

**Utility holds line on electric rates for 2007**

Clark Public Utilities' commissioners today put their stamp of approval on a \$372 million electric system operating budget for 2007 that holds the line on current electric rates.

And it looks as if the utility will end 2006 well enough in the black to add to the rate stability fund that was established two years ago and is now well over \$5 million. Clark's chief financial officer, **Rick Dyer**, told utility commissioners the utility could have as much as a \$6 million surplus by the end of this year.

In addition, the utility has \$670,000 in unused tax credits. Each of the three commissioners had hers or his own separate ideas about how that should be distributed.

Commission president **Carol Curtis** recommended using most of the tax credits to beef up the utility's low-income programs, including Operation Warm Heart, which is also supported in part by utility customer voluntary contributions. Commissioner **Nancy Barnes** said that she felt that a large portion of the tax credit should be applied to electric energy conservation programs. Commissioner **Byron Hanke**, who initiated the utility's rate stability fund, suggested that after applying a portion of the tax credit to Operation Warm Heart, the largest share should be added to the rate stability fund.

The utility also serves about 30,000 water customers in Clark County, who can expect an increase of about 12 percent in water rates beginning January 1, with the average customer bill going up to \$25.32 a month.

The largest increase for water customers is the system development charge, which will rise from \$1,500 to \$1,750, to more closely reflect system development charges, according to Dyer.

**Moeller proposes sales-tax "holiday"**

Saying it's an especially appropriate idea for our border counties, state Rep. **Jim Moeller** (D-49th) today announced he will sponsor a bill creating a sales-tax holiday for citizens and businesses.

"At least a dozen other states already provide their citizens and businesses a break from the sales tax for a couple days a year, usually in August to help back-to-school shoppers," Moeller said.

Moeller's sales-tax holiday would apply to clothing, shoes, school-supplies, textbooks, computers and other school-related items. Washington shoppers and businesses would see the tax break the second weekend every August.

"This proposal would recapture a large chunk of the millions of dollars in revenue our stores lose to Oregon every year," Moeller predicted.

Moeller is meeting with small businesses and other retailers, as well as city and county officials to prepare the bill for legislative-committee discussion.

His proposal would extend the tax break to clothing of no more than \$150 an item, computers of no more than \$2,000 each, and school-supplies of no more than \$150 apiece.

New York state offered the first sales-tax holiday nine years ago. Other states that have recently provided the break include Alabama, Connecticut, Iowa, New Mexico and Texas.

**ICC to discuss local consequences of international trade projections**

Identity Clark County presents a program on the consequences of the projected doubling of international trade in the Vancouver-Portland port systems over the next 30 years in a program open to the public at 11 a.m. Thursday, Dec. 14, in Port of Vancouver offices, 3103 NW Lower River Road.

The findings of the Vancouver-Portland Trade Capacity Study will be presented by **Arno Hart**, lead consulting analyst for the study group. The Port of Vancouver and the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council are major participants in the regional study.

The study was designed to provide insight into trade trends that will affect the region's land supply and to help identify priorities that relate to international and domestic trade and the ports of Vancouver and Portland.

Southern California, the California Bay Area, the Columbia River and Puget Sound are primary West Coast gateways to international trade.

Trucking is expected to be the dominant mode of freight transportation in and out of West Coast ports, the study finds.

For further information and to register for the program, call **695-4116**, or send an email to

[kathy@identityclarkcounty.org](mailto:kathy@identityclarkcounty.org)

### **Clark County Chamber of Commerce names six best in county businesses**

Six Clark County businesses were singled out for Best-In-County Awards yesterday by the Clark County Chamber of Commerce. The awards recognized top performances in six different categories.

The winners were selected from an estimated 16,000 businesses in Clark County, according to chamber of commerce president **Izad Khormae**.

The winners are as follows: Umpqua Bank, Visibility, Best-in-County, for developing innovative strategies to gain awareness; Absolute Life Chiropractic, Networking, Best-in-County for building strength by working with others; Quail Homes, Public advocacy, Best-in-County for having a positive impact on the community; Clark County Department of Community Development, Business Services, Best-in-County for excellence in serving the community; Silicon Forest, Training Programs, Best-in-County for developing talent within its own organization; and Legacy Salmon Creek Hospital, Entrepreneur, Best-in-County for expanding job growth and providing quality patient care based on a family-centered care approach.

### **News brief**

The Vancouver Youth Theatre Group and Burgerville USA have teamed up to present two Breakfast with Santa programs Saturday, Dec. 16, in the Salmon Creek Burgerville, NE 134th Street and Highway 99. The holiday shows and complete breakfasts, waffles, eggs, bacon, pastries, milk or juice, are at 9 a.m. and again at 10 a.m. Adult tickets are \$10. Tickets for children 10 and under \$6. Both include breakfast. Pre-purchased tickets are \$8 and \$4 and can be had by calling Unraveled Yarns, **993-5835**.

### **Calendar**

C-TRAN board of directors meet at 5:15 p.m. today in C-TRAN offices at 2425 NE 65TH Avenue. ☞ Clark County department of community services director **Michael Piper** and the department's deputy director **Cheri Dolezal** will discuss and show photographs of their recent exchange visit to Africa at 5:30 p.m. today in the Center for Community Health, 1601 E Mill Plain Boulevard. ☞ Clark County commissioners meet in an informal session at 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 13.

### **Tuesday Headlines**

[Regional library director Bruce Ziegman is one for the books--Columbian, Howard Buck](#)  
[SP&S 700 steam locomotive will bring Santa Claus to Vancouver for a two your visit Saturday--Columbian, Dean Baker](#)  
[Vancouver council pleased with Grand Central development plans--Columbian, Cami Joner](#)  
[Old barn by Clark County fairgrounds succumbs--Columbian, Julia Anderson](#)  
[Oregon man crashes two cars, gets two DUI tickets on the same day--KATU](#)  
[Christmas trees going back up at Sea-Tac--Seattle Times, Janet I. Tu and Lornet Turnbull](#)  
[White House won't unveil new Iraq plan until next year--USA TODAY, David Jackson](#)  
[Truck bombing kills at least 70 in Baghdad--New York Times, Qais Misher and John O'Neil](#)  
[Most Americans believe U.S. is losing Iraq War--Washington Post, Peter Baker and Jon Cohen](#)  
[Interest rates hold steady--USA TODAY, Sue Kirchhoff](#)

### **Tuesday on the air**

...Bravo! Vancouver: The Messiah—3 p.m. CVTV  
Marshall Award Ceremony (11/8)—5:30 p.m. CVTV  
**Vancouver Planning Commission (live)—7 p.m. CVTV**

### **Town Tabloids and the Weather**

**Ron Fincher** making tree trimming pitch. ☞ **Terry Mundorff** getting absentia plaudits. ☞ **Gary Saleba** fondly remembered. ☞ **Jim Jacks** doing the best with what he has to work with. ☞ **John Idsigna, Gladys Doriot** and **Gary Adkins** share paper turkeys. ☞ **Tuesday**, showers likely, sunbreaks, too, 55. **Wednesday**, mostly rain, 52.

The Daily Insider is published by Tony Bacon 7007 Corregidor Rd. Vancouver, WA 98664. (360) 696-1077. Fax 694-9886. E-mail [tony@dailyinsider.info](mailto:tony@dailyinsider.info). Annual subscription, \$335.00. Free to all retired persons.

**Thursday**, more rain, possible sun breaks, 50. [Click here for the rest of Pat Timm's current weather information.](#)