

COLUMBIA CITY

Newsletter - September 2026



CITY OF COLUMBIA CITY
1840 Second Street
PO Box 189
Columbia City, OR 97018
Ph: (503) 397-4010
Fax: (503) 366-2870
colcity@columbia-city.org
www.columbia-city.org

UNDERSTANDING CITY FINANCES: WHY AN INCREASED POLICE LEVY IS ON THE BALLOT

In 2010, the City Council identified police protection as a critical General Fund service. Property taxes are the largest revenue source for Columbia City. However, total revenue generated by the City's low permanent tax rate falls short of funding a staffed Police Department, making a voter-approved tax levy necessary.

In 1997, Oregon voters passed Measure 50, which caps annual property tax growth to a maximum of 3% based on a home's assessed value **not** the market value. Over time – especially since COVID-19 – this 3% property tax revenue limit has failed to keep pace with inflation and rising operational costs.

The following link is to Columbia County's website, with videos at the bottom of the page that help explain how home assessed values are calculated:
<https://www.columbiacountyor.gov/departments/assessor>

The City was fortunate to receive money from the 2021 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). These funds were used to complete some big items on a long list of necessary City improvements, including: replacing the roofs and rotting siding on City Hall and Community Hall, replacing a broken 30-year-old air conditioner, replacing a broken 1986 backhoe, replacing a police car, and more. While ARPA funds temporarily freed up the use of some of the permanent property tax revenues to subsidize police operations, they were one-time funds, and the gap between the City's limited low tax revenues and the increased operating costs needs to be bridged.

A local option levy is the tool provided by Oregon law to let voters decide whether to support funding to maintain City services. The proposed police levy increase to \$1.95 per \$1,000 of assessed property value will replace the current \$0.90 levy that expires at the end of the 2026-2027 fiscal year. Without the updated levy, and as operational costs continue to rise across the board, it is no longer sustainable for the City to subsidize police operation costs from the permanent tax fund. This new rate will be used to

fund the full cost of police operations, allowing the City to continue maintaining other essential services.

CHIEF'S CORNER

School Starts. Summers end is rapidly approaching. Soon you will start to see children heading back to school. They will be walking to school and bus stops. Please keep an eye out for them and drive safely as you approach them. The school zone speeds will be back in effect so watch your speed in the area of schools. When you see a bus with flashing red lights all traffic lanes must stop unless the highway has a physical divider. All four lanes of highway 30 must stop if there is a bus with its lights on. It is all about safety and protecting the kids in our community.



The Police Department serviced the following calls during July 2026: 1 abuse/neglect, 1 audible alarm, 5 animal complaints, 4 assist persons, 1 burglary in progress, 1 civil complaint, 4 civil enforcements, 1 DHS referral, 1 disturbance, 2 domestics, 11 follow ups, 1 cold fraud, 5 fireworks, 2 harassment/ threats, 6 hazards, 1 incomplete 911, 1 marine patrol, 1 overdose, 1 parking complaint, 16 premise checks, 3 lost/found property, 3 suspicious vehicles, 1 suicide threat, 1 adult sex crime, 3 traffic complaints, 9 traffic stops, 1 unwanted, 1 drug/prostitute, and 1 welfare check. In all the Police Department serviced 95 activities.

The Police Department would like to request your continued support in being our eyes and ears in the community. Please feel free to contact us via 9-1-1 (emergency), 503-397-4010 (office), or 503-397-1521 (non-emergency dispatch).

Best regards ~ Chief Jerry Bartolomucci

SPECIAL THANK YOU TO GARY ECKART

Resident Gary Eckart generously donated a dump truck load of rock from JC Excavating to the City.



Thank you to everyone who helped with the

Columbia City Celebration!

And thank you to



everyone who attended! It was good to see friends and neighbors.

Secondhand Prose. Keeping with USA's 250th Birthday and the 25th Anniversary of 9/11, September half-price specials are History. There are books about important people, various conflicts, and lots more than just American history. Hardbacks \$1.00, Paperbacks \$.50.

New to the Library. 103 titles added to the library, here are just a few:

Make Your Bed: Little Things That Can Change Your Life by William H. McRaven (best seller)
Ironwood by Michael Connelly (recent best seller)
Carl's Doomsday Scenario by Matt Dinniman (best seller)
Deadly Redemption by Warren C. Easley (regional writer)
Meet Me in Paris by Kristin Harmel (recent best seller)
Calamity James by William W. Johnstone (along with three other westerns)
Getting Away with Murder by Shari Lapena (recent best seller)
The Divorce by Freida McFadden (best seller)
Devil's Chew Toy by Rob Osler (Agatha award nominee)
The Glorious Race of Magical Beasts by Alex Bell (middle grades)

Upcoming Events

Saturday, September 12th – Messy Art Day: Join the library for two sessions: **10:30 am to 12 pm & 1 to 2:30 pm.** All ages are welcome! Come get

creative, get messy, and try out some brand-new art projects.

Friday, September 25th – Senior Safety Workshop

#1: Smart & Safe: Understanding AI: Curious about AI? Come from **1 to 2 pm** to learn how it works, how it can be useful in everyday life, and how to recognize when you're interacting with AI. This fun, beginner-friendly workshop will help you feel smarter and safer in an increasingly digital world! Call or email the library to register, space is limited.

Storytime:

Mondays at 11 am

Novel Quilters:

Wednesday, September 16th at 2 pm

Friends of the Library:

Monday, September 21st at 4 pm

Mystery Book Club:

Wednesday, September 30th at 7 pm

Columbia City Community Library

2000 Second Street, PO Box 189

Columbia City, OR 97018

HOURS: Mon, Tue & Sat 10 am – 2 pm

Wed & Thurs 10 am – 6 pm

Phone: 503-366-8020 **Email:** ccclibrary@live.com

Website & Card Catalog:

www.columbiacitycommunitylibrary.com

COLUMBIA COUNTY BEGINS COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN UPDATE

Columbia County Emergency Management is encouraging residents to participate in community meetings and/or an online survey to help with the plan updates. Public input is a key part of the planning process, please share your knowledge and experiences to help guide future mitigation efforts.

Community meetings close to Columbia City are:

- Rainier – Sept. 3, 6 pm, 100 W A Street
- St. Helens – Sept. 17, 6 pm, 1054 Oregon Street
- Scappoose – Sept. 22, 6 pm, 52751 Columbia River Hwy

Those who cannot attend a meeting can share their input through an online survey, remaining open through October 31, 2026. For a printed survey, contact Columbia County Public Health at 503-397-7247 or health@columbiacountyor.gov.

Survey information, meeting updates, and additional CWPP updates will be shared through Columbia County Emergency Management Program's webpage.

VETERANS PARK CLEAN UP THANK YOU

A big thank you to those who helped clean up the Columbia City Veterans Park on Monday, August 24th. Attendees from the St. Helens Garden Club were members Tom and Fonda Lawson, Susan Proctor, and Leslie Fuller. Additional volunteers were Mike Rasczewski and Angel. Thanks to all! Next clean up date is to be determined.



Pictured above are Mike Rasczewski (left), Leslie Fuller (center), and Angel (right).

A VIEW INTO THE PAST "Pete" Peterson and His Bear

by Mark Stevens - markstevens@colcomuseum.org

You may have been driving down on The Strand and passed by a fir tree with a carved wooden bear chained to it and wondered what the back-story was.



During Prohibition in the late 1920's and early 1930's there was a man named Theodore "Pete" Peterson who was claimed to have been a "Bootlegger,"

meaning he was making his own moonshine illegally. I can't find any proof that this allegation was true, but the story goes that after Prohibition ended in 1933, Pete continued with his passion for making moonshine and was selling it out of his home. Theodore Walfred Peterson was born in Sweden on January 9, 1894, and immigrated to the U.S. in 1914. He married Esther Bloomquist in 1923. In the 1930 census, his occupation is listed as a pipefitter, and he is living with his wife Esther and three children on L Street. Esther dies at the age of 31 on March 4, 1936, and in 1940 he is found living on The Strand with his 3 children, Charles, Anna, and Nancy, and lists his occupation as a Cattle Raiser, when in fact it has been suggested that he made his living by snagging logs floating down the Columbia River and selling them to the mills.

To possibly gain attention, Pete got a hold of a bear cub, and as the story goes, he chained it up to a fir tree outside of his home and allowed the neighborhood children to wrestle it. This allegedly all came to an end after the bear started getting more aggressive and was scratching the children, and one of the mothers got her leg bitten.



Here is an AI-generated image of what that may have looked like.

Pete sent his bear off to Marshland (near Clatskanie) to the Bear Tavern. The Bear Tavern was run by a notorious bootlegger and was probably a friend of Pete's and maybe where Pete got his bear in the first place. The Bear Tavern was known for having caged bears that supposedly were brought in by loggers when they found bear cubs in the woods.

So, there you have it. The wooden bear chained to the tree has a true story behind it.

Pete died June 1, 1947, of emphysema at the age of 53, occupation was then listed as commercial fisherman. Both he and his wife Esther are buried in unmarked plots at Bethany Cemetery in Warren.

IS YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION CURRENT?

We frequently find that the phone numbers we have listed on our utility accounts are no longer valid. It is very important that we have current contact information on file for you. We may need to call you to:

- Let you know about a water leak we discovered while reading your meter, or
- Notify you of a temporary street closure that will impact your access, or
- Let you know your water will be shut off due to a waterline break or other repair work, or
- Let you know your dog was spotted near Highway 30, or
- Contact you in the event of an emergency.

Whatever the reason, we hope we have your current contact information in our records when we attempt to call you. If your work phone number has changed, or you have a new cell phone or home telephone number, please keep us informed so we can update our records. To update your contact information, please stop by City Hall, email the information to colcity@columbia-city.org, or call 503-397-4010.

FREE Mattress Recycling
Collection Event
Saturday, September 12
8:00 AM to 12:00 PM
Columbia County Transfer Station
1601 Railroad Ave Street
St. Helens, OR 97051
Call (503) 397-9811 for details



ANOTHER NEIGHBORHOOD GATHERING 25th ALLEY CATS PICNIC Submitted by Leslie Fuller

Twenty-five years ago, Leslie Fuller and Velma Nicholas decided it would be fun to throw a summer party and invite all the folks living on The Strand and on 1st Street. The alley behind the houses between F & G Streets was chosen as it is a large shared grassy area. A perfect place for a party! It inspired the name "Alley Cats". We added a Christmas party, and over the years both parties have been held at different neighbors with Leslie being the coordinator.

We also have a roster and map of The Strand and 1st Street. All of these parts allow us to keep in touch and know our neighbors well.



On August 22nd the Alley Cats held their 25th annual potluck picnic. It was attended by twenty-six neighbors who brought their favorite dishes and desserts. We had a lovely time visiting and meeting new neighbors.

Caples House Museum Complex

1925 1st Street, Columbia City, Oregon

Harvest Festival



Sunday, September 27th, 2026
12:00 - 5:00 p.m.
Free Admission!

The Caples House Museum Harvest Festival is a wonderful way to go back in time with your children.

Play pioneer games.

Write with a quill pen.

Dip candles.

Use a washboard.

Watch apple cider being pressed.

Tour an 1870s farmhouse.

Food and beverages available.



Email : Caples.House@OregonDAR.org
for more information

SEPTEMBER 2026 MEETING AND EVENT CALENDAR

September 7 th	CLOSED	All City Offices in observance of Labor Day
September 8 th	6:00 pm	Parks Committee Meeting at City Hall
September 15 th	6:30 pm	Planning Commission Meeting at City Hall - canceled
September 17 th	6:00 pm	City Council Meeting at City Hall
September 29 th	6:00 pm	Hazard Mitigation Meeting at City Hall