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Violet Power still committed to Moses Lake production

By CHARLES H. FEATHERSTONE
Staff Writer

MOSES LAKE — Despite ending its relationship with REC Silicon, Oregon-based solar power startup Violet Power expects to start production in Moses Lake this year.

“The termination of the alliance with REC, however, will not affect in any way Violet Power’s plans for, or progress on, building out its manufacturing capacity in Moses Lake,” Violet Power CEO Desari Strader said in a press release issued late last week.

The companies jointly announced in September 2020 Violet Power would secure polysilicon to make solar panels from REC’s currently shuttered Moses Lake production facility and would lease space from Massachusetts-

based biofuels start-up Xyleco at its facility at 3741 Road N NE, just across the street from REC.

However, Violet Power later announced it was looking at building its own production facility at the Port of Moses Lake.

According to Strader, Violet Power remains committed to Moses Lake, with Violet Power-made solar modules and panels expected to hit the U.S. market by the end of 2021.

“As Violet Power announced in September 2020, the first cell and module line at 1.4 gigawatts will reach full capacity at our plant in Moses Lake by 2022,” she said in the press release.

Solar-grade silicon is created in a reactor with a catalyst and a great deal of

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First cases of ‘California variant’ COVID-19 strain found in Grant County

By CHERYL SCHWEIZER
Staff Writer

MOSES LAKE — Grant County Health District officials announced Monday the first three cases of the COVID-19 “California variant,” B.1.429, were confirmed in the first few days of April.

Misty Aguilar, GCHD public information officer, said the three people tested positive for coronavirus in late March and early April. None of the patients required

hospitalization, and all are recovering, Aguilar said.

Presence of the variant was confirmed by testing at the Washington Department of Health Public Health Laboratory.

Grant County health officer Dr. Alexander Brzezny said in a release most coronavirus cases now identified in Washington are variants of the original disease.

“Most COVID variants are

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Eye on traffic

Widen SR-28/281, says a mayor asking for federal funding



By CHARLES H. FEATHERSTONE
Staff Writer

ROCK ISLAND — Rock Island Mayor Randy Agnew is tired of the traffic on state Route 28. He would like to see the road, which links Wenatchee to Interstate 90 at George via state Route 281 and passes through his community, widened to four lanes.

“I’ve lived out here a good portion of my life,” said Agnew, 60. “The traffic has increased a lot, and I’ve been pushing for this since I became mayor.”

Agnew is asking Sen. Patty

Murray to include a \$1.2 billion appropriation to widen SR-28/281 as part of any federal highway appropriation or infrastructure funding measure this year.

Murray’s office did not respond to the Columbia Basin Herald’s request for comment.

According to the Washington State Department of Transportation’s website, SR-28 from East Wenatchee to Quincy and then SR-281 south to I-90 is one of the busier routes in the region, with portions of the road — particularly near the potato and

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Vehicles travel on state Route 281 between George and Quincy.

Dave Burgess/Columbia Basin Herald

Senate passes low-carbon fuel standard bill; returns to House

By ANGELICA RELENTE
Herald Legislative Writer

In a 27-20 vote, the Washington state Senate passed House Bill 1091, the low-carbon fuel standard bill, which many opponents say would hike gas and diesel prices in the state.

After the virtual legislative debate Thursday night, the bill will head back to the House to consider the Senate’s amendments.

HB 1091 would permit the state Department of Ecology to create the Clean Fuels Program to limit greenhouse

gas emissions in transportation fuel, according to the bill’s text. The program looks to reduce carbon in fuels to 20% by 2035.

Democrats say HB 1091 would ensure children will have a healthier environment in the future while Republicans say the bill would impact Washingtonians’ wallets, especially those on the eastern side of the state.

Sen. Reuven Carlyle, D-Seattle, said during the virtual legislative debate climate change is affecting people’s lives. Bills like HB 1091

would work to decarbonize the transportation sector, which makes up 45% of the greenhouse gas emissions in the state, he said.

“The work of climate change is unheralded,” Carlyle said. “The work of taking meaningful action is not easy.”

Sen. Judy Warnick, R-Moses Lake, said during the virtual legislative debate she received a handwritten letter from a resident in her district



Warnick

who was worried about HB 1091. The resident, a fifth-generation farmer from Quincy, was concerned about the future of her family farm if the bill is signed into law.

“I understand ... the underlying goal of this legislation, but I think the high cost is going to hit the low-income people and our agricultural people harder than anyone else,” Warnick said.

Sen. Mark Schoesler, R-Ritzville, said during the virtual legislative debate the only thing “honest” about HB 1091 is the increase in fuel prices. The bill would impact



Schoesler

producers and rural residents the most because they drive farther to get to certain places. Sen. June Robinson, D-Everett, said during the virtual legislative debate HB 1091 is for children whose health and lives are at risk. Childrens’ livelihoods are compromised due to the unhealthy environment they

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Grant County sees small decrease. **A2**

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Shooting

Student fires at officers at Tennessee school, is killed. **A3**

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