

# Board: 'It's going to be an interesting trip'

Continued from Page 1A

music festival broke revenue and attendance records; ticket sales hit \$100,000 for the first time. The 2015 festival featured 23 performances of symphonic and chamber music, operas and educational events, most of which were held at Astoria's historic Liberty Theater.

## New names

The board members officially appointed are:

Caswell, a freelance writer and owner of The Dwight Caswell Studio; Board Vice President Jeanne Maddox Peterson, founder and director of Maddox Dance Studio; Board Secretary Craig Holt, a chemist at Oregon State University's Seafood Research & Education Center; Board Treasurer Leena Riker, a fiber artist and professor emerita at Oregon Health & Science University; William Armington, a radiologist at Columbia Memorial Hospital; Sergey Antonov, a cellist and longtime performer at the music festival and Jacob Redekop, a retired orthopedic surgeon and professor emeritus at University of Arizona.

Several other people — including Scott Ashley, a physician at Wimahl Family Clinic; Michael Foster, a retired educator and artist; and John Orr, an attorney and guitarist — have agreed to join the board, but haven't yet been voted in.

"When the previous board decided to resign, they informed Keith, and he called Leena and myself and several others about setting up a new board," Caswell said. "People suggested people; it was one of those go-around-the-community-and-see-if-they're-interested kind of thing."

## Broad representation

Going forward, Caswell and Clark want the board always to have some members who have worked with the festival. Riker, for example, was board president for several years and was instrumental in raising grant money. "She began the process of transforming it from a small, local festival into a major West Coast festival," Caswell said.

They also hope to have at least one member, like Antonov, representing festival artists and one representing festival volunteers.

Ideally, Caswell said, board appointments will be staggered so that no more than one-third of the board's composition changes in any given year.

The previous board had hired a year-round managing director, Carol Shepherd, in November to help make the festival structure resemble that of most nonprofit performing arts organizations in the United States. But, when the previous board resigned, so did Shepherd.

The new board is still searching for Shepherd's replacement. However, "we're not eager to

hire somebody right away," Caswell said. "We really want to make sure we get the right person."

"I am pleased by the community's show of support for our festival, and look forward to more great music in 2016," Clark wrote in an email. "Preliminary plans promise that our 14th annual festival will be the biggest yet, featuring exciting collaborations with several other leading West Coast performing companies."

## Conflicting narratives

The outgoing eight-member board claimed they resigned because they and Clark could not agree on a vision for the festival's direction and leadership structure.

The board alleged that Clark said he intended to separate from the music festival in order to form a new music program with an administration of his choosing. A resignation letter quotes Clark as saying, "We will continue the founding vision of the Astoria Music Festival as a European-style, artist-led company, rather than one dominated by a non-musician board."

Rather than watch Clark leave and establish a new festival, the board chose to step aside.

However, Clark called the outgoing board's narrative "totally inaccurate."

Clark, who founded the festival in 2003, said the old board had repeatedly refused to confirm that he would remain as music director. Eventually, he began hearing rumors that the board was considering replacing him. In addition, Clark said he never hoped to break away from the festival or create a new festival to compete with the existing one.

Outgoing board President Diane Tiedeman declined to comment on the dispute, but former board members denied Clark's version of events.

## 'An interesting trip'

The latest board appointments will mean a "much more dynamic festival," Caswell said. "There's a high energy level, and everybody who's on the board now has a real desire to see the festival succeed."

Asked why she joined the board, Peterson said, "I truly believe in it and what it stands for: bringing art to our community, the art of music and performance."

Though it is too soon to know what "more dynamic" will mean in practice, Caswell said he hopes "we'll be a little edgier in terms of music selection."

Once the appointments are finalized, the executive committee will hold monthly executive meetings; the full board will meet quarterly, and the public is invited to attend.

"People should watch what we do, watch where we're going," he said. "It's going to be an interesting trip this year."

# Wildfires: State's insurance policy deductible increased by \$30 million

Continued from Page 1A

As of Thursday afternoon, the Canyon Creek Complex near John Day had burned nearly 85,000 acres and the Grizzly Bear Complex had burned more than 68,000 acres in the Umatilla National Forest and private land in Oregon and Washington state. An additional 17 large wildfires continued to burn in other areas of the state Thursday, according to an interagency fire tracking website.

## Unique system

Oregon relies on a unique system to pay wildfire fighting costs. Property owners with land classified as forest pay a state assessment to help cover firefighting costs in addition to money

from the Legislature appropriates from the general fund. The state has also purchased an insurance policy most years since 1973 to help cover firefighting costs.

After two severe fire seasons, however, the state's insurance deductible more than doubled from \$20 million to \$50 million. When lawmakers and forest landowners decided to purchase the policy earlier this year, they had to prepare to spend up to \$50 million before they could tap into the \$25 million insurance policy.

Rod Nichols, a spokesman for the Oregon Department of Forestry, said this week that the agency estimated net spending this year at \$26 million, when expected reimbursements from the Federal Emergency Management Agency

and other sources are factored in. Oregon spent an estimated total of \$63 million to fight the wildfires, and fire officials so far expect to receive approximately \$15 million in reimbursement from FEMA and \$22 million from other federal sources.

"The main thing everyone is focused on now is getting the fires out," Nichols said. "We cannot not respond to fires, so we just have to do it. That said, we're spending a lot of money obviously from those figures."

The state has to pay contractors in a timely manner, for example, to ensure they remain in business and can continue to work on the fires, Nichols said.

## Pulling in resources

At the start of fire season, the

Oregon Department of Forestry had 500 seasonal firefighters, 220 fire engines, 15 bulldozers and 14 aircraft. The state also had access to three 188 private contract hand crews, inmate hand crews from state prisons, three incident management teams and National Guard helicopters.

Oregon has since pulled in resources including additional fire crews (including volunteers from the coast), aircraft and fire managers from other states and Canadian provinces to fight the wildfires.

"Basically, the cupboard is bare, though some of the large fires are winding down and resources are starting to return from them," Nichols wrote in an email.

*The Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.*

# Mayhem: 'Lessons learned and bridges burned'

Continued from Page 1A

On Aug. 20, the Greg and Terry Queener Trucking Co. owner said he learned of the damage after his friend and employee, Greg Olsen, went to the site.

"He's more shaken up about it than I am," Queener said of Olsen, a veteran who jumped in to help him with jobs after Queener started getting more work than he could handle on his own.

## 'It was mangled'

At first, Queener figured they'd probably slashed the tires or messed up the truck's paint job. But a few minutes later, a dispatcher for the culvert project got in touch, too, telling him, "It's upside down, smashed, pretty much ruined."

Queener, who works full time on a county road crew, got permission from his boss to leave, and rushed to the site.

"I was worried about fuel getting in the creek. I'm a small business. I didn't know if I was going to be liable for 100 gallons of fuel leaking in the creek."

Fortunately, no fuel leaked, but Queener said the damage was stunning.

"The whole scene was mind-blowing — 'Holy cow, look at this!' It was mangled. I actually thought, 'Who died?' It looked like a car wreck."

Another good friend, Robby Ohrberg, who owns a Cathlamet excavation company dropped everything to help him get the 25,000-pound truck out of the woods and haul it to Toledo.

## Painful decision

On Aug. 19, a woman called a Sheriff's Office employee at home and confided that she suspected her son, Tanner Buchanan, had been involved in the incident. A spokesperson for the Sheriff's Office said that while it was painful for the mother to turn in her own son, she told deputies she knew that she had to do the right thing.

Deputies contacted Buchanan, who admitted that he and another friend caused the damage to the dump truck with an excavator and a bulldozer. Buchanan told the deputies they had both been drinking alcohol and had trashed the truck "for the fun of it." Deputies then tracked down the second suspect, Derrick Justice. Justice also

admitted to operating the bulldozer, but he denied that he damaged the truck in any way, according to the press release.

Both Buchanan and Justice were arrested Aug. 19, and booked into the Pacific County Jail on charges of first-degree malicious mischief and second-degree trespassing.

## One wild night, immeasurable damage

Queener estimates the truck had a value of between \$30,000 and \$50,000. It was insured, so he'll get reimbursed for some of that — he's not sure how much yet. But even if the insurance company pays him replacement cost, or the perpetrators eventually give him some compensation, it still won't cover the real cost of the loss.

Queener had spent thousands to keep the aging rig in good condition, most recently buying a brand-new \$12,000 motor. On top of that there's the insurance premiums and deductible, the full tank of gas, the licensing fees, the missed time at his county job and the inconvenience to his employee, the owners of the destroyed site and

all the customers he can't help during the busiest time of year.

"I've already got many calls for work for the next week, and obviously that's not gonna happen, so I had to refer it to someone else," Queener said.

Though he's losing as much as \$900 a day in lost work, he says the most frustrating thing by far is that no amount of money could make up for losing an item that had serious sentimental value.

The truck used to belong to his uncle, Terry Queener, and the two men were very close.

"He was my best friend. He was one of those relatives that you can go to, no matter what," Queener explained. When his uncle passed away about five years ago, Queener spent most of his own savings to buy the truck from his aunt. Though he'd never planned on owning a trucking company, he says he's been spending virtually all of his free time either "fixing that damn thing or working on it" ever since.

Despite all the hassle and heartache, Queener said the incident has helped him realize how much his business has grown, and how many loyal friends, family members and customers

he has. He estimates that somewhere in the neighborhood of 150 to 200 of people, including many strangers, have shared his story, or called or written to him to express their support.

"My phone has blown up," Queener said. "I can't believe that many people care."

## Learning the hard way

As of Monday, both suspects remained in jail. Justice is being held on \$25,000 bail.

Buchanan currently has two other open criminal cases in North District Court. In one case, he is charged with hit-and-run. In the other, he is charged with driving under the influence and hit-and-run. He is being held on \$100,000 bail for the vandalism incident.

Shortly after the July DUI incident, Buchanan posted a picture of his wrecked vehicle on his public Facebook page with the caption, "Lessons learned and bridges burned."

"You're lucky to be alive," one friend told him.

Buchanan assured her that he'd taken the incident to heart, saying, "My head is now pulled out of my a--."

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