

Business: More attention has been focused on the Astoria Riverwalk

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metal. He moved to Astoria four years ago from Portland and four months ago realized his dream of opening his own heavy metal head shop.

Gentner's thin corridor of a store is filled with the heavy paraphernalia, including hard rock and heavy metal vinyl records; jean and leather jackets; bongos and pipes; paintings and blankets of anything from Vikings and marijuana leafs to unicorns to toppers women; counterculture books and videos and stuffed animal heads. Gentner has always been a fan of.

"I figured people around here would like it as much as anywhere else," Gentner said of opening a niche store in small Astoria. "Some of my best customers are plain-dressed but fanatic."

Robin Dismang said she and her husband Mike moved from Las Vegas to Astoria sight-unseen after the opportunity arose to run the new Astoria expansion of Sisters Olives & Nuts, her brother Mitch and sister-in-law Julie Mansfield's business based in Sisters that opened its second location May 7 on Commercial Street.

The Mansfields feature bottles of picked vegetables, garlic, preserves, condiments and other products primarily sourced from Oregon, along with a wide selection of nuts.

'Everybody walks and jogs on the waterfront. There's so much foot traffic, it's ridiculous.'

— Gordon Clement

owner of Clemente's Cafe and Public House

Just as she found her way to Astoria on a whim, Dismang said her brother and sister-in-law were eating at Fulio's Pastaria across the street when they saw the vacant former 4 Seasons Clothing storefront and decided they would start their second location there.

On the Riverwalk

Commercial Street is still the main drag in Astoria, but more attention has focused on the Astoria Riverwalk.

Late last week, the downtown association's office moved from the corner of 12th and Exchange streets to Pier 12 next to Baked Alaska. Garner said the move will help her office be a better source of information on downtown to people wandering up and down the Astoria Riverwalk.

On the western edge of the downtown waterfront, Buoy Beer Co. has filled up a former fish processing plant. The owners of the Wet Dog Cafe and Astoria Brewing Company bought the Pier 11 mall and have agreements with

tenants to open a wine bar, lounge, salon and photo studio, along with the longstanding Rollin' Thunder Barbecue. Next door, Edison Bros. Fish Co. is reopening the former Josephson's Fish Station building as their first brick-and-mortar location.

Down the street to the east is the 14th Street Pilot Station, which has seen a recent influx of new business, from gourmet ice cream parlor Frite & Scoop last year to the new location for local icon Clemente's Seafood, which opened as Clemente's Cafe and Public House earlier this month after moving from caddy-corner to the Liberty Theater in January.

Gordon Clement, who owns the restaurant with his wife, Lisa, said the move was the hardest he's ever made in the restaurant's 10-year history. But he said the location is perfect, between the laid-back vibe and the high visibility.

"The trolley goes by," he said. "Everybody walks and jogs on the waterfront. There's so much foot traffic, it's ridiculous."

NEW DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORS

A number of new businesses have opened, relocated to and expanded in downtown Astoria in the first five months of 2015, according to the Astoria Downtown Historic District Association:

- **Odie B's**, the children's consignment store that took over the accounts of predecessor 5 Lil Monkeys, opened at 1255 Commercial St. next to Tempo Gallery.
- **Columbia Vapes** vaping lounge opened at 1268 Commercial St. next to Link's Outdoor.
- **Metal Head**, a heavy metal head shop, opened next to the Columbia Cafe at 1126 Marine Drive.
- **Pacific Coast Medical Supply** relocated from the corner of 12th Street and Marine Drive to 1062 Marine Drive, formerly Astoria Hemp Works.
- **The Smoke 'N' Vape Bloc** smoke shop opened in the former Tienda La Costenita Hispanic grocery store next to Christie's Malternative, 1159 Marine Drive.
- **Massage Therapy** with Amy Finn and Michelle Malin opened at 42 Seventh St. in the Fisher Bros. Co. building.
- **Maiden Astoria** local and regional handmade goods shop opened at 255 14th St., next to Gimre's Shoe Store.
- **de la Salandra** clothing and apparel store opened next to Fulio's at 1145 Commercial St.
- **The Shop for Guys & Dolls**, a photo studio and salon, opened inside the Pier 11 mall. Following soon in Pier 11 will be a wine bar and a new lounge.

- **Sisters Olive and Nut Co.** opened in the former 4 Seasons Clothing store at 1144 Commercial St.
- **Albatross** restaurant at 225 14th St. expanded into the adjacent former Ambiance home decor storefront.
- The Arc Arcade is expanding in the former Deals Too storefront at the corner of 11th and Commercial streets.
- **Seven Ages NW Apparel & Gifts** will open soon 1125 Commercial St.
- **Edison Bros. Fish Co.** was aiming to open its fish market today in the Josephson Fish Station at the foot of 11th Street.
- **The Astoria Downtown Historic District Association** relocated from the corner of Exchange and 12th streets to No. 1 12th St. next to Baked Alaska on the Astoria Riverwalk.
- **4 Seasons Clothing** relocated from 1144 Commercial St. to the John Jacob Astor Building on the corner of 14th and Commercial streets.
- **Clemente's Seafood** relocated from the corner of 12th and Commercial streets and opened as Clemente's Cafe and Public House in the Pilot House Building at 175 14th St., No. 180.
- **Party Jesters** relocated from the warehouses near Abbey Lane to 1413 Commercial St. in the John Jacob Astor building.
- **Prana Wellness Center** relocated from the Cannery Lofts to the former Medical Spa LaCost at 1428 Commercial St.

Weston: Complaints could be used as evidence in cases filed against him

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dispelled allegations Weston tried to compel staff to engage in a cover-up and he was intoxicated while on the job.

The institute is a membership-based organization offering third-party human resources and labor relations assistance to Oregon cities, counties and special districts.

The complaints and report have had no effect on Weston's employment. He was interim director for more than a year, a candidate for the permanent directorship and still works as the Port's director of business development and operations.

But it could be used as evidence in the cases filed against Weston and the Port by the agency's former finance manager, Colleen Browne, and facilities manager, Tammie Herman. They made the complaints against Weston in July and were fired in November, shortly after new Executive Director Jim Knight was hired. Their suit claims whistleblower retaliation, contract breaches, defamation, post-employment retaliation and disability discrimination.

The Daily Astorian originally requested the report Jan. 20, but the Port denied the request. Ultimately, Clatsop County Dis-

trict Attorney Joshua Marquis reviewed the report and the Port counsel's recommended redactions. He sent a letter to Port counsel April 22 recommending the Port release a redacted copy of the report to the newspaper.

Why the report?

"The President of the Board of Commissioners received a complaint from Port employees stating that the current Interim Director has engaged in a pattern of conduct including creating a hostile work environment for staff, conducting work contrary to the directives of the Board of Commissioners and being untruthful in his reporting of Port activities to the Commissioners," wrote Craig Stoelk, an investigator with the institute who authored the report.

Weston assumed the interim director role after former Executive Director Hank Bynaker resigned in September 2013. The Port Commission had been interviewing candidates for Bynaker's replacement, including Weston, at the time the complaints came in mid-July.

Port Commission Chairman John Raichl reached out to Stoelk later that month. Stoelk wrote Raichl had concerns the complaints were timed to diminish Weston's candidacy and only

seemed to be a continuing issue for former Browne and Herman.

Scope of work

"Mr. Raichl provided direction to me to identify the scope of an investigation," Stoelk wrote, pointing out several questions his report sought to answer:

- Had Weston attempted to compel employees to sign documents or participate in a cover-up of unauthorized appointments?
- Had Weston engaged in conduct creating a hostile work environment?
- Had Weston hired staff without first posting the positions?
- Had Weston violated Port Commission directives related to a hiring freeze?
- Had Weston engaged in conduct involving alcohol in violation of rules?

Stoelk interviewed Weston, Browne, Herman and other employees at the Port; current and former Port commissioners; Bynaker; and Westerlund Log Handling's Roger Nance.

Findings

In his findings, Stoelk wrote that Weston had engaged in individual meetings with Port Commissioners and acted on their opinions, when the Port Commission as a whole should

dictate actions of the Port.

"The individual or solicited meetings is not unlawful as a violation of public meetings laws, however the practice is precarious when outcomes are in conflict with policy matters, and it promotes an atmosphere of favoritism or selective work priority," Stoelk wrote.

A couple of allegations made against Weston were not sustained by Stoelk's report:

- He had not compelled employees to sign any documents or engage in a cover-up.
- He had not engaged in Port activities while under the influence of intoxicants.

But a number of allegations against Weston were sustained:

- He had engaged in personnel negotiations or modi-

fications of personnel benefits without the Port Commission's authorization.

• He engaged in a practice of hiring staff, disregarding a hiring freeze imposed by the Port Commission. The report also found he failed to announce job vacancies publicly and had been untruthful in his representation of three employee appointments to the Port Commission.

• He engaged in deceptive conduct related to the ratification of a labor agreement between the Port and the International Longshore and Warehouse Union by editing a contract's language on vacation accrual after the union had voted and before he brought it to the Port Commission for a vote.

- He made statements to em-

ployees that appeared retaliatory in nature for actions taken by them.

• He failed to adhere to ethical standards related to a public official by taking items abandoned by a former tenant, but not yet forfeited to the Port, for his own personal use. "The use of goods, allowed Mr. Weston to not spend money on equipment rental of scaffolding," Stoelk wrote in the report.

Cases in discovery

The cases brought by Browne and Herman against Weston and the Port are in U.S. District Court in Portland. Discovery in the cases is due by June 17. Alternate dispute resolutions or the ordering of a pre-trial will happen by July 17.

Bill: 'I don't see where it's going to move forward'

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Rep. Julie Parrish, R-West Linn, hoped to end that exemption with a bill introduced this session. But Parrish said Thursday the bill, which would also impose deadlines and fee limits on government responses to records requests, is essentially dead.

"I just don't see where it's going to move forward," Parrish said of House Bill 3505. "If my colleagues do nothing about it, then it's a shame on them about it. I hear a lot of floor speeches about money in politics and Democracy."

Parrish said the chairwoman of the House Committee on Rules, House Democratic Leader Rep. Val Hoyle, could have done more to work with Parrish to come up with public records reform legislation on which more lawmakers might agree.

In a written statement Thursday, Hoyle said Parrish's bill stalled because of opposition from city and county governments. Those agencies testified deadlines and changes to fees in Parrish's bill would have been too costly.

"The testimony delivered in committee from local governments and school districts was overwhelmingly clear that HB 3505 as written is unworkable," Hoyle wrote in an email. "That said, I believe we need to make substantial reforms to public records policies as part of an overall effort to increase transparency and accountabil-

ity and restore the public's trust in state government. That's why earlier this month I convened a bipartisan group of House members to discuss ideas for meaningful ethics reforms focused on the legislature. I've asked the Speaker for the ability to continue convening this group to work on recommendations that we can bring forward."

Aaron Knott, legislative director for the Oregon Department of Justice, also submitted written testimony that Parrish's bill would encourage people to file overly broad records requests, because it would require governments to waive all fees if employees were unable to respond within 21 days. Knott also wrote some sections of the bill were laudable, although he did not address the legislative exemption.

Since Oregon lawmakers choose whether to respond to public records requests, individual lawmakers respond very differently to the same request. The EO Media Group/Pamplin Media Group Capital Bureau recently requested a copy of the April work schedules for the 10 lawmakers on the House-Senate committee working on marijuana issues. Four lawmakers provided their schedules: Sen. Floyd Prozanski, D-Eugene, Sen. Lee Beyer, D-Springfield, Sen. Ginny

Burdick, D-Portland and Rep. Peter Buckley, D-Ashland. A spokeswoman for Senate Minority Leader Sen. Ted Ferrioli, R-John Day, said he intended to provide his schedule and she was checking into the issue.

Prozanski said he released his schedule because it did not add much to his staff's workload.

"It was pretty simple," Prozanski said. "From my perspective, it was something we could accommodate in the heat of the legislative session." Prozanski said he handles public records requests on a case-by-case basis and has used the legislative exemption in response to more voluminous requests because they would have taken too much of his staff's time away from other work during the session.

"I have a desire to be as transparent as possible under the circumstances," Prozanski said.

Miles Pengilly, chief of staff for Rep. Ken Helm, D-Beaverton, wrote in an email that the lawmaker "has chosen to invoke the in-session exemption for any and all public records requests made during the legislative session. It is time-consuming for our office to satisfy these requests and distracts our focus from important legislative work during the fast-paced, high-stakes session."



Rep. Julie Parrish

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