

THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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Take a fresh look at ocean energy rules

The Oregon Coast is an asset of incalculable economic and spiritual value, one that demands rigorous protection.

Thus it will bear close attention as the Department of State Lands' aquatic resource management program writes new rules for wind, wave and other offshore renewable energy projects in anticipation of more companies applying to develop such facilities.

Our Capital Bureau's Hillary Borrud reported on the issue in last Friday's Oregon Capital Insider. DSL Assistant Director Bill Ryan promises a straightforward process, clear understanding of the state's regulatory authority, and protections for coastal communities, recreational and commercial fishing and marine ecosystems.

The state's renewable energy rules for the ocean haven't been updated since 2007. Technology has advanced since then, while the U.S. energy sector has been transformed by abundant natural gas and domestically produced oil using new extraction techniques. It definitely is time for a fresh look at how best to share access to the state's finite maritime zone.

There will be conflicts and controversies when projects propose to make electricity from offshore winds, waves and tides. Those who use Oregon's wa-

ters for commercial/recreational fishing, transportation and other well-established functions will naturally worry about loss of any traditional operating places. Even greater objections are likely to come from homeowners and tourists who will fear loss of the coast's legendary wildness and iconic vistas.

However, there are valid public-policy reasons to continue exploring ocean-energy possibilities. Ultimately, perhaps nothing poses a bigger threat to the seashore and ocean health than rising levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, along with associated changes in marine chemistry. It would be a good thing if Oregon could someday produce a meaningful portion of its electricity from relatively harmless and unobtrusive ocean facilities.

Weather and ocean conditions being what they are on North Pacific, there needs to be a clear and logical regulatory pathway for prospective energy producers. These natural impediments will be obstacles enough to keep most fly-by-night proposals from advancing. Genuine, serious contenders for the next generation of electricity generation ought to be able to find a path forward.

Bravo, Lektro

At 70, the manufacturer is part of our community fabric

It is a common complaint that Clatsop County needs manufacturing. The truth — that we have a robust manufacturing sector — would surprise people.

Georgia Pacific's Wauna paper mill is the biggest fabricator, with employment approaching 1,000. At the other end of the spectrum is Auto Manufacturing in Brownsmead, maker of grinding equipment, selling to a global market.

Walluski Western makes equipment for agriculture. Lektro, which employs 80, is a 70-year-old firm that makes tugs for moving aircraft. J&H Boatworks in Lewis and Clark is

a 40-year-old maker and remodeler of boats. Government economists also classify The Daily Astorian as a manufacturer.

Lektro marked its anniversary last weekend with a celebration at the county fairgrounds, featuring the singer and piano player Phil Vassar.

Companies like Lektro matter, because they are part of the community fabric. Its president Eric Paulson has contributed time and money to many organizations, most notably the Astoria Regatta and Liberty Theater.

Bravo, Lektro. Long may it thrive.

Hamilton, Mays fill the breach

Rich Mays is an excellent choice for interim manager of Clatsop County.

The job is vacant because of the resignation of Scott Somers. As city manager of Cannon Beach for more than eight years, Mays knows our county's terrain. Years ago, another Cannon Beach resident, Bud Kramer, was the county interim manager.

Clatsop Community College, is also seeks a new chief executive, to fill the position left vacant by Lawrence Galizio. CCC's board of directors has

hired an interim president, Gerald Hamilton, who was president of Klamath Community College, 2007-2012. The board was explicit in telling Hamilton it did not want a caretaker. It was essential, the board said, for college business to move forward.

Life moves on, with or without a permanent leader at the county or the college. Mays and Hamilton will make decisions — some large, some small — during their brief tenures. We are fortunate to have their service.

Short-term renters drive some nuts

Do you know your neighbor?

Nowadays, you may never meet them, because they are a corporation.

The North Coast is so popular with tourists and out-of-towners that a new player is sweeping the hospitality mix: the corporate property manager. Companies like Homeaway, Beachcombers and Vacasa are snatching up area properties. Gearhart homeowners tell us they routinely receive blind mailings from these companies soliciting their properties for rental, with promises of big returns.

When Gearhart was 'under the radar'

Not so long ago, homeowners bought homes on the beach for their own use, or that of their families. They would come and visit year-in and year-out, and many homes are still dedicated to the annual family retreat. As lifestyles changed and schedules got busier, many families discovered they couldn't make it out to the beach every year. Renting the house out for the season became a good idea to help cover costs and maintain ownership.

Terry Graff, a Marion Avenue resident, grew up in Spokane, Wash. Nineteen years ago he and his family bought property in Gearhart. "We don't live here permanently but we spend approximately five to six months a year here, we're here almost all summer," he told the Gearhart City Council in August. "When we bought the place we were aware that part of the fabric in Gearhart was short-term vacation rentals.

"It was low-key, kind of under the radar," he said. "There were a few rental agencies that listed these places, but it always worked. People came back every year and there weren't any problems. But that's all changed now, and it's changed at lightning speed."

The Internet is the main reason, he said, and with it, the rise of what is known as "VRBO" — vacation rentals by owner. Graff found 77 properties in Gearhart for short-term rental, split among FlipKey, Vacasa and Edson.

"I think a lot of us feel we bought into Gearhart as a residential community," North Cottage Avenue resident Jeannie Mark said. "It's feeling more and more like a hotel community."

She added a disaster scenario to the mix.

"Since we live in a tsunami zone, visitors are likely to be unprepared and perhaps even clueless

SEEN FROM SEASIDE

By R.J. MARX



in an emergency," Mark said.

Marilyn Gilbaugh, a Seventh Street resident, said only two homes on her street are owner-occupied. "We don't know the people," she said. "The turnover is just crazy."

Are home values impacted?

Graff recited current Web listings in Gearhart: "From the Vacasa site: 'two bedrooms, three baths, sleeps 10'; 'four bedrooms, one bath, sleeps eight'; '1 bedroom, 1 bath, sleeps four'; 'three bedrooms, 1 bath, sleeps 10'; 'zero bedrooms, one bath, sleeps four.'"

Yes, zero bedrooms — a side studio is being rented out without facilities.

Graff described noisy all-night parties, cars overflowing onto the street, and blocked roadways that prevent garbage pickup.

Graff said he went to Gearhart City Manager Chad Sweet and asked what the rules were.

There are no rules, he was told.

Graff called Vacasa, listed as manager of the neighboring short-term rental. He said he was routed to a corporate office in Lorinda, Calif.

Graff then sent a letter to the property owner himself. "He said, 'We can do whatever we want,'" Graff said.

"I'm asking you to do something," Graff told the council. "People say 'Why don't you move?'" Graff said. "I can't. If I put my house on the market, according to a Realtor, it's worth \$100,000 to \$150,000 less because of the circus next door — and that's if I can get somebody to look at it."

"Is anybody doing anything on the council?" North Cottage Avenue resident Jenny Sabel asked. "Is anybody attacking this?"

City reviews options

The good news is, short-term rentals are a near-term priority for the city of Gearhart.

Mayor Dianne Widdop urged neighbors to weigh in: "Write let-

ters," she said. "Any problems you see, let us know and we can compile all of these things."

City Manager Sweet provided an update to the Gearhart Planning Commission in July, and turned over data on listings, local regulations and police incidents that could apply.

A theft from a Gearhart home by a Vacasa employee — since fired — did little to improve the company's standing. Other police reports of noise or disturbance are hard to directly attribute to the VRBO trend.

Sweet said the city requires licensing of hotels, motels and rental units, which can determine occupancy rates and require owner or manager contact information on file.

Under these rules, multiple reservations of the same property — as in the case in the "zero bedroom" rental — could be a violation of other zoning code.

'A living, working map'

City Attorney Peter Watts said properties were considered short-term if rented for less than 30 days. This would exclude six-month and one-year leases.

Sweet said the city is compiling a Google map of short-term residences. The map, posted on a wall in the City Hall building, is "bejewelled" to indicate location of the properties.

"This is a living, working map," he said. "It lists each one of the short-term rentals known to the city of Gearhart. We will continue to update that map so you can see how they are spread throughout the community."

City officials and administrators are reviewing the information posted on regional and national website. "Not including motels, hotels and condos, we know of 75 rentals in town," Sweet said. "That's 75 different homes. For perspective, that's 10 new homes since April this year that we know about."

Sweet said Vacasa has four new homes in the pipeline, with growth from 12 homes to 25 in Gearhart since April. And so far, there hasn't been mention of another popular short-term rental tool, Airbnb, which could add fuel to this fire.

The stakes will be high for local homeowners, visitors and corporate speculators.

"Get rid of these short-term rentals," Graff pleaded. "It's driving our neighborhood nuts."

R.J. Marx is The Daily Astorian's south county reporter and the editor of the Seaside Signal and Cannon Beach Gazette.

Why Clinton remains, yes, inevitable

By CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

Washington Post Writers Group

WASHINGTON — Unless she's indicted, Hillary Clinton will win the Democratic nomination.

That kind of sentence is rarely written about a major presidential candidate. But I don't see a realistic third alternative (except for one long-shot, below).

Clinton is now hostage to the various investigations — the FBI, Congress, the courts — of her emails. The issue has already damaged her seriously by highlighting once again her congenital inability to speak truthfully. When the scandal broke in March, she said unequivocally that she "did not email any classified material to anyone." That's now been shown to be unequivocally false. After all, the inspector general of the intelligence community referred her emails to the Justice Department precisely because they contain classified material.

The fallback — every Clinton defense has a fallback — is that she did not mishandle any material "marked" classified. But that's absurd. Who could even have been in a position to mark classified something she composed and sent on her own private email system?

Moreover, what's prohibited is mishandling classified information not just documents. For example, any information learned from confidential conversations with foreign leaders is automatically classified. Everyone in national security knows that. Reuters has already found 17 emails sent by Clinton containing such "born classified" information. And the State Department has already identified 188 emails on her server that contain classified information.

The truth-shaving never stops. Take a minor matter: her communications with Sidney Blumenthal.

She originally insisted that these were just "unsolicited" emails from an old friend. Last Monday's document release showed that they were very much solicited ("Keep 'em coming when you can") and in large volume — 306 emails, according to *The New York Times'* Peter Baker, more than with any other person, apparently, outside the State Department.

The parallel scandal looming over Clinton is possible corruption involving contributions to the Clinton Foundation while she was secretary of state. There are relatively few references to the foundation in the emails she has released. Remember, she erased 32,000 emails she deemed not "work-related." Clinton needs to be asked a straightforward question: "In sorting your private from public emails, were those related to the Clinton Foundation considered work-related or were they considered private and thus deleted?"

The truth-shaving never stops.

We are unlikely to get a straight answer from Clinton. In fact, we may never get the real answer. So Clinton marches on regardless. Who is to stop her?

Yes, Bernie Sanders has risen impressively. But it is inconceivable that he would be nominated. For one thing, he'd be the oldest president by far — on Inauguration Day older than Ronald Reagan, our oldest president, was at his second inaugural.

And there is the matter of Sanders being a self-proclaimed socialist in a country more allergic to socialism than any in the Western world. Which is why the party is turning its lonely eyes to joltin' Joe Biden.



Charles Krauthammer

Biden, who at 72 shares the Democrats' gerontocracy problem, is riding a wave of deserved sympathy. But that melts away quickly when a campaign starts. Even now, his support stands at only 18 percent in the latest Quinnipiac poll. For him to win, one has to assume that Sanders disappears and Biden automatically inherits Sanders' constituency.

That's a fantasy, modeled on 1968 when Bobby Kennedy picked up Eugene McCarthy's anti-Lyndon Johnson constituency. But Joe Biden is no Bobby Kennedy. And in a recent Iowa poll, Biden's support comes roughly equally from Clinton and Sanders. Rather than inheriting the anti-Clintonite constituency, he could instead be splitting it.

There is one long-shot possibility that might upend Clinton: Biden pledges to serve one term only and chooses Elizabeth Warren as his running mate — now. One term pledges address the age problem but they are political poison, giving the impression of impermanence and mere transition. Warren cures that, offering the Democratic base — and the Sanders constituency — the vision of a 12-year liberal ascendancy.

When asked on Wednesday whether she had discussed such a ticket with Biden, Warren answered "it was a long conversation," a knowing wink in the form of a provocative denial.

I doubt a Biden-Warren ticket will happen, but it remains the only threat to Clinton outside of some Justice Department prosecutor showing the same zeal in going after Hillary Clinton as the administration did in going after David Petraeus.

Otherwise the Democrats remain lashed to Clinton. Their only hope is that the Republicans self-destruct in a blaze of intraparty warfare. Something for which they are showing an impressive talent.