

THE DAILY ASTORIAN

144TH YEAR, NO. 80

DailyAstorian.com // THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2016

ONE DOLLAR



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian
Fire and police responded to a blaze at inside marijuana-extraction company Higher Level Concentrates on the corner of Industry and Portway streets in Astoria Wednesday night.

EXPLOSION LEADS TO BLAZE AT WEST-END POT BUSINESS

Two taken to hospital with burn injuries

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

Two people suffered burn injuries Wednesday night after an explosion and fire at a marijuana-extraction company at the corner of Portway and Industry streets in Astoria.

According to the Astoria Police Department, three people were working in a walkout basement at Higher Level Concentrates when an explosion occurred around 6:30 p.m. All three escaped. Two were transported to Columbia Memorial Hospital with burn injuries and later taken to Legacy Emanuel Medical

Center in Portland.

Cody Smith, a crane operator for Bergerson Construction Co., said he was working on a well on Pier 3 when he saw smoke billowing from the direction of his employer's offices, which are across the Astoria Riverfront Trolley tracks from Higher Level Concentrates. He went back to see what was happening.

See **BLAZE**, Page 9A

PORT OF ASTORIA ASKS CITY TO SHORE UP TRACKS FOR FREIGHT TRAFFIC



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian
Bergerson Construction Co. employees work on repairs to the rail line on Eighth Street in Astoria Wednesday.

City seeks balance between housing, tourism

By ERICK BENGEL
The Daily Astorian

The Astoria Planning Commission, wary of producing more tourists rather than long-term housing options for residents, may prohibit the use of new accessory dwelling units for vacation lodging in certain neighborhoods.

The commission is considering development code changes meant to encourage property owners to build and rent out accessory dwelling units on their lots, an effort aimed at increasing Astoria's housing supply.

These units would include detached structures like tiny houses, or converted spaces like basements and garages.

The City Council set a goal last year to promote housing that Astorians can afford.

Community Development Director Kevin Cronin initiated the code amendments earlier this year.

Last month, after a handful of work sessions, the Planning Commission held a public hearing, where residents expressed concern that introducing more dwelling units would crowd neighborhoods while doing little to alleviate Astoria's housing crunch.

One common objection was that the amendments would enable property owners to use their accessory dwelling units for vacation, or "homestay," lodging instead of permanent housing.

Though the city forbids vacation rentals in residential zones, it allows homestay lodging and bed-and-breakfasts under certain conditions and in all zones, either conditionally or as outright permitted uses, Cronin reminded the commission during a Wednesday work session.

As outlined, Cronin's proposed code changes would allow accessory dwelling units to be used for this type of short-term lodging.

See **BALANCE**, Page 9A

Freight rail or trolley trail?

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

The city of Astoria is struggling to maintain the aging trestles and street-end bridges along the waterfront enough to keep the Astoria Riverfront Trolley running.

The Port of Astoria Commission on Tuesday put the city's feet to the fire, passing a motion that the agency would like freight rail access maintained to the central waterfront in case freight traffic ever returns.

"In the future, there could be a cargo that seeks our facility and requires rail transport," said Commissioner Stephen Fulton, who has called for the Port to take such a stance at multiple meetings.

The state owns the right-of-way on the railroad from Wauna to Tongue Point. The city of Astoria took possession of the railroad and right-of-way from Tongue Point to the central waterfront in a 1996 railbanking agreement with the state and Burlington Northern Santa Fe LLC meant to preserve rail corridors.

Last stop

The first train from Portland to Astoria came along the Columbia River Railroad in 1898. Throughout much of the 20th century, Astoria was a bustling industrial waterfront, with multiple rail spurs crossing the Port's docks.

See **RAIL**, Page 7A



Clatsop County Heritage Museum
The first train from Portland to Astoria came along the Columbia River Railroad in 1898. Throughout the 20th century, the tracks were busy.



Kevin Cronin

Vandals damage headstones at Ocean View Cemetery

Thirteen grave markers were overturned

By DERRICK DEPLEDGE
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — Vandals tipped over 13 headstones at Ocean View Cemetery in what police are calling a senseless desecration.

The damage was discovered Monday afternoon by the Astoria Parks and Recreation Department, which oversees the cemetery. The parks department is trying

to notify the families of the dead about the vandalism.

Warrenton Police are investigating the headstone tipping as criminal mischief.

"This is a property crime that really upsets me," Police Chief Mathew Workman said. "It's senseless. Truly senseless."

Police and parks officials do not recall any similar vandalism at Ocean View in recent years, but the cemetery can be a magnet for pranksters. Considerable force is necessary to overturn the headstones, which weighed from about 700 to 1,500 pounds.

"It takes a lot of force. It

doesn't happen by accident by any means," said Angela Cosby, the director of the parks department.

The city has asked Astoria Granite Works to help restore the headstones, which are owned by the families. Russ Warr, who serves on the Astoria City Council and owns the granite shop, said several of the headstones were not damaged and could likely be placed upright for a negligible cost. Four or five of the headstones have serious damage, he said, although he is hopeful he can repair the markers.



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian
Vandals tipped over 13 headstones at Ocean View Cemetery, seen here on Wednesday in Warrenton.

See **VANDALS**, Page 7A

