

Astoria superintendent takes medical leave

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

The Astoria School District Board of Directors on Wednesday unanimously approved an indefinite leave of absence for Superintendent Craig Hoppes, who was not at the meeting. They also approved Hoppes' recommendation to make Curriculum Director Melissa Linder the interim superintendent in the short term.

"Last week, Craig put in a request at the advice of his physician to take indefinite medical leave," School Board Chairman Martin Dursse said. "I've talked to Craig a couple times. He's not comfortable sharing the exact reason for that request."

Dursse said that in the next couple of days, he'd talk to

Hoppes and see whether he wants to disclose his situation.

Board member Shawn Helligso supported the motion but asked what the "short term" means.

"To me, the short term is until at least next month," Dursse said, adding that along with Hoppes, he's been talking to the Oregon School Boards Association and the Northwest Regional Education Service District to figure out what sort of support they can provide, if the district needs to seek a longer-term interim superintendent.

Linder said district administrators met Monday, adding that if she didn't have their support, the decision wouldn't have been as easy to fill Hoppes' shoes. Linder was hired last year as the curriculum director.



Craig Hoppes



Melissa Linder

Electronic devices

The Astoria School Board passed two policies regarding the use of personal electronic devices by students and faculty. The policies define devices as capable of "electronically communicating, sending, receiving, storing, recording,

reproducing and/or displaying information and data."

"If the district implements a curriculum that uses technology, students may be allowed to use their own personal electronic devices to access the curriculum," reads the first policy. "Stu-

dents who are allowed to use their own devices to access the curriculum will be granted access to any application or electronic materials when they are available to students who do not use their own devices, or provided free of charge to students who do not use their own devices for curriculum."

The policy also created an appeal process if a student isn't allowed to use their device, and releases the district from liability for any damage to personal devices.

The second of the two policies governs staff use, including keeping devices silenced during work; not taking pictures or video of district facilities, staff, students, volunteers or parents without prior authorization; discouraging communication between staff

and students on nonschool-related matters; and prohibiting such communication at school.

"Staff actions on social media websites, public websites and blogs, while on or off duty, which disrupt the school environment, are subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal," the second policy reads.

In other news:

- Dursse proclaimed May 4 to 8 Teacher Appreciation Week.

- The Astoria High School Pizazz Dance Team, which recently swept the Oregon School Activities Association's state dance/drill team competition in the 4A/3A/2A/1A Small division, received more than \$6,500 in cash gifts from local businesses and individuals.

Warrenton City Commission approves agreement on dam removal

Would enhance fish passage, preserve access

By DERRICK DePLEDGE
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — The Warrenton City Commission voted Wednesday night to again approve an agreement to remove the aging Eighth Street Dam, a decision complicated by the width of a single-lane bridge over the Skipanon River that would replace a gravel road on the dam.

The agreement between the city, the Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce and the Skipanon Water Control District to demolish the dam could improve fish passage and water quality. The city would also maintain emergency access over the river through a 54-foot bridge.

The \$1.2 million project would be financed by the Bonneville Power Administration to help restore salmon habitat.

The city had initially approved the agreement with CREST last year. But a routine vote to amend the agreement to formally add the Skipanon Water Control District, which owns the 52-year-old dam, was delayed twice over the past month after nearby property owners complained that the bridge was too narrow and could disrupt business and limit future development.

Matt Van Ess, a habitat restoration coordinator for CREST, told the City Commission at a special meeting on the issue Wednesday night that adjustable guardrails could be installed on the bridge to expand the width of the travel lane to 16 feet, up from 14 feet.



ALEX PAJUNAS — The Daily Astorian

The Eighth Street Dam on the Skipanon River in Warrenton was built for flood control.

Property owners who have been discussing the bridge with CREST support the revision, but remain disappointed with the process and might raise other objections when the Warrenton Planning Commission reviews the land use details of the project tonight.

City commissioners had chosen to extend the debate on the agreement so property owners could be heard. But the delay has complicated the deal and ruffled the partnership with the Skipanon Water Control District, which signed off on the agreement in February.

John Nygaard, a Portland attorney whose family owns Warrenton Fiber, has questioned whether the city provided adequate notice to property owners as required for land use matters under the city's development code.

A private engineering

firm working with CREST found that removing the dam would likely not worsen flood conditions upstream. The Oregon Water Resources Department has also described the dam as a significant hazard that may no longer be capable of flood control.

But in a letter to the City Commission Tuesday, Nygaard argued that the removal of the dam would

"unequivocally affect real property landowners in this flood plain."

Two weeks ago, Stephen Fulton, who works on land development and wetland mitigation for Warrenton Fiber and serves as a commissioner for the Port of Astoria, had recommended that the dam removal project go through a more thorough U.S. Army Corps of Engineers review and that

the city learn how much salmon recovery is anticipated.

Hal Snow, the city attorney,

said the agreement with CREST and the Skipanon Water Control District is not a land use decision, so the notice requirements did not apply. Land use issues related to the dam removal will first be addressed by the Planning Commission, and could be appealed to the City Commission.

City staff instructed commissioners not to consider the bridge or other land use details before voting on the agreement Wednesday night, even though the bridge had been the crux of the debate for the past month.

The vote was 4-0 to approve the agreement. Mayor Mark Kujala recused himself because he and his family own property near the river and the dam.

City Manager Kurt Fritsch, asked afterward about the convoluted process, said commissioners wanted to give property owners the freedom to speak. "We erred on the side of hearing more public comment," he said.

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29	30	31				

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