PGE, WL partnering in waterfront master plan

By PATRICK MALEE
The Tidings

West Linn has a new partner as it plans for large scale redevelopment along its waterfront.

Portland General Electric (PGE), which owns a significant portion of the land along the waterfront, is partnering with the city to redevelop land between the Arch Bridge and Willamette Park. This move is significant because it will bring in a master planner to evaluate future uses of its waterfront property.

Work will be completed in conjunction with West Linn's own master planning process, which is targeted for completion in 2024. The city has long hoped to spur economic and recreational redevelopment along its waterfront, and its most recent planning process referred to the same goals.

As West Linn's Waterfront Master Plan began in 2016, a new concept plan for the area was approved in 2018, but scrapped when the City Council underwent a significant turnover.

For PGE, the decision to get involved was driven by a significant change in its property.

"The biggest driver is that PGE owns more than 180 acres of land along West Linn's waterfront that may be redeveloped, including the island that houses the former West Linn Paper Company mill."
Planning

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Closure back in October," said Brooke Berglund, POE's local government affairs manager for West Linn. "They're a tenant of ours on our property, and so when the City was moving forward with their planning process, we determined it was a good time to be able to marry those two together, for us to really be able to look at, "What does the future of that site look like?"

West Linn Paper's lease with PGE runs through 2030, meaning that up until that point another company could come in and use the mill land for a similar purpose.

"We aren't sure yet what that will look like long-term," Berglund said.

Whatever's clear is that PGE, which has operated the T.W. Sullivan hydroelectric plant next to the paper mill for more than 125 years, isn't going anywhere.

"We want to be able to maintain Sullivan ... continue to operate that, provide the fish passage while also partnering with the City," Berglund said. "The plan will look at the whole gamut of everything that's on the island and the property. How do those interactions with the other? And then moving forward, what that could look like."

PGE owns a total of nine parcels of land totaling 156 acres along the waterfront, according to West Linn Community Development Director John Williams. That total doesn't include the island, which Williams estimated to be about 15 acres. In all, Williams said PGE owns about 40 percent of West Linn's waterfront project area, not including road right-of-way.

The island — created when the Willamette Falls Locks were carved out of rock in 1873 — houses the plant and sits next to the Willamette Falls will be a particular point of focus as master planning is completed.

"That piece is so unique," Berglund said. "We have an operating hydro power facility, the Willamette Falls Locks, it's the site of West Linn Paper. There are all these different components for it."

Williams agreed.

"The property on the shore, some of it is quite challenging and interesting. But the island, I would say is the most unique and the piece of property with the biggest opportunity on it. L that anyone is looking at in the state of Oregon right now," Williams said. "There's nothing like that, in every sense of the word — both opportunities and challenges."

Berglund said PGE hopes to make significant progress on its plan through the second half of this year.

"We have a tentative timeline where we're hoping to have a master planner on board this summer," she said. "They'll start working with us on outreach in the community, what the community is looking for and take the information and have and what the City has from previous planning processes. And hopefully they'll have a recommendation by the end of the year that would then feed into the City's overarching plan in the beginning part of '25."

Beyond public outreach, the planners will also do site analysis on PGE's properties.

"They'll take into consideration the requirements we have with the power plant, and the requirements that exist to maintain it," Berglund said.

As planning moves forward, Williams said the City is excited to see how the partnership will unfold.

"It will allow us to get a much better understanding of what that property is," Williams said.

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WILL GLAUSI
Will Glaus is a senior at West Linn High School. His favorite hobby is music. He plays in several bands, and takes and teaches lessons. He also plays music with people wherever he can. With his family, Will enjoys adventuring in the Columbia River Gorge. With friends, Will likes to laugh and have fun. Will values PGE for its top-tier teachers. His two favorite subjects are math and Spanish. Advice he'd give to other students who want to be successful is to remember that consistent work can get you to the top. A career he'd like to learn more about is culinary arts.

ABBY GROSS
Abby Gross is a senior at West Linn High School. In school, Abby finds herself busy with AP classes and teaches outside of school. She is busy playing soccer and lacrosse, painting and working at a food cart in Tigard. With family, Abby likes to play with their dogs, hike and travel. With friends, she enjoys thrift shopping, being outside and trying different restaurants. Abby values WHLS for its dedicated teachers. Her favorite subjects are art and math. Advice she'd give to students is to get involved in areas that interest you. A career Abby would like to learn more about is biomedical engineering.