

Onward and Upward!

by Kristi Chapman,
Port Commission President



Summer is here! Hood River is again bustling and vibrant with tourists and locals enjoying all the

recreational opportunities the area has to offer. This time of year always reminds me of the important role the Port of Hood River plays in our local economy. The Port is one of the oldest organizations in Hood River, having started in the 1930s with a focus on creating and supporting a thriving agricultural and industrial economy. Over the last 40 years we have seen tourism explode, and the Port has had to pivot and try to sustainably and responsibly steward its holdings to help support economic growth and maintain beautiful recreational spaces to be enjoyed by locals and tourists alike. The path ahead is a new frontier for the Port, and will require new ideas, opportunities and a shift towards lean management to move forward. I am excited to work alongside my fellow board members to look for new ways for the Port to engage with the communities of the gorge, as we step into a new era where the Port is no longer overseeing the

Please see **Onward** on page 4

Celebrating 100 years of community connection

On December 6th, 1924, Mr. Leslie Butler drove the last spike into the wooden planks of the newly constructed Waucoma Interstate Bridge. Made of steel, wood and concrete, the Waucoma Interstate Bridge spanned almost a mile over the mighty Columbia River, finally connecting the many agriculturally minded communities scattered throughout the gorge.

And while 100 years have passed, the words of Mr. Butler ring as true today as they did that cold December day, "This is not a mere bridge...It is a monument to the spirit of cooperation among the people of Hood River county, Oregon, and those of Klickitat and Skamania counties, Washington; a spirit of cooperation that made possible the construction of the interstate span." It was a day of celebration, with over 1,200 people flocking to the newly built bridge to walk and ride over a river that had been seen for so long as a barrier to new adventure and commerce.

Fast forward 100 years and this spirit of cooperation lives on in the newly formed Hood River White Salmon Bridge Authority (HRWSBA). This new organization, made up of neighbors on both sides of the river, will oversee the bridge replacement project, from funding, to design and ultimately construction. The bridge replacement is on track to be completed in 2029, signaling the end of an era for the Port of Hood River, and for the bridge itself. As the last bolt is welded into the replacement bridge, this historical structure will span the river for the last time, ultimately to be deconstructed, ending a historical span which connected our communities.

From its completion in 1924, the bridge was privately managed by local investors, the Washington-Oregon Bridge Company; they had seen the need for a bridge to help move the natural resources being harvested on both sides of the river. The next twenty-five years saw the



Photo Credit: The History Museum of Hood River County

Leslie Butler drives in the final stake into the Waucoma Bridge, December 6, 1924

bridge almost completely replaced as the completion of the Bonneville Dam raised the river level and required the installation of a lift span and changes to the bridge elevation. In 1950, Washington-Oregon Bridge Company began courting riverside communities in hopes of finding a buyer for the bridge. With towns up and down the river passing on the opportunity, the Port of Hood River took a risk and began ownership and oversight of the newly renamed Hood River-White Salmon Interstate Bridge, buying the bridge for \$800,000 an astounding \$10,182,439 by today's financial standards.

The Hood River-White Salmon Interstate Bridge, was a hefty investment by the Port, spending another \$725,000 in the next year to bring the bridge to pristine condition. As the 1900s marched on, the Hood River-White Salmon Bridge saw many costly upgrades, replacing the wooden beams with steel, adding lighting, running a gas line, cables, rewelding, and repainting. Toll booth systems and upgrades were needed as well, with traffic increasing at an alarming rate. Shortly after the bridge was completed in 1926, a recorded 67,432 cars crossed the newly built structure. As the communities in the gorge grew, the traffic on the bridge increased. By 1980, 1.2 million cars crossed the bridge annually.

Traffic continued to increase, as did the recreational opportunities discovered in the gorge. With the mighty river, and often mighty wind, Hood River proved a popular location for the new windsurfing community. The Port shifted the waterfront's industrial focus to the

Please see **Celebrating** on page 3



Photo Credit: The History Museum of Hood River County

Port Update

AIRPORT:

- The Port is working to secure funding to continue with responsible development of the airport, including a new hanger and potential administrative buildings.
- Asphalt paving repairs completed at Hanger C.
- The Commission agreed to extend an agreement with local non-profit Hood River Soaring, which provides glider rides, instructions and services to the youth of the community.

BUILDINGS:

- The Port administration buildings are in the beginning planning stages to move Port offices to Marina East Building, which will be necessary when construction begins on the new bridge.
- The Port Commissioners are continuing to discuss the possible sale of Port held buildings, as well as agreeing to lease commercial space to numerous local companies.
- Work to maintain and upgrade the popular pedestrian footbridge over the Hood River was completed.

BRIDGE

- 7,800 welds were completed in the latest bridge welding project.
- The Port submitted a formal request to the US Coast Guard to require a 30-day notice for bridge lifts, in order to minimize mechanical and electrical maintenance on the lift span.
- The Port, The Hood River County History Museum and Visit Hood River, are working together to plan a Centennial Celebration of the bridge on October 6, 2024.

WATERFRONT

- The Port has contracted with a security contractor, and will now have security patrols, to ensure the safety of its properties.
- The Port and Commissioners are working to obtain funding to create a roundabout at 2nd and Riverside, as well as adding 50+ parking spaces at the waterfront. ●

Promise and Purpose

By Kevin Greenwood, Executive Director, Port of Hood River



As we embark on the journey into our 75th year of stewardship of the Hood River Bridge, the Port of Hood River is entering a transformative era. 2024 marks not only the centennial anniversary of our iconic bridge but also a pivotal moment as we hand over the reins of the replacement bridge effort to the Hood River White Salmon Bridge Authority (HRWSBA). It signifies a paradigm shift for us, a strategic pivot towards nurturing the burgeoning recreational and commercial landscape of our community.

Operating and maintaining the Hood River Bridge has been both a privilege and a challenge. While the costs escalate annually, it has served as a cornerstone for funding the operational needs of our diverse portfolio, spanning from the riverfront to the airport and every space in between. Remarkably, we've managed to keep the tax burden minimal, averaging a mere \$7 per household per year. However, effective July 1, 2026, toll revenues will be exclusively allocated towards the operations, upkeep and replacement of the existing bridge.

Our waterfront has evolved into a hub for world-class water sports enthusiasts, attracting windsurfers, kite-boarders, e-foilers, and paddleboarders from far and wide. With over 5 miles of shoreline under our stewardship, we've diligently crafted safe and accessible recreational zones, transforming what was once an industrial precinct into a vibrant public space. But with the impending cessation of bridge toll funding for non-bridge activities, we must recalibrate our focus towards revenue-generating initiatives while sustaining our commitment to enhancing the waterfront experience.

The success of waterfront businesses and community events underscores the need for infrastructure upgrades and traffic management measures. Projects like the roundabout and expanded parking facilities are on the horizon to accommodate the growing demands. Annual events like the Harvest and Cider Fest inject vitality into the local economy, emphasizing the pivotal role of community engagement in shaping the waterfront's economic trajectory.

The Port would like to thank the community for their patience and understanding during the emergency closure of the bridge June 28-30, 2024. Closures are not done lightly, as the Port recognizes the impact to the economies and livability on both sides of the river, but **the safety of our community is the priority.** For more information and updates, please head to portofhoodriver.com



Similarly, our regional airport presents promising growth prospects, with local aviation enterprises collaborating on infrastructure enhancements. Securing state and federal grants remains a top priority, ensuring the seamless realization of these development endeavors for the benefit of our community.

Furthermore, fostering partnerships with local organizations forms the cornerstone of our community outreach initiatives. Collaborations with law enforcement agencies ensure the safety of our waterways, while joint ventures with cultural institutions like the Hood River County History Museum enrich the fabric of our heritage. By providing a platform for nonprofits like Wylde, Wind & Water and the Hood River Gliders, we not only empower grassroots initiatives but also sustain vital revenue streams for our facilities and recreational spaces.

In tandem with our commitment to fiscal prudence, we're embracing lean management practices to optimize operational efficiency. The adoption of cutting-edge financial software promises enhanced transparency and streamlined decision-making across departments. As we prepare for the construction of the new bridge in 2025, prudent fiscal planning necessitates relocating our administrative offices to the East Marina building, obviating the need for new construction.

Undoubtedly, the road ahead is fraught with challenges, but we're poised to surmount them with resilience and foresight. As we celebrate a century of bridging communities and nurturing a shared vision for the Columbia Gorge, I invite you to join us in envisioning a future brimming with promise and purpose. So, the next time you find yourself on the waterfront or at the airport, let your gaze linger a moment longer, and dare to dream alongside us as we forge ahead into a future ripe with possibility. ●

Greenwood was promoted to Executive Director in October 2022 after directing the Bridge Replacement project for five years.

Financial Overview

RESOURCES: The financial year for the Port of Hood River runs from July 1 through June 30th of the following year. At the time of publication, the Port is finishing up its fiscal year, with the recently approved 2024/25 Budget adopted by the Port Commission on June 11, 2024. The adopted budget begins July 1, 2024 and is anticipating financial resources of approximately \$28.1 million; an estimated \$11M from toll revenue, \$8.8M in lease revenue and user fees, \$4.3M in anticipated grant revenue, \$4M expected property sales, and the rest from interest and property taxes. Currently, the Port receives only \$105,000 in property tax funding from the community, averaging around \$7 per household annually. The majority of the grant resources are allocated toward the bridge replacement project, and will be administered by the Port until the HRWSBA is ready to take over distributions. The Port is working to diversify revenue streams looking ahead, as bridge tolls will no longer be allocated towards general Port maintenance and operations beginning in July of 2026. For a visual representation of Port resources for the 2024/25 year, please see Chart 1.

REQUIREMENTS: Port financial requirements for the upcoming fiscal year are estimated to be \$24M, of which \$16M is budgeted towards the existing and replacement toll bridge operations. The Port's rental properties will cost approximately \$2.8M to operate, and the popular Waterfront Recreation, Marina and Airport an estimated \$2.2M to maintain. The planned creation of a roundabout at 2nd and Riverside, and creation of additional waterfront parking, will cost around \$3M next year. Regular annual expenses include payroll, administrative services and facilities costs. The Port has taken steps to streamline systems, adding new software that will help managers budget their departments, working diligently to find state and federal fund grants for upcoming projects, and scaling down the scope of projects as needed to best steward their funds. See Chart 2 for visual representation of expected Port requirements for 2024/25. For a detailed look at the budget, head to www.portofhoodriver.com.

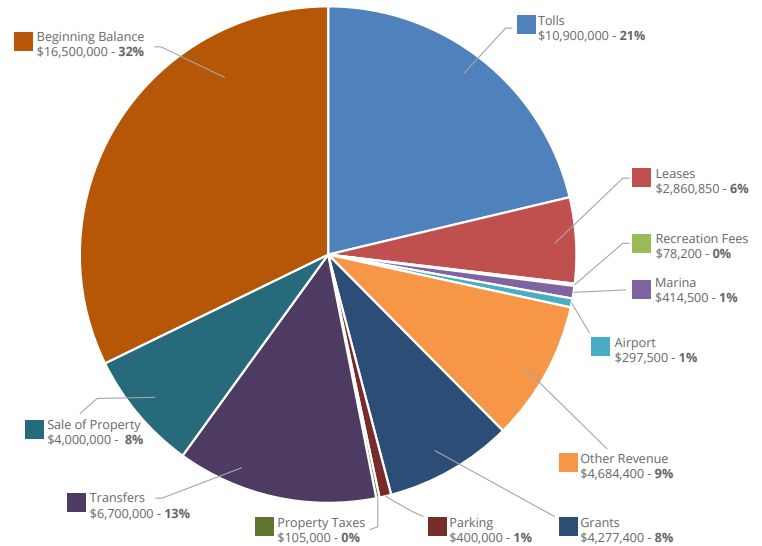


Chart 1 - RESOURCES

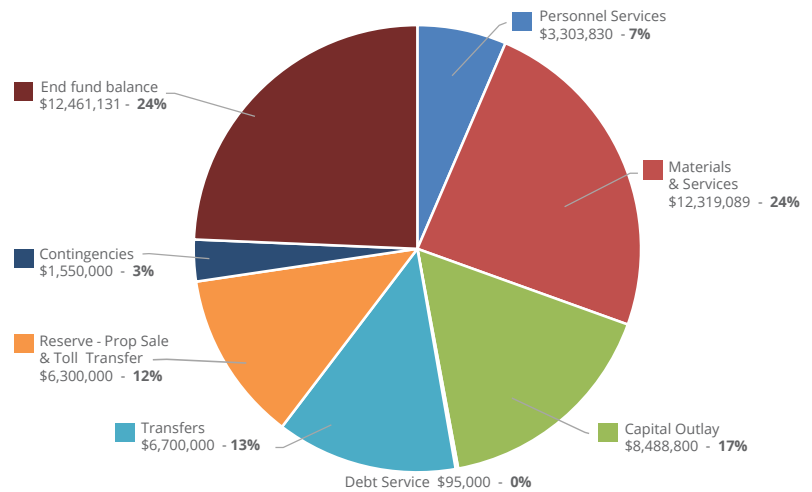


Chart 2 - REQUIREMENTS

Celebrating *continued from page 1*

new windsurfing needs, later adding kiteboarding, e-foiling and family friendly spaces to the growing list of community demands. The tolls from the bridge proved vital in maintaining not only the aging bridge, but the growing maintenance and facility costs for Port properties spread throughout the county. At the turn of the 21st century, the communities of the gorge were interacting more than ever, with traffic on the bridge reaching 4.6 million people in 2023. While the Port had been working hard to safely extend the longevity of the bridge, a long-term plan for replacing the bridge became more than a dream, but a necessity.

And now the time has come for a replacement plan to unfold; a plan that not only proves the spirit of cooperation still exists but moves these communities into a new century of adventure. The Port has handed over the replacement of the bridge to the Hood River White Salmon Bridge Authority, and is looking forward for the concept and design phase to begin. The Port will instead focus on keeping the bridge safe as the replacement plans are finalized and construction begins.

But before the gorge bids farewell to this faithful structure, The Port invites you to celebrate and thank the bridge that once sang a tune of adventure with each crossing. Together with Visit Hood River and the Hood

River County History Museum, the Port will host a Centennial Celebration for the beloved structure in October of 2024. A committee is forming to plan the festivities and each and every community member is invited to say goodbye to the local green giant. For more information, follow Visit Hood River, the History Museum and the Port on Instagram, Facebook, or subscribe to their newsletters. The History Museum of Hood River will be opening a new exhibit early in the fall to celebrate the history of the bridge and the people it has served. A timeline of bridge maintenance and projects can be found at www.portofhoodriver.com.



People of the Port - Celebrating dedication and service



Thank you to Jay, Steve and Celestino for their collective 76 years of dedication to the Port, and community, of Hood River.

It takes a team of 29 to make the Port and its properties function smoothly and safely. Without the dedication of our incredible staff, the Port would not be able to plan for growth and continue with the maintenance and operations of its various holdings. The Port would like to honor and highlight the exceptional dedication of three of our staff: Jay Cruz, Steve Depriest and Celestino Negrete. Together, this trio has collectively contributed 76 years of service to the Port of Hood River, and the community at large. The backbone of the facilities department, Steve, Jay and Celestino embody commitment, passion and excellence in their roles at the Port. Please join us in thanking these gentlemen for their dedication to our community.

Steve (27 years of service)

Steve has been an invaluable member of the facilities team for an incredible 27 years. His unwavering dedication and expertise have been instrumental in the smooth functioning of Port operations. Steve's leadership, reliability and deep knowledge have not only earned him respect among his colleagues but have also played a pivotal role in shaping the success of our Port over the years. We salute Steve for his remarkable service and unwavering commitment!

Jay (25 years of service)

A driving force behind the success of the Port, Jay has been working in the facilities department for 25 years. His passion for his work, coupled with his tireless efforts, is truly inspiring. Jay's attention to detail, problem-solving abilities, and exemplary work ethic have consistently exceeded expectations, making him an indispensable asset to the Port team. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Jay for his dedication and invaluable contributions throughout the years!

Celestino (24 years of service)

For an impressive 24 years, Celestino has been an integral part of the Port family, working hard in the facilities department. His hard work, dedication, and positive attitude have left an indelible mark on the organization. Celestino's unwavering commitment to excellence, coupled with his willingness to go above and beyond, have consistently set him apart. We commend Celestino for his outstanding service and unwavering dedication to the Port of Hood River. ●

Commissioner Fox receives SDAO Award



Mike Fox receiving award from Andrea Klaas

On February 10, 2024, the Special Districts Association of Oregon (SDAO) awarded Port Commissioner Mike Fox the 2024 Outstanding Special District Service Award at a ceremony held in Seaside, Oregon. Nominated for his dedication to the Hood River-White Salmon Bridge Replacement Project and the thousands of hours he has spent in pursuit of funding for the project. With 40+ years working in engineering, Commissioner Fox brings valuable insight and consideration to the replacement project, which is necessary for the vitality of the communities in Hood River, Skamania and Klickitat counties. Elected to the Port Commission in the spring of 2021, Fox played a key role in hiring HNTB as the project manager, which

led to securing over \$300-million in federal and state grants. Commissioner Fox has played an important role in the selection of the Progressive Design Build team, and bringing focus and optimism to the project. "Mike Fox has a tenacity for this project that has been key in moving this bridge replacement project forward" said Board President Kristi Chapman, "I am so glad he was recognized for his efforts."

The Special Districts Association of Oregon is made up of publicly-elected service districts from around the state. The Port is honored to work with Commissioner Fox and watch his passion for the bridge project be put into action as a representative of the Hood River White Salmon Bridge Authority. ●

Onward continued from page 1

Bridge. Instead, we pass the baton of a beautifully functional new bridge to the Hood River White Salmon Bridge Authority, who will oversee and manage the new bridge as that vision comes to life. We cannot stress the importance of keeping the governance of the new bridge local in order to best serve the gorge community. The strides that have been taken over the last few years were because of the dedication of the Port and the Bridge Authority working in concert to support one another. The Port will now take the time to continue to build and foster the community we live in; to strengthen partnerships with local organizations, support local non-profits, and work to maintain current Port holdings. There are some exciting things on the horizon, from a Centennial bridge celebration to new airport projects and improvements. It is going to be a time of growth, restructure, and perhaps a little bit of discomfort, as we right-size our operational and maintenance facilities. I am excited to work with such a dedicated board of commissioners, who are focused on continuing our legacy as a backbone to the economy of Hood River. Onward and upward! ●

New bridge slated to open fall 2029

A new bridge between Hood River and White Salmon is on track to open in October 2029. The much-needed replacement will mark the culmination of decades of work by local leaders on both sides of the river.

The new span will feature long-awaited improvements such as wider lanes and dedicated spaces for cyclists and pedestrians to cross. The replacement bridge will not need to lift for water traffic, and the structure will be built to withstand an earthquake. It will also collect stormwater and runoff, protecting the river ecosystem below.

"We have taken steps to secure certification as the first-ever Salmon Safe bridge in the U.S.," said Jake Anderson, co-chair of the Hood River White Salmon Bridge Authority, which oversees the replacement project. "This landmark certification will be a testament of our commitment to protecting the Columbia River and all the living things that rely on it."

Funding & tolls

The \$520 million project is more than 60 percent funded, thanks in large part to a \$200 million federal INFRA grant. The project has also received \$80 million from Washington State (including a \$5 million planning grant) and \$25 million from Oregon (including a \$5 million planning grant).

The project team is seeking additional funding from the Oregon and Washington legislatures this biennium to ensure the project can move forward into construction. The remainder of the project cost will be covered by a federal loan that will be repaid by toll revenue.

Tolls on the current bridge rose in 2023 to help pay for the new bridge, and the new bridge will also be tolled. The Bridge Authority is committed to keeping tolls low and will establish a toll-setting policy in the coming months.

A bi-state, grassroots effort

The effort to replace the existing bridge dates back to 2003, when the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for construction was submitted to the federal government for approval.

A bi-state working group formed in 2020 and coordinated the work of multiple agencies involved in the bridge replacement project. That working group laid the groundwork for a new agency to spearhead the project.

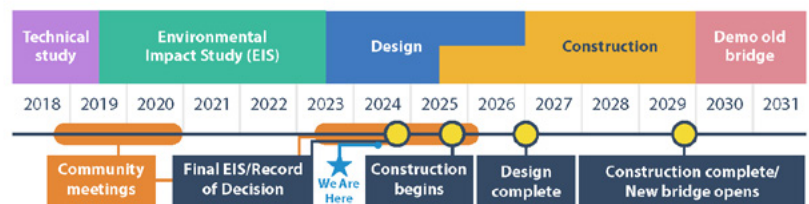
The Hood River White Salmon Bridge Authority was established in 2023. With three commissioners from Washington and three from Oregon, the agency ensures that interests of residents from both states are represented.

"The push to replace this bridge has truly been a grassroots, volunteer effort," said Marla Keethler, who served on the working group and now serves on the Bridge Authority. "We still need more state funding, but what we've accomplished so far speaks volumes about our communities' ability to work together to improve livability across the region."

Project truly underway

The Authority's volunteer commissioners have been busy in the agency's first year. So far, the Authority has secured large federal grants for the project, hired a firm to design and build the bridge, and convened a Bridge Aesthetics Committee to advise the design-builder on the look and the feel of the bridge.

The Authority has also sought public input at key points of the process, including bridge aesthetics and toll rates. The project team has worked hard to ensure the community is up-to-date on the project through the project website, regular emails to its mailing list and by attending community events.



"The project is truly underway now," said Michael Shannon, director of the bridge replacement project. "The first phase of design will be done toward the end of this year, and construction is scheduled to start in 2025."

The existing bridge will remain open throughout construction of the new bridge, which will be built beside it. To minimize disruptions, the old bridge will only close after the new bridge is open to traffic.

To learn more about the bridge replacement project, hoodriverbridge.org.

We need your help!

The project needs more funding from Oregon and Washington state to move into construction. Contact your state representative today and ask them to fund the new bridge.

Washington residents: bit.ly/456DN9D
Oregon residents: bit.ly/3VmAQ1s



TIMELINE OF BRIDGE OPERATIONS



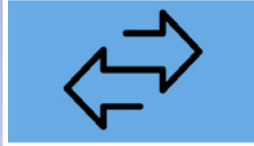
JULY 2023

The Hood River White Salmon Bridge Authority (HRWSBA) is established to take over the policy setting of the bridge replacement effort. The Port continues to provide administrative support to the HRWSBA, but all contracts and replacement bridge policies are set by the new HRWSBA commission. The Port continues to collect tolls on, manage and maintain the existing bridge.



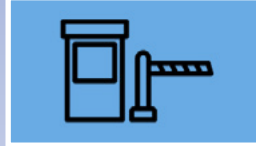
SEPTEMBER 2023

The HRWSBA advocates to the Port to increase tolls with the new tolls (\$1.50 per cash crossing and \$0.75 per BreezeBy crossing) to be set aside in a HRWSBA account with the intent purpose of building up necessary reserves for a federal construction loan. The Port continues to use pre-existing toll amounts for current bridge operations and economic development initiatives.



MARCH 2024

An Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between the Port and HRWSBA codifies the transfer of all bridge replacement grants and contracts from the Port to the HRWSBA. The Port continues to provide administrative services to the HRWSBA.



JULY 2026

100% of ALL tolls must be used solely for bridge operations, maintenance, repairs and/or replacement. All non-bridge activities (e.g. marina, airport, waterfront rec) must be supported by other revenue streams. The Port continues to own and operate the existing bridge.



OCTOBER 2029

100% of ALL tolls will be collected by the HRWSBA to be used solely on new bridge operations and debt services. At this time, the current bridge will cease operations and the Port no longer operates or maintains a toll bridge of any kind.

PORT OF HOOD RIVER

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Tenant Highlight:
History Museum of Hood River County



Step into the History Museum of Hood River and you will be astounded by the variety of items on display. From paintings, to sculptures, textiles and documents, the

museum boasts a variety of objects during their rotating exhibits. The Port has held a special relationship with the History Museum for years, donating the current site for the museum which educates and informs the community on the history of Hood River County. The Port is happy to strengthen this partnership; readily agreeing to lease a 7,000 square foot annex in the Port owned Big 7 building to the History Museum of Hood River County. This new space will allow the museum to house their growing collection, with easier visualization and accessibility. Lisa Commander, Executive Director of the museum is excited about the opportunity to have a better sense of the museum's collection. "What you see on display at any museum is about 10-20% of their collection," Commander explained, "With the new space at the Annex, we have a lot of flexibility." With a team of over 40 volunteers, Commander has been overseeing the movement of the museum's collection into the new space, updating records and documents as they go. The range of objects is extreme - from large farm equipment to beads and



Volunteers of the History Museum inventory the collection in the newly leased Annex.

letters, and this new space has provided new acquisition opportunities for the museum. The annex space will allow the History Museum to rearrange their permanent collection, as some of the current Confluence Project exhibit pieces will find a permanent home at the museum. The freed space will also allow for more meeting spaces, and room for the dedicated volunteers of the museum to continue to digitize the collection and plan future events. Commander is currently focused on the upcoming exhibit on the Hood River-White Salmon Interstate Bridge, a celebration of its centennial, which will open early Fall of 2024, and run through the end of the year. The energy Commander brings to the museum is palpable, and Commander has been inviting various county and city agencies to come and tour the new space, "It's a great space! It's amazing!" Partnering with both the County and the Port, Commander is optimistic about the future of the museum, with a new lease giving new life to their vision. ●