

# Walmart site design gets one-year extension

## City Commission OKs request while Army Corps litigation pends

By ERICK BENGEL  
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — Walmart's site design is safe for at least another year.

The City Commission, at its Tuesday meeting, unanimously approved a one-year extension of Walmart's site design review plan approval for its proposed location at Ensign Lane and U.S. Highway 101, in the North Coast Retail Center.

The extension will last until mid-August of next year. Walmart supporters hope that, by that time, the

retail giant will have overcome a recent obstacle.

Last April, Clatsop Residents Against Walmart filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which issued Walmart a permit to fill a small wetland on the affected property.

In the lawsuit, CRAW alleges that the Army Corps issued the permit without properly assessing the environmental impact of filling the wetland and without exploring available alternatives.

"The proposed Walmart

store would already be constructed if it were not for the hate speech proponents of CRAW," said Jim Ray, a Walmart supporter from Hammond. He added, "If CRAW hates Walmart, they have the right to do business elsewhere but not to violate the free exercise of trade and capitalism which is to the advantage of all of us."

Lori Durheim, a Walmart opponent from Astoria, advised the commission to take a larger view of Walmart's potential impact on the community. A new outlet, she said, would increase the already high level of traffic congestion on U.S. Highway 101 between Warrenton and Astoria.

Walmart's site design review application was originally approved in August 2013. The approval period had been previously extended from August 2014 until next month because the wetland fill permit had not yet been issued, preventing Walmart from beginning construction. The CRAW lawsuit has pushed back the construction date even further.

"The permits are ready to go; they're just waiting for the appeal process to be resolved," Community Development Director Skip Urling said.

Walmart expects to break ground in spring 2016, assuming all the legal loose

ends are wrapped up by then, according to the extension request written by Bryan Dickerson, an attorney with PacLand, the firm representing the corporation.

In other business, the City Commission:

- Unanimously approved an ordinance prohibiting vehicle parking from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. on postal delivery days in front of mailboxes, or places where mail is delivered, except when necessary to avoid conflict with other traffic, comply with the law or directions from law enforcement, or momentarily to pick up or drop off passengers.

The amendment to the

municipal code grants a 15-foot buffer on both sides of curbside mailboxes, allowing mail carriers a 30-foot comfort zone to access them.

Devised by Police Chief Matt Workman, the ordinance seeks to address the parking complaints of residents who often have to contend with parking overflow in their neighborhoods, especially during such popular draws as the Buoy 10 annual sports fishing season.

- Appointed by a unanimous vote Lorna Anderson, a Warrenton resident, to Position No. 4 on the Warrenton Community Center Board.

## Woman accused of rape, sexual assault

By KYLE SPURR  
The Daily Astorian

A 20-year-old woman pleaded not guilty Wednesday in Clatsop County Circuit Court to allegations of raping and sexually abusing a teenage boy.

Alejandra Espinoza, of Hammond, is charged with four counts of third-degree rape and four counts of third-degree sex abuse.

She is accused of touching and unlawfully engaging in sexual intercourse with a 14-year-old boy, according to the indictment.

The alleged incidents occurred between February and May 2014, when Espinoza was 19.

Third-degree rape is a class C felony and third-degree sex abuse is a class A misdemeanor.

Since the victim was under 16 and the age gap between the two was more than three years, the charges rose to the level of felony rape, according to Clatsop County District Attorney Josh Marquis.

"If the victim is under 16, then it can be a felony," Marquis said. "The assumption is they cannot consent. The idea is you protect children."

The teenage boy reported the alleged abuse in June 2014, and the case was brought before a grand jury in February, when Espinoza was indicted.

She had an arraignment scheduled in March, but she said she never received the notice and missed the court date. A warrant was issued, and she was arrested and booked Tuesday.

"I just got back from out of state," Espinoza said in court Wednesday. "I was on vacation for about a year. That is why I didn't receive any mail."

She appeared in court via video link from Clatsop County Jail, where she is being held on \$25,000 bail.

Defense lawyer Kris Kaino has been appointed to represent Espinoza.

She is due back in court for an early resolution conference in October



Alejandra Espinoza

## Doctors are bringing house calls back

By SAEROM YOO  
Statesman Journal

SALEM — Mary Venturacci is 98 years old and lives by herself in her northeast Salem home.

It's an ideal situation for most older adults, who prefer to continue living in the comfort of their home and maintain independence. But it takes some work.

Much of it falls on her daughter, Wanda Urban, who helps Venturacci with her health care, medications, grocery shopping and more. Another good portion falls on Venturacci's Kaiser Permanente nurse practitioner, Marty Surface, who provides her with primary care services at her home.

When Surface made his first visit with Venturacci, he immediately recommended changes — to the home. The bathroom needed bars to help her get down and up. The bed's wheels needed stoppers to make sure it doesn't move around too much when Venturacci lands on it. Surface then taught Venturacci how to use her walker.

These are all things a typical primary care doctor in a clinic setting would not have been able to do, yet they could have a profound impact on Venturacci's health outcomes.

### Fall prevention

One out of three adults aged 65 and older fall each year, which can lead to hospitalizations, loss of independence, worsening health and death, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. More than 95 percent of hip fractures are caused by falls.

Fall prevention is key to keeping frail, older people healthy.

House calls, which may conjure an image from a different generation, when doctors traveled with black satchels, are gaining recognition for their effectiveness in lowering costs and improving outcomes for the most fragile, complex -- and, in turn, most costly — health care consumers.

Kaiser Permanente began its Primary Care at Home program in 2007 and started ex-

panding its reach to Salem a year and a half ago. Its patient base has grown from 500 to 1,500 people, but more could be helped.

Surface, who serves 102 patients, is currently the only house call provider in the Salem area, but Kaiser is looking to hire another provider, as there are about 100 people on the waiting list.

The only requirement is that the patients be homebound, or face significant challenges making clinic appointments.

In a cohort of 554 Kaiser Permanente patients, preliminary data show that house calls have helped decrease costs by 40 percent, emergency room visits by 40 percent and hospital admissions by 60 percent.

The federal government's home care demonstration for Medicare patients showed similar gains.

First-year results of the three-year Affordable Care Act study, Independence at Home, showed that offering house calls to Medicare patients with complex conditions and high needs saved Medicare \$25 million. Medicare rewarded participating providers who met certain quality measures and Portland-based Housecall Providers collected \$1.2 million for its first year's performance.

### Federal legislation

The U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation to extend the program for two additional years and now awaits President Barack Obama's approval.

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, who championed Independence at Home from early on, also helped introduce the extension.

"Independence at Home has shown that providing quality health care to seniors in their home works for beneficiaries, works for health providers, and works

for Medicare," Wyden, D-Ore., said in a statement. "Given the strong first year results of the demonstration, a two-year extension is a no-brainer. Independence at Home is an important step towards reducing our nation's inefficient and expensive patchwork of health care delivery systems."

Much of what house calls allow providers to do is not medical in nature.

Shari Sanders, chief of geriatrics and long-term care for Kaiser Permanente Northwest, said it allows clinicians to detect a crisis before it begins.

"Who cooks for you? How do you get dressed? How do you go to the grocery store?" Sanders said, listing the type of information providers gather during home visits. "And who's your social support? What's in your fridge? Your eyes are opened a little bit more."

### Home visits

During a recent visit with Venturacci, who experiences swelling in her legs, Surface discussed reducing the patient's blood pressure medication dose by half to see if that might improve her symptoms.

If the pills are easy to cut, then Venturacci would be able to avoid a separate copay refilling a new prescription, Surface noted.

Urban brought out the pills, and Surface demonstrated how to split them.

When Venturacci misplaced her hearing aids, Surface lent her a personal amplifier.

Housecall Providers has been specializing in home visits for 20 years.

"The need has always been significant," executive director Terri Hobbs said. "We've always had a waiting list. We've always been recruiting for more clinicians."

However, it can be difficult to make a living see-

ing patients in their homes. House call providers are reimbursed the same way clinic providers are, on a fee-for-service basis, yet house calls take more time and traveling in between patients. Providers weren't able to see the volume of patients required to keep the doors open. So the nonprofit's revenue has long been supplemented by grants and donations.

But there's hope that Medicare's support for house calls through Independence at Home and its value-based payment model is a sign of change, making the profession a more viable option.

"I do see a tide turning and I think there will be health care systems looking at this as a way to better serve these patients," medical director Dr. Pamela Miner said.

Keeping older patients out of the hospital isn't just a cost saving. It could also be life-saving.

Older patients tend not to have great outcomes in hospitals, and they often have to be discharged to a nursing home. The experience also worsens memory problems, Surface said.

Venturacci has no plans to move.

"It's a quiet neighborhood," Venturacci said. "I enjoy it here."

Surface turned to Venturacci.

"At least for the immediate future," he said, "I see no reason why you'd have to leave."

## Burning cigarette sets Astoria house ablaze

The Daily Astorian

An Astoria home caught fire Tuesday morning from a burning cigarette left on a couch in the living room.

Astoria Fire Department responded just before 7 a.m. to the scene on the 1500 block of Franklin Avenue. Upon arrival, crews found two bay windows already broken as fire and smoke came out from the living room area.

The lone occupant, who was home at the time, was not injured. One of the firefighters suffered a pulled calf muscle and was taken to the hospital.

The fire damaged about

half of the home's first floor. Smoke damage extended from the living room to a stairway. The total damage is estimated to cost about \$50,000 to repair, according to the fire department.

Astoria Fire Department cleared the scene at about 8:30 a.m. The fire department was assisted by Lewis and Clark Volunteer Fire Department and Olney Walruski Fire and Rescue.

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