; regular attendance, and the tardiness count is also down. Kids are in class and getting to class on time. Our late count is now just five to six percent."

Students Aubrey Tyner and Caleb Suttan then spoke in support of TMS intervention classes.

"I left TMS as a sixth grader and have come back as an eighth grader," Tyner said. "Taking the intervention math class, I went up two full grade levels."

"Intervention classes helped me write better and do math," Caleb, a seventh-grader, noted.

Also speaking was sixth-grader Emily Olson, in support of the TMS arts program.

"The arts program opens more opportunities for students," Olson said, after which Hodgson directed the attention of the board and its audience to 'Pi Day' art projects set up around the TMS library in honor of Pi Day (3/14), both the mathematical figure and the baked dessert.

TMS Yearbook staff members Thomas Thompson and Alexis Cortez then reported on the advantages of putting together the school's yearbook.



Photo by Dan Fisher
TMS staff member Sonia Nicholson and Shannon Glenn of the Red Cross present a lifesaving certificate to TMS Principal Rand Hodgden at the Tenino school board meeting.

They said the current yearbook staff includes just five students, but that they are getting lots of experience in photography, editing and page layout, and they proposed a change in yearbook services from Josten's, the school's service for the past decade, to Tree Ring, which has a lower fee and offers more services.

They said many sixth graders are utilized for camera work, and the seventh and eighth graders on the staff have had to sort through thousands of photos to select the ones that best contribute to the layout and memories

encapsulated in the yearbook.

The draft educational calendar for the 2026-27 school year was then presented for a second reading. It included Sept. 1 as the first day of classes for the Tenino School District and June 11 as the last day.

In the absence of the district's financial director, Endicott also gave the financial report.

"We will be moving our budget down due to declining enrollment," Endicott said. "Out of all the school district's in the county, we are the only one not doing an RIF (reduction in force)."

Endicott said an emphasis

in the budget for next year is on school zone safety, replacing the district's flashing light signs with new ones that will all have the same system.

"They're coming to the end of their service lifetimes," Endicott said of the current school zone flashing signs.

The student report revealed that the THS Tolo will be held next week and the Knowledge Bowl team placed a best-ever sixth at state.

The next business meeting for the Tenino School Board will be April 27 at Parkside Elementary School, 6:30 p.m.

Governor's Mansion public tours available April 1, 8

OLYMPIA – In honor of Library Month in April, tours of the Governor's Mansion will feature newly donated books for the private library. A highlight of the collection is 20 books from the

personal library of Elisha Ferry, the first governor of Washington State. The entire library has come from donors over the years, and no taxpayer money has ever been spent on this splendid collection

of books focused on Washington State history, personalities, art, authors, and geography.

Reservations – Visit the Department of Enterprise Services' website to complete an online reservation <https://capitol.wa.gov/tours/governors-mansion-tours>. Adult tour guests must show photo identification and all visitors under 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

Cancellation Policy – If you need to cancel your reservation, please do so at least 72 hours (3 days) before your scheduled tour by:

- Use the Reserve a Tour application to cancel or reschedule, TERS | Department of Enterprise Services
- Call the Tour Office at 360-902-8880 to cancel your tour.

Accessibility – Accessible parking spots are available on campus for those with placards. Please visit <https://capitol.wa.gov/visit/campus-map> to find a campus map to locate these spots and other visitor parking. The mansion is accessible to walkers and wheelchairs (1st floor only).

Questions or additional information – Please email the State Capitol Tour Office at tours@des.wa.gov (please put in subject line Governor's Mansion Tours).

Built in 1908 and first occupied in 1909, the Governor's Mansion is the oldest building on the state Capitol's West Campus. It has been fully restored and furnished with many antiques from 1790s-1830s.

As part of the State Capitol Historic District, the Mansion is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Governor's Mansion Foundation is an all-volunteer, non-profit, non-partisan organization. It honors the historical and cultural significance of the Washington State Governor's Mansion by maintaining and enhancing the furnishings, art and library collection in the public rooms of the Mansion, educating the public about the Mansion and its history, and advocating on its behalf. The Governor's Mansion Foundation is independent of the Governor's office and the Governor. To learn more on becoming a "Friend of the Mansion", or for more information on GMF, visit <https://wagovmansion.org/>.

Prep Sports Calendar

Thursday, March 26

Fastpitch

Tenino at Elma, 4 pm

Track

Tenino at Adma, 1:30 pm

Friday, March 27

Fastpitch

Rochester at Kalama, 4 pm

Boys Soccer

Elma at Tenino, 6 pm

Rochester at Montesano, 7 pm

Monday, March 30

Baseball

Charles Wright at Tenino, 4 pm

Fastpitch

Hoquiam at Tenino, 4 pm

Rochester at Montesano, 5:30 pm

Tuesday, March 31

Baseball

Rochester at Hoquiam (2), 4 pm

Fastpitch

Eatonville at Tenino, 4 pm

Boys Soccer

Tenino at Ilwaco, 6 pm

Raymond-South Bend at Rochester, 7 pm