

Pioneer Village at Oregon Trail Days

By Charlie Plante
DeVaul Publishing

Pioneer Village started with Bob Hill taking out a piece of cedar wood in the middle of a field to “shake” it into roof slats to show people how it used to be. Over the last 17 years, that one demonstration has turned into 28 separate booths and an incredible number of people in the community helping Hill by volunteering their time to help teach others.

“Whatever’s in your heart is what drives you and when I see people incredibly happy, that’s what drives me,” Bob Hill said.

Bob Hill started out as an elementary school teacher and now that he’s retired, “he works all year by himself collecting and

getting people involved and he’s nearly 80,” Amy Cassidy, Bob and Patsy Hill’s daughter, said. “His face just lights up when he sees kids learning.”

Patsy Hill said she and him have worked together on the village, but he spearheaded it.

He wanted children to understand history, not through a book, but through hands-on learning, Bob Hill said.

“Our community is really supportive,” Patsy Hill said.

Their community even helped to build a traditional apple cider press.

Ski Onloske and Bob Hill have been friends for 45 or 50 years, Onloske said. He volunteered to help run a booth, where he was in charge of teaching peo-

ple how to sharpen axes. “It’s gotten bigger every year.”

Even those he does not know, he supports. David Thorp, a member of the North West Blacksmith Association said he brings them lunch even though he does not have to and is not a part of the pioneer village.

“He is just so nice,” Thorp said.

“All of his neighbors are here,” Cassidy said. “People love him so much they want to help him in return.”

Kris Fitzgerald is exactly that. She was helping the Hills by running the wood carving booth.

“Everyone here has become like family,” Fitzgerald said.



Photo by Charlie Plante

Ski Onloske uses a pioneer sharpener to sharpen an axe on July 25 in Tenino.



Courtesy Photo Deb Reichelderfar

Dan Fisher is stepping down this week after 22 years as editor of the Tenino Independent/Rochester Sun News.

Dan Fisher retires

By Charlie Plante
DeVaul Publishing

The reporter, editor and paperboy for the Tenino Independent over the last 22 years is retiring at the end of July.

Dan Fisher started his career out as a sports writer in 1982 and slowly became accustomed to a small city with its routines, events and livelihoods.

“Dan is a very balanced person,” Justin Black, the Rochester School Board Superintendent, said. “He understands small communities very well. He’s not there to do a ‘gotcha’ or anything like that, he’s there to just report what’s going on and highlight the celebrations we have as a school.”

Deb Reichelderfar, the South Thurston County Historical Society (SICHS) treasurer, said he attended community events diligently over his 22 years. Cheryl Pearce, the Tenino Chamber of Commerce president, said his attendance with the council and chamber meetings was prompt and Clint Endicott, the Tenino School Board Superintendent, agreed for his “prolific” attendance at school board meetings.

“I know that I am attending meetings for my readers,” Fisher said.

“I’ve observed him working in our community and I value that in a small town reporter,” Reichelderfar said. “Being present is the biggest part of the

battle.” “He’s been great and he’s been generous with his time,” Black said.

“One of the things I really appreciated that he has is the history page,” Black said. “It helps us get a little bit of a historical perspective on our own small community. I think him trying to keep that small community tradition alive has been a really cool thing he’s done.”

Fisher began the “It happened this week...” section of the Tenino Independent, one of his proudest accomplishments at the Independent. Going back into the paper’s history and learning what was going on at the time.

“The things I have always appreciated about Dan was his desire to highlight the good in whatever was going on and he was pretty passionate about his work and that showed,” Endicott said. “He definitely carried a pretty large work load for a long time and he did it pretty commendably.”

“He will be missed,” Black said. “He’s been a constant face. It’s almost a tradition to have Dan at our school board meetings... We’ll miss that transition of Dan every other Wednesday.”

“Dan was a very unique individual as he really wanted to capture the things that make our community great,” Endicott said. “He did a commendable job.”

“Thank you, Dan,” Reichelderfar said.

Board approves Tenino 2026-27 school budget and fee schedule

’25-26 closed out with budget extension

By Dan Fisher
News Editor

In a meeting that began a little late but still ended early, the Tenino School Board on Monday, Sept. 27 approved Resolution No. 1: 2026-2027, adopting the school budget for the upcoming school year.

Also approved was Resolution No 5: 2025-2026, a General Fund and Capital Projects budget extension to close out the just-completed school year.

A new facilities use and free schedule was also approved, which raises breakfast prices by 20 cents and lunch prices by 10 cents for students, and increases meal prices by \$1 each for adults and raising admission to THS

sports event by \$1 as well, in order to conform with the rest of the schools in the Southwest WAsngton 1A League Evergreen Division.

The meeting began six minutes late because at the scheduled start time of 6:30 p.m. the board lacked a quorum, with only Board President Jessica Reeves Rush and Director Jessica Eley present. Arriving at 6:36 was Director Jennifer Johnson, allowing the meeting to get under way.

The 2025-26 budget extension allowed a transfer of \$150,000 from the General Fund to the Capital Projects Fund to cover the expense of replacement for the artificial turf at Beaver Stadium, which has reached the end of its useful service.

Also included was the addition of \$450,000 in federal funds which were not part of the original 2025-26 budget.

The 2026-27 budget saw an increase from the ’25-26 total of

\$22,747,000 to \$24,479,652.

Superintendent Clint Endicott reported to the board on the State Board of Education Minimum Basic Education Requirements.

“New this year is a requirement for our board to see our submission on meeting state requirements before we submit it to the State Board,” Endicott said.

The TSD report was reviewed and approved by a 3-0 vote.

District Fiscal Director Jamie Black closed out the 2025-26 school finances with his report to the board.

“Through the end of the school year we have been trending consistently with our budget,” Black said.

The next business meeting of the Tenino School Board will be on Monday, Aug. 24, at 6:30 p.m. at the School District Office board room.

RSD Board gets Highly Capable and Multilingual plan reports

Justin Black gives his first Supt.’s report

By Dan Fisher
News Editor

Rochester’s School Board received reports on the 2026-27 Highly Capable Plan and the ’26-27 Transitional Bilingual Program Plan, both from Maggie Evans, as the centerpiece of the board’s July 22 business meeting in the RSD office board room.

Evans described how the state defines Highly Capable students and the changes for the coming year in the referral selection process.

“We anticipated this, so we didn’t have to make changes in our plan,” Evans told the board. “This program is expected to involve about 3 to 5 percent of students. There is a difference between ‘bright’ and ‘highly capable.’ We try to focus on the services we offer.”

Evans then described the ‘continuum of services’ offered in Rochester schools, which have 6.5 to 7 percent of their students rated as highly capable.

After her Hi-Cap Plan report, the board voted approval of the plan for the 2026-27 school year.

Evans then shifted to the Transitional Bilingual Program Plan for the coming school year, which she said is for “Students, not native English speakers, to make them fluent in English while also doing their regular learning.”

The board also voted approval of the Transitional Bilingual Plan.



Photo by Dan Fisher

Maggie Evans delivers the 2026-27 Highly Capable Plan report during the July 22 Rochester School Board meeting.

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was then approved by the board for shared Special Education Assignments with the Oakville School District.

A Water System Preconstruction Contract was next on the agenda, and Black told the board that tree bids had been received, with Raglin’s of Aber-

deen submitting the best overall bid, which was accepted by the board.

The final item considered by the board was one on classroom technology, for the installation of interactive panels in classrooms at Grand Mound Elementary School. This proposal was also approved by the board in a unanimous vote.

Austin Gonia on Linfield’s Spring 2026 Dean’s List

MCMINNVILLE, OR -- Austin Gonia from Tenino, WA, earned Dean’s List honors at Linfield University during the spring 2026 academic term.

The Dean’s List identifies undergraduate students who earned a GPA at least equivalent to a cum laude (3.65) while taking at least graded 12 credits. It is computed following the posting of grades at the end of each semester. Students from Lin-

field’s three locations - McMinnville campus, Portland campus and eCampus - are eligible.

Gonia is a first-year student, majoring in an undeclared field.

Congratulations, Austin, on this distinguished academic achievement!

Linfield University is an independent, nonprofit university with campuses in McMinnville and Portland, Oregon, as well as eCampus for online learning.