

# Steadfast: Bolanos is the ship’s fourth commander since April



Line crews help moor the U.S. Coast Guard cutter Steadfast to the docks Monday.



The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Steadfast approaches Astoria while being assisted by the PJ Brix tugboat Monday.

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**Back from patrol**  
The Steadfast, a 47-year-old, 210-foot medium endurance cutter, spends its deployments along the West Coast conducting search and rescue, marine environmental response, recreational boating safety, port safety, security and law enforcement missions. Law enforcement includes interdicting drug traffickers and migrants, preventing marine pollution, protecting marine sanctuaries and enforcing fishery rules.

Astoria’s cutters fit into the Coast Guard’s Western Hemisphere Strategy, a document released a year ago that details the Coast Guard’s strategy to protect the U.S. and secure its southern borders by combating transnational crime networks and safeguarding commerce.

The cutter also spent much of its deployment training,

said operations officer Lt. Jonathan Wolstenholme, because slightly more than half the crew was new. A major training piece, he added, was aviation standardization to make sure helicopters know how to land on the ship.

When the Steadfast came in Monday, it did so with the assistance of a tug boat. Wolstenholme said the ship was dealing with some “mechanical casualties.” The cutter will spend a couple of months in port for maintenance, Wolstenholme said, before heading back out on deployment.

**Changes of command**  
Bolanos is technically the Steadfast’s fourth commander since April.

Cmdr. John Bitterman took command of the Steadfast in July 2014. He was temporarily relieved of his command shortly before the Steadfast’s most recent deployment in April.

The reason given by Pacific Area Command was a loss of confidence in his abilities to lead, although no further explanation was given. Darrin Gibbons, Bitterman’s attorney at the time, said the ousted commander had identified problems on the vessel such as lead contamination, poor decking and moldy mattresses, and was being retaliated against for whistleblowing.

Cmdr. John Pruitt of the Coast Guard’s Motion Picture & Television Office in Los Angeles originally took over temporary command of the Steadfast from Bitterman. Early on in the patrol, Wolstenholme said, Walsh took over for Pruitt, who had to go back to his other job advising on an upcoming movie about the Coast Guard.

Bitterman was permanently removed from his post over the summer, but still works for the Coast Guard at Sector Columbia River in Warrenton.



The crew of the U.S. Coast Guard cutter Steadfast stand at attention during the change of command ceremony aboard the ship.

Photos by Joshua Bessex  
The Daily Astorian

# Housing: City does not have many large tracts suitable for new housing

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consider property tax exemptions, government or private grants, tax credits, or an equity fund as incentives to help finance new or rehabilitated housing projects.

At a special session Monday night, the City Council heard from low-income housing experts and builders who recom-

mended that the city explore smaller rehabilitation options rather than wait for large projects to solve the housing shortage.

“Don’t just focus on the big, splashy sorts of things,” said Jim Tierney, the executive director of the Community Action Team, a St. Helens-based nonprofit that works on anti-poverty issues in Clatsop, Columbia

and Tillamook counties.

“Try and find how you can do housing rehabilitation, how you can do sweat equity.”

The affordable housing study defined affordability as households that pay no more than 30 percent of annual income on housing. According to the study, 30 percent of homeowners and 45.6 percent of renters were over that threshold in 2013.

Since the recession, as the economy has improved and tourism has flourished, many low- to middle-income workers have complained about the difficulty of finding housing in Astoria. Working families, in particular, are moving to Warrenton and Hammond, where school enrollment has increased, while Astoria enrollment has declined.

The city’s cultural rebirth has also attracted retirees and urban transplants with the financial means to buy and renovate houses that are comparatively cheaper than in markets such as Portland and Seattle.

The city does not have many large tracts suitable for new housing, so projects will likely be scattered in different pockets with redevelopment potential.

LaMear and the councilors discussed creating an affordable housing task force, but opted to wait for the data from the vacant housing inventory and other information before deciding how the City Council will proceed.

“I think it’s a matter, partly, of information but partly of political will,” City Councilor Drew Herzig said.

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