

# Council Action Sheet

To: Mayor and City Council Members  
From: Kathy Payne  
Human Resources Coordinator/City Recorder  
Date: October 2, 2024  
Subject: Official Newspaper of Record



## County paper to close

STAFF REPORT  
Country Media, Inc.

Eight months ago, Country Media, Inc. merged the two weekly newspapers it owned in St. Helens and Clatskanie into a new publication, the weekly Columbia County Chronicle & Chief.

The Salem-based corporation had acquired the St. Helens paper in February 2009 and the Clatskanie paper in August 2014.

"When we decided to combine these two publications, we had been experiencing declining revenues in Columbia County, along with a difficulty recruiting and retaining experienced reporters and advertising sales employees," said Country Media president Steve Hungerford.

"Combining the two newspapers into one was a last-ditch effort to reduce expenses and reestablish profitability," he said. "Sadly, that wasn't successful."

The final edition of the Chronicle & Chief will be published the last week in September, on Sept. 25.

The company's chief executive for operations, Joe Warren, said subscribers will be receiving a refund.

Country Media currently owns ten community newspapers in Oregon and one in Northern California, most of them along the Pacific coastline. Employees of the Chronicle & Chief are being offered positions at other company locations.

### Background

A Newspaper of Record establishes where the City will publish notices for the general public.

The City has used The Chronicle newspaper for many, many years, except during a short time in 2008-2009 when we used The Spotlight because we were having serious billing issues with The Chronicle.

In January of this year, Country Media merged the Clatskanie Chief with The Chronicle and changed the name of the newspaper to the Columbia County Chronicle & Chief.

Establishing a Newspaper of Record is a formality. On September 25, Country Media, Inc., will publish the last edition of the Columbia County Chronicle & Chief. This means that the Columbia County Spotlight will be the only newspaper of general circulation in the County.

### Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Council approve changing to the Columbia County Spotlight as our Newspaper of Record.