



JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian

A man strolls along the Warrenton Waterfront Trail on Tuesday. Building new trails is a big part of the association according to Warrenton Trail Association Chairwoman Tessa Scheller.

## Trails: Regional trail association may help address varying interests

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One example is a potential trail from Seaside to Warrenton, which would go through the dunes that are owned by private citizens and the state. Having a regional group could help address the varying interests, Scheller said.

"Because there are so many jurisdictions and agencies, I see a place for collaborative work from state agencies and nonprofits," Scheller said. "We are focused where we are invited."

Building new trails is a large part of the regional trail association. Scheller sees

new trails not just for hiking, but for bicyclists, equestrian groups and even those interested in live action role play, or LARP.

"We are happy to see a number of ways to get people out and about," she said.

Steven Blakesley, Clatsop County public health promotion specialist, said a regional trail association would be an asset to the county and give a stronger voice to decisions about the cities and county's transportation plans.

"It's bringing health into more policies and having more connected bike paths and walking paths that obvi-

ously help our overall health," he said.

Blakesley, along with Tucker, helped the WTA apply for the National Park Service assistance.

Blakesley said the need for a regional trail association became apparent in 2013, when he, Tucker and Scheller partnered with others to create the NW Coast Trail Map and Guide. The detailed map, available at warrentontrails.org, outlines all hiking trails in Clatsop County. It also shows how many different jurisdictions have trails and the fact that not one trail goes directly through the county.

"We really needed a regional trails organization," Blakesley said.

Last month, Stone hosted an initial conference call with the local partners. No work plan has been lined out yet, Stone said, and everyone is still getting organized. The focus is on team building and ways to get the community involved. A lot will be accomplished in the next year, she said.

"Very soon we are going to want to get as many people with interest in trails together as possible," Stone said. "The call will hopefully be very soon and very wide."

## Gearhart: 'I feel we are truly a laughingstock of the county'

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the two of them and City Administrator Chad Sweet and trying to distribute the recording to other councilors. Sweet later said he was the one who recorded the conversation after Sigler asked if she could use her recorder.

Widdop is the focus of a recall campaign being waged by Gearhart resident Harold Gable, who is collecting signatures to trigger a recall election.

Although the City Council had planned to discuss the issue in a closed executive session Wednesday night, Widdop said she wanted the discussion to be public.

"I like transparency," Widdop explained.

Widdop asked the councilors if they had any questions. Jesse said he didn't have questions and that he would have preferred a closed session.

"It pains me a lot to have to do this, but it bothers me that the community is being torn apart," Jesse said.

"I'm embarrassed and ashamed for the community," he said. "I feel we are truly a

laughingstock of the county. I wish this would come to an end. It won't happen unless you choose to resign."

Jesse said he didn't think a recall election was the best way to deal with the controversy.

"You owe an apology to all of the citizens," said Jesse, adding that Widdop's apology to business owner Linda Goldfarb wasn't believable.

Jesse, who was elected in 2012, said he had considered resigning, but his wife reminded him that he was "elected to a four-year term and I owe it to the citizens who elected me to continue on."

"I have no interest in sitting in this chair anymore," Jesse said. "I feel like we're going backward instead of going forward. I couldn't sit here, saying nothing. I didn't think it was right."

Widdop said she had been personally attacked since last April. The incident in which she suggested that Goldfarb remove Willett's campaign sign because it might hurt her business was a "red herring to get me out of office," Widdop said.

"It goes back to the barn," said Widdop, who was referring to another city issue over whether a historic livery stable can meet safety codes to become an events center. An appeal to the state Land Use Board of Appeals over a council decision involving the barn's conditional use permit is pending.

"Allegations that were made against me; I have an answer to everyone," Widdop said. "What more can I do?"

"I didn't tell her to remove the sign. I did nothing to Kevin Willett. He has a temper. It's my constitutional right to say what I want. I have done nothing wrong."

"I apologized to Linda Goldfarb. What else do you want from me? I did nothing illegal. I've done nothing wrong. I am not going to resign."

Jesse said he had never accused Widdop of doing anything illegal.

"Just because it may not be illegal doesn't mean it's right," Jesse said.

He noted that the City Council wrote a code of ethics to follow.

"We agreed to respect

each other and treat each other right," he said.

Kerry Smith, a new councilor who took office last month, said he didn't agree with Widdop's actions concerning the sign but felt the other accusations were "nit-picking."

"I talked to the (Oregon) Ethics Commission," Smith said. "It was not smart, but it shouldn't have been blown up like this. I have a bitter taste about it."

"It has soured my feeling about this job. I'm going to fight even harder to have this be a council that gets the job done," Smith said.

Widdop agreed that her actions were "stupid."

"It was stupid. I'm the first to admit it," she said.

Councilor John Duncan, who also took office for the first time in December, said as an engineer and land surveyor in the region he has worked in several small communities, and he has seen worse controversies.

"What you're seeing here is small," he said. "You may be thinking it's just Gearhart, but it happens all over Oregon and Washington."

said. "It sounds like exactly what we'd look for on our beaches."

While Wright and his police officers would likely handle any issues with the vehicles within Long Beach's city limits, increased use down at the state park and any resulting conflicts or problems could be handled by a variety of agencies including state park rangers, Pacific County sheriff's deputies and state patrol.

Still, there are a number of things to consider and discuss as the proposal moves

forward, Kline said.

The peninsula is a popular destination during the summer, it's roads and beaches filling with tourists and locals; wildlife abundant in the dunes and woods nearby — the state park and Willapa National Wildlife Refuge close down portions of the beach up north seasonally to protect snowy plover nesting habitat; and the beach is used as, among other things, a highway with cars and trucks driving in at various beach access points up and down the peninsula.

"Really it's around public safety," Kline said. He anticipates that if the rule change does go into effect, so will a number of restrictions to keep everyone and every thing on the beach safe.

"An important consideration is that it's been legal in Oregon for a long time," Roberts added. "They don't seem to have any troubles with it."

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