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Friday, November 14, 2025

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Train theft attempted in Warden

By NANCE BESTON
Staff Writer

WARDEN — On Wednesday night, Bunge, a food producer located in the 1800 block of West First Street, was nearly a victim of train theft, according to Warden Police Department Chief Jeff Gann.

“To my knowledge, this is the first time in history that someone has tried to steal a train from the city of Warden,” Gann said. “It might have happened before, but to my knowledge, it has never happened before.”

When the Warden officer arrived at the scene, he learned that a male subject had gained access to a locomotive and released its brakes, attempting to move the train. At the time, there was an employee working on top of the train. The employee escaped without serious injury, according to WPD.

The suspect, John L. McKernan Vasquez, 40, of Warden, was confronted by employees and fled on foot. Officers located him nearby and when he was told to stop, he again fled on foot. Officers pursued McKernan Vasquez for over a mile before he was located hiding in the brush.

“From what I understand, it was not a constant run. This guy would run and then he would hide. The officers would find him, and he would run again,” Gann said. “The pursuit occurred for around 30-45 minutes. It was a long pursuit to get this person. It was dark, there was some rough terrain, and it was muddy.”

See THEFT, A5

Moses Lake to host budget hearing

By CHERYL SCHWEIZER
Staff Writer

MOSES LAKE — Moses Lake residents will have a chance to register their opinions on the city's 2026 budget at a public hearing during the Nov. 26 Moses Lake City Council meeting. The public hearing is being continued from Wednesday's council meeting. Finance Director Madeline Prentice said that while the city's projected general fund

deficit should be smaller in 2026, there's still a deficit.

“(The 2026 budget) does have an approximately \$1 million deficit in a \$41 million (combined) general and street fund. We do have a healthy reserve, so we are able to absorb that deficit,” Prentice said. “We're working very hard to reduce that even more, but currently it does have a \$1 million deficit.”

See HEARING, A5



Moses Lake Mayor Dustin Swartz said general fund revenue projections are a little scary in 2026. Residents can give their opinions on the proposed 2026 budget at a hearing Nov. 25.

CHERYL SCHWEIZER/
COLUMBIA BASIN HERALD

Grant County Animal Outreach to break ground on new shelter

By NANCE BESTON
Staff Writer

MOSES LAKE — The Grant County Animal Outreach will hold a groundbreaking ceremony for its new shelter facility at 2 p.m. Monday on Randolph Road Northeast, marking a milestone in the organization's mission to provide improved care for animals in the community. With a projected cost of \$2.5 million, the new facility is set to address the growing needs of the area's sheltered pets, especially following the surge in animal intake during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“This shelter will serve all of Grant County, not just Moses Lake, with the exception of Quincy, which has its own shelter,” stated Moses Lake City Administrator Rob Karlinsey.

He emphasized the immediate necessity for the project, noting, “The current shelter has outlived its useful life, is in a state of disrepair, and is operating at more than double its capacity.”

According to GCAO board president Sara Thompson Tweedy, the plans for the new building have been in development since 2023, dealing with a series of “starts and stops” along the way.

“When I became involved in GCAO in 2021, there was seed funding for a new shelter, as well as land that was donated,” she said. “Thanks to the community's generosity,

See SHELTER, A3



NANCE BESTON/COLUMBIA BASIN HERALD

Poppy is one of the long-term residents at Grant County Animal Outreach. She, along with the other dogs and cats of the shelter, will be moved to a new \$2.5 million facility in August 2026. Grant County Animal Outreach will break ground on the building Monday.

New ordinance will allow some Moses Lake irrigation-only wells

By CHERYL SCHWEIZER
Staff Writer

MOSES LAKE — Public and semi-public organizations would be allowed to drill shallower-depth wells to help water their property under the terms of an ordinance reviewed by the Moses Lake City Council Wednesday. Water from those wells will be used for irrigation only. Mayor Dustin Swartz said the ordinance is designed to take some of the pressure off the city's existing municipal water system.

“The spirit, as far as I'm concerned, is to get as many users off our municipal potable water system as we can,” Swartz said. “We're doing something to limit (the number of wells) while at the same time trying to solve our problem.”

The ordinance will allow users like the Moses Lake School District to drill a well specifically for irrigation. Spring and summer watering is a major demand on the city's existing system, which is under strain from declining water levels in the deep aquifer that supplies the city's water. The existing system uses water for all purposes that's treated to drinking standards, and giving some customers the option of their own

See IRRIGATION, A5

>> NATION

Shutdown

Government slowly reopens after shutdown but travel snags linger. **A6**

>> LIFESTYLE

Concert

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