

Slow growth

Population report shows little change for West Linn

See Page A11



Lawyer up?

West Linn regroups after legal services measure fails

See Page A8



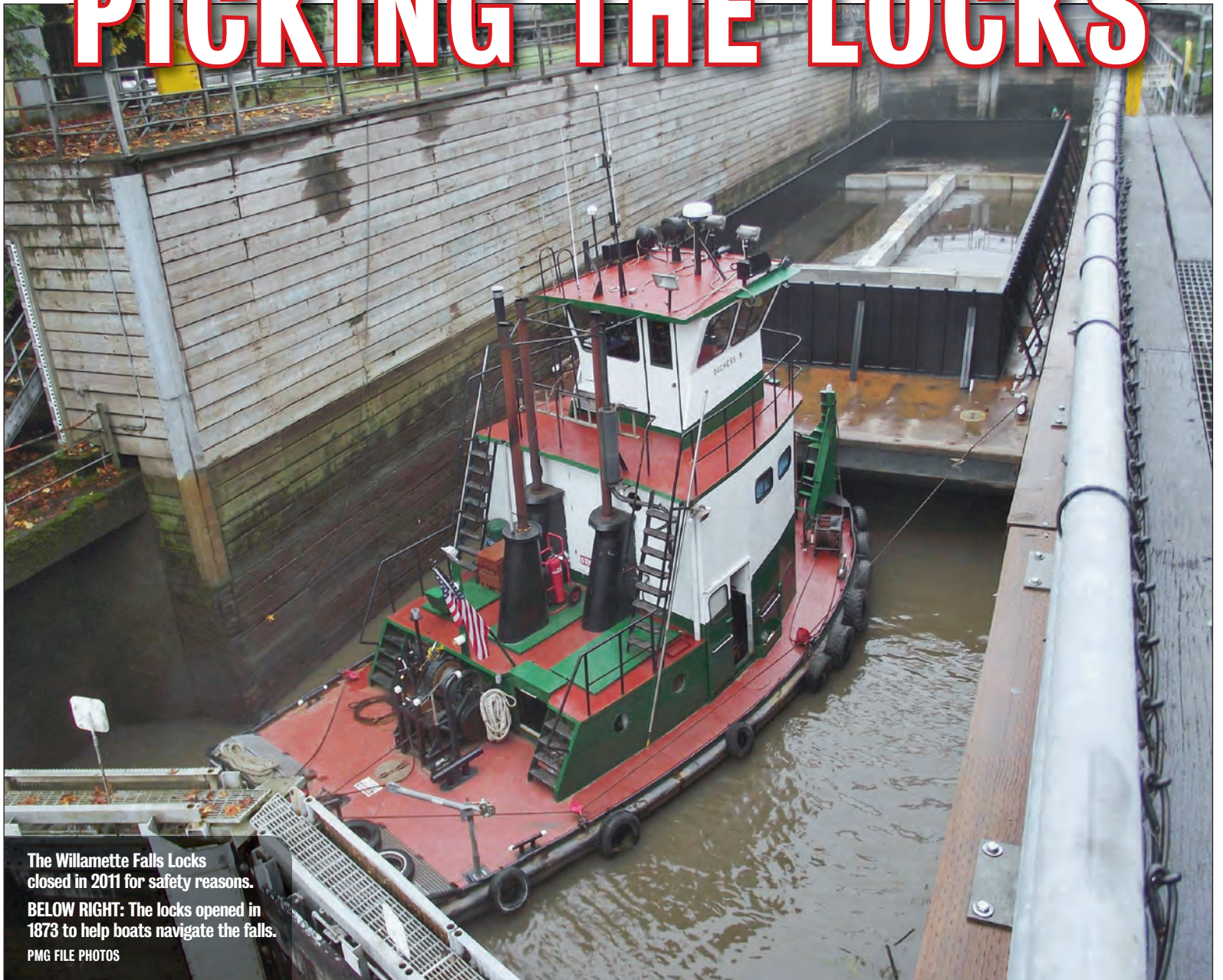
Owner & Neighbor
Dr. Robert B. Pamplin, Jr.

WestLinnTidings

Pamplin
MediaGroup

Thursday, November 28, 2019 • Vol 39, Issue 49 • Building a stronger West Linn through great local journalism • westlinntidings.com • \$1.00

PICKING THE LOCKS



The Willamette Falls Locks closed in 2011 for safety reasons.

BELOW RIGHT: The locks opened in 1873 to help boats navigate the falls.

PMG FILE PHOTOS



PMG PHOTO: HOLLY BARTHOLOMEW

Ken Warner has been with the parks department for 26 years.

Ken Warner named parks director for West Linn

Warner will take over for longtime head Ken Worcester

By HOLLY BARTHOLOMEW
The Tidings

Though the West Linn Parks & Recreation Department lost one half of its two-Ken team with the retirement of Parks Director Ken Worcester at the end of October, City residents can rest easy knowing the department is in the hands of the other half of the duo, longtime assistant director Ken Warner.

After 26 years with the department, Warner was named permanent director Tuesday, Nov. 19, following a stint as interim director after Worcester's retirement.

"I'm very proud to be the director," Warner said. "Through the years, with Ken's (Worcester's) leadership we've had a great run."

Warner was hired by the City in 1993 as its first recreation coordinator.

"Ken told me years later that I was the second choice, but we think it worked out," Warner joked. "I was put in a 10-by-20 room with a table and a notepad and a pen and Ken said, 'Let's build a rec program.'"

It's been a slow process, but Warner is proud of the rec program built by the West Linn parks team. He said he's glad that the community has accepted the programming and participated at such high rates.

Not long after Warner got the rec program off the ground, a couple community members came to the parks department wanting to address the community's need for more space to put all of these programs. To accommodate these needs, they

See PARKS / Page A10

Panel still needs state, federal funding, legislation to reopen Willamette Falls waterway

By HOLLY BARTHOLOMEW
The Tidings

Plans to reopen the Willamette Falls Locks and have them operating once more are moving full steam ahead.

The locks served as a way for commercial and recreational boats to navigate up and down the river for 138 years before closing in 2011 when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) determined that excessive corrosion of the locks' gates made them a public safety hazard.

Last week, members of the Willamette Falls Locks Commission, including West Linn Mayor Russ Axelrod, who chairs the

commission, testified to four committees of the Oregon Legislature. The commission is advocating for legislation that will form a public corporation to take over ownership of the locks.

Axelrod said the testimony was well-received by the legislative committees last week. He added that they hope to get the bill through in this legislative session, which ends in March.

If the bill passes, Axelrod explained the governor will then appoint a handful of board mem-

See LOCKS / Page A2





COURTESY PHOTO ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

The Willamette Falls Locks served as a vital part of Oregon's transportation system, allowing boats to navigate the entire Willamette River. It has undergone multiple repair efforts over the years.

Locks

■ From Page A1

bers to run the corporation, which according to the draft legislation would be called the Willamette Falls Locks Authority.

Before the ownership of the locks can be transferred to a state corporation, however, Congress must first deauthorize them as a federal facility.

Congress is currently starting work on a bill generally referred to as WRDA (water resources development act)," said Michelle Giguere, a project team leader with the commission.

"The Senate committee is starting that bill and Sen. Merkley sits on that committee and has a provision drafted for transfer of the locks, which we believe will be included in the

Senate bill."

According to the commission, a study by ECONorthwest found that opening the locks would provide \$12 million to 49 million of transportation benefits and \$12 million to \$50 million in recreation benefits to the state of Oregon, as well as remove 80,000-220,000 truck trips from Portland area roads and provide a reduction of 11,000-32,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide.

"Reopening the locks and returning navigational access around Willamette Falls also holds tremendous historical and cultural value to Oregonians, and to the state's Native American tribes. Tribal history in the area dates back at least 14,000 years, once serving as a place to collect food and fiber and to trade with other tribes, as well as a spiritual and ceremonial gathering place," an October press release from the commission stated.

The commission hopes the

falls will be open and operating once again in the next five to ten years. The USACE plans to make a number of capital improvements before the locks reopen.

These repairs are estimated to cost around \$14 million, Axelrod said. He said the commission hopes to receive some of that funding from state lottery funds.

Capital repairs and improvements aren't the only costs the commission is focusing on at the moment. They expect to need \$250,000-400,000 a year for the first four or five years while the Willamette Falls Locks Authority is starting up.

"We'll be reaching out to a lot of different people, entities and stakeholders," Axelrod said.

He mentioned funding could come from different cities along the river, the counties of the greater Portland area, the Port of Portland and Portland General Electric.