

Retired police officer demands answers over suicide



Submitted photo

A makeshift memorial under the Astoria Bridge honors Carrie Barnhart, who committed suicide in April.

Questions raised whether woman received adequate mental health care

By **DERRICK DePLEDGE**
The Daily Astorian

A retired Wyoming police officer asked the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners Wednesday night to look into whether a woman who committed suicide in April by jumping off the Astoria Bridge had received adequate mental health care.

Norman Tutton, who lives in Surf Pines, has become an advocate for the family of Carrie Barnhart, a 54-year-old mother of six who took her own life after making several suicide threats.

Astoria Police had taken Barnhart to Columbia Memorial Hospital a week before her death after finding her alone on the bridge after midnight. Police said she was evaluated by

Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare and released after two hours.

Clatsop County contracts with Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare for mental health services.

Tutton urged county commissioners to "get answers and see that this never happens again. Basically, your own commitment here is you do have the duty and obligation. And I'm laying that at your feet."

After reading about Barnhart's death in *The Daily Astorian*, Tutton initiated his own inquiries with the police, the county, the hospital and mental health authorities. He said he has reviewed Barnhart's health care records with her family and is convinced she did not receive the help she needed.

He said he was asked to

leave Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare Wednesday when he again sought answers to his questions about Barnhart's care.

Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare has said it would work with law enforcement to help prevent similar tragedies in the future, but has declined to comment about the details of Barnhart's care, citing medical privacy restrictions.

County commissioners will discuss mental health care at the board's next meeting June 10. The state provides counties with money to pay for mental health services, which are often contracted out to private mental health providers.

"We're going to talk about the county's obligation," County Manager Scott Somers said. "We're going to talk about how those dollars are passed through from the state to the county and

then to our contractor.

"And it's fairly convoluted, so we want to try to untangle that."

Scott Lee, the board's chairman, said commissioners could not discuss individual cases, such as Barnhart's suicide, because of confidentiality.

"I hope that he understands that it's not that we don't care," Lee said of Tutton. "But this is all confidential information. We have no access to it for the same reasons he doesn't."

Tutton believes county commissioners do have the authority to examine whether Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare fulfilled its responsibility to provide Barnhart with sufficient care. He appeared at the board meeting Wednesday night with members of Barnhart's family.

"Not only do I want answers," he said, "they deserve answers."

Perez to resign from county position

By **KYLE SPURR**
The Daily Astorian

Dean Perez, Clatsop County's administrative services director, has announced his resignation effective June 2.

Perez oversees the county's human resources, emergency management, information technology, community relations, veterans services and risk management divisions.

Perez, who joined the county in 1999 as a human resources director, became the administrative services director in 2013. He also serves as commander of Camp Rilea Armed Forces Training Center in Warrenton.

Perez was not immediately available for comment.

With his resignation, the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners considered Wednesday to eliminate the administrative services department and place the various divisions under the county manager's office. Such a structure was in place prior to the creation of the

administrative services department.

Adding the administrative services department was first considered in April 2013 as a necessary reorganization after the assistant county manager position was eliminated and the central services director resigned.

For different organizational purposes, County Manager Scott Somers has proposed to return to the original structure.

"With the recent resignation of that department head Dean Perez, it has caused me to reflect as to whether or not we continue to need a stand-alone department to house those divisions," Somers said. "I don't believe we do, at this time."

Having more divisions under the county manager's office means more directors reporting to Somers, which he said he is comfortable handling since many divisions are self-sufficient.

Direct reports to the county manager will increase by three,

'We lose that institutional memory and experience from Mr. Perez (resigning).'

— **Scott Lee**
board chairman

bringing the total to 12.

"My impression is those divisions are largely self-functioning now," Somers said. "They don't need as much oversight as they did before."

The Board of Commissioners agreed Wednesday to revisit eliminating the administrative services department at its next regular meeting June 10.

Chairman Scott Lee said he sees the change as a housekeeping item. It is needed, Lee said,

especially after losing Perez's 16 years of experience with the county.

"We lose that institutional memory and experience from Mr. Perez (resigning)," Lee said.

Somers said the county is in the process of hiring a human resources director. The national search will begin next week.

"We will have a new HR manager, but it will be a division within the office of the county manager," Somers said. "Those divisions don't need as much hand-holding as they once did, so they are not going to need as much oversight from me."

A slight savings is expected from eliminating the administrative services director position and re-creating the human resources director position, according to the county.

Perez also served as county manager pro tem. The Board of Commissioners on Wednesday appointed Budget and Finance Director Monica Steele as county manager pro tem to replace Perez.

White-sided dolphin washes ashore on Ocean Park beach

The Daily Astorian

OCEAN PARK, Wash. — A 7-foot-long, 250-pound male Pacific white-sided dolphin washed ashore in Ocean Park Tuesday afternoon.

The dolphin had died before washing ashore. Seaside Aquarium staff recovered the animal. Marine mammal experts from Portland State University will perform a necropsy to see if they can determine the cause of death. External observations suggest this may have just been an old male who died of natural causes.

Pacific white-sided dolphins are known for their exuberant behavior, leaping out of the water, belly-flopping, somersaulting and riding the bow waves of boats. They can live for a little over 40 years. Although they are an



TIFFANY BOOTHE — Seaside Aquarium

A Pacific white-sided dolphin washed ashore in Ocean Park, Wash., Tuesday afternoon.

offshore species, the dolphins will sometimes venture closer to shore. They are endemic to the northern Pacific Ocean, ranging from the Aleutians down the west coast to the tip of Baja California.

Spring chinook sport fishing boundary lifted

The Daily Astorian

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife has announced a fishing rule change, effective Saturday: The Columbia River spring chinook sport fishing boat boundary has been lifted on the mainstem from the Tongue Point/Rocky Point line upstream to Bonneville Dam, allowing both boat and bank angling for spring chinook and steelhead.

nook and steelhead.

The reason for the change is because harvestable numbers of hatchery salmon remain available, based on the updated forecast, associated management agreements and harvest estimates to date.

The daily bag limit is six fish (hatchery chinook or hatchery steelhead), of which no more than two may be adult chinook or steelhead,

and no more than one may be an adult chinook. All wild chinook and wild steelhead must be released. The salmon minimum size is 12 inches.

For information, call 360-696-6211, ext. *1010, or go to <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing>

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CLATSOP SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Soils! SEMINAR

Instructor James Cassidy from the Oregon State University Crop and Soil Science Department will present a program on the complex nature of soils!

Saturday May 30th 2015
6:00-8:00pm
Location: Fort George Brewery Showroom
1483 Duane Street • Astoria

This seminar will be suitable for urban residents, farmers and gardeners alike! The program will cover how soils are formed, soil health and microbiology and more!
Seminar is FREE, but please RSVP to Clatsop SWCD

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