

Cougar rumors not confirmed

» Ephrata, A2



Royal overcomes Warden on the pitch

» Soccer, B1

Ephrata competitors recognized

» Schools, C1

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\$1

Study recommends city keep MLFD

By CHERYL SCHWEIZER
Staff Writer

MOSES LAKE — As of now, the city of Moses Lake would be best served by keeping its own fire department, planning to accommodate additional demand and financial sustainability. That was the recommendation of a study presented to the Moses Lake City Council at its regular

meeting Tuesday. The study, done by Berk Consulting, evaluated three options, keeping the Moses Lake Fire Department, forming a separate fire district with a boundary the same as the city limits, and joining with other local fire agencies in a regional fire authority. Don Waller of Berk Consulting said the study concluded the regional

fire authority would not be feasible right now, since the MLFD and its most logical partner, Grant County Fire District 5, are much different departments. "Moses Lake has evolved as an urban city department, versus (GCFD) 5, which has evolved as more of a rural department.

See MLFD, A3



A study of how fire services should be provided to the city of Moses Lake's residents and businesses has found that the Moses Lake Fire Department should be retained as a separate department, at least for now.

CHERYL SCHWEIZER/
COLUMBIA BASIN
HERALD

Last bill sponsored by Warnick signed into law

Legislation will aid Port of Moses Lake in expanding transportation capabilities

By CHERYL SCHWEIZER
Staff Writer

YAKIMA — The final bill sponsored by longtime 13th District Senator Judy Warnick, R-Moses Lake, was signed into law by Gov. Bob Ferguson on Friday. The legislation increases the Port of Moses Lake's ability to borrow money to pay for its project to reconnect port property to outside rail lines.

"That was the last bill of my legislative career," Warnick said. "I was glad to get that across the finish line."

Ferguson recognized Warnick with a special pen used during the signing ceremony in Yakima.

Senate Bill 6312 will allow the port to increase its indebtedness by 0.25%, which Port Director Dan Roach said would make a big difference.

"That's going to allow us to borrow the money we need," Roach said.

Port officials have been working on the rail project for a couple of decades, and have federal



State Senator Judy Warnick, R-Moses Lake, attends a community event in 2023. Warnick has served Washington's 13th Legislative District in Olympia for several years.

FILE PHOTO

and state funding for it, as well as right-of-way access. But inflation over the last few years raised the cost until it was more than the port's available funding.

"How are we going to fill that gap?" Roach said. "We were trying to

get creative."

Warnick's bill was the last piece needed to provide the funding, he said. Port officials were grateful for her help, he said, and a group of commissioners and officials attended the signing ceremony.

"I was glad to be able to do that. I've been working on rail funding for years," Warnick said. "It won't change the world, but it will help the Grant County economy."

The legislation is drafted so that it only applies to the Port of

Moses Lake, she said. Because it was a revenue measure other legislators were skeptical — when presenting it in the House of Representatives, the committee chair hearing the bill asked how many ports would be affected.

"I said, 'One,'" Warnick said.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Warnick said the legislation was narrowly focused but would have an impact.

See BILL, A4



Soap Lake allocates tourism funds, discusses contractors

By NANCE BESTON
Staff Writer

SOAP LAKE — The Soap Lake City Council on Tuesday approved \$52,350 in tourism funding for 2026 events and signaled its intent to contract with both Kovach Architects and Safe Built LLC to address planning and permitting needs.

The tourism allocation passed unanimously after more than an hour of discussion about event requests,

Soap Lake City Council unanimously approved tourism funding for 2026, including the Soap Lake Lantern Festival which recently celebrated its first year.

FILE PHOTO

budget capacity and the city's reimbursement process.

"We budgeted \$50,779, and we've already got \$138,000 in cash on hand," Councilmember Kayleen Bryson said. "I don't recommend that we always go this large, but since this is a special year, I would."

Council members said approving funding does not automatically approve the events themselves. Each organizer must still obtain sign-offs from the police department, fire district and public works.

"Just because we approve the funding does not mean we approve the event,"

See TOURISM, A2

» LOCAL

Promotion

GCFD 7 ceremony promotes captains, medical service officers. C1

» SPORTS

NBA

Seattle a step closer to getting NBA team. B1

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