

Brown declines to take position on accepting Syrian refugees

By **PARIS ACHEN**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Gov. Kate Brown has rejected calls by Republicans to take a position on whether Oregon should accept more refugees after reports that at least one of the suspects in the Paris attacks carried a Syrian passport.

“The governor’s response stands,” said Melissa Navas, a spokeswoman for Brown. “I can’t tell you what will happen tomorrow or a week from now.”

Several Republican governors have declared they will block more Syrian refugees from settling in their states following the Paris attacks, though federal law suggests they have no power to do so.

States have no authority to reject Syrian refugees or to act independently in any way concerning the handling of the Syrian refugee crisis, according to the Oregon Department of Human Services.

“It’s kind of easy to pick, but it doesn’t seem anyone is paying attention to the bigger issue on whether governors can close their states to refugees, if that can actually happen,” Navas said of media coverage on Republican governors who say they are refusing more refugees.

Congress and the president set policy on accepting



Gov. Kate Brown

refugees. President Barack Obama recently announced the United States would accept 10,000 Syrian refugees, a small fraction compared to some other countries. So far, only one Syrian refugee has settled in Oregon, a Department of Human Services spokesman said.

Refugees may ask to settle in a particular state where they have social connections, or national volunteer agencies might settle refugees based on resources available in different regions, according to the state.

The U.S. Office on Refugee Resettlement did not immediately return a call from the EO Media Group/Pamplin Media Group seeking information on gubernatorial authority over refugee resettlement.

State Rep. Bill Post, R-Keizer, wrote to Brown

Monday to ask the governor whether the state plans to accept more Syrian refugees.

“I strongly believe that America, and specifically Oregon, should always be a place where those seeking relief from religious persecution may come and build a new safer life,” Post wrote. “At the same time, I am very concerned that if we take any and every refugee, we may expose Oregonians to acts of terrorism like Paris experienced last Friday.”

The Department of Human Services gives refugees up to eight months of cash assistance and employment services. The agency tracks only refugees participating in the short-term refugee program.

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

State slow to take action against ‘flagged’ child service providers

By **HILLARY BORRUD**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon lawmakers learned Monday that a state-licensed child services provider had been flagged for problems 30 out of the last 36 months, even more frequently than the Portland foster care program Give Us This Day, which was the focus of a series of stories by the Willamette Week newspaper about a range of problems, from misuse of funds to child neglect.

According to testimony Monday, being flagged by the agency didn’t necessarily lead to any action being taken.

Willamette Week’s coverage, which prompted multiple legislative hearings, revealed that top Department of Human Services administrators ignored reports of problems at the program. The latest hearing was at the Senate Interim Committee on Human Services and Early Childhood, which met Monday to discuss potential legislation next year and other actions to address problems in the state’s foster care system.

On the radar

Give Us This Day showed up on the Department of Human Services’ “RADAR list” for 26 of the last 36 months, according to information the agency provided in response to questions from state Sen. Sara Gelsler, D-Corvallis.

But another unidentified

children’s service provider has been on the “RADAR list” more than 30 of the last 36 months. DHS appears to have used the “RADAR list” as an informational tool to alert top administrators to problems and potential media or political attention at DHS-licensed facilities.

The agency has not suspended, revoked or even denied the renewal of licenses for any problematic service providers during the last 36 months.

It’s unclear from the agency’s response to Gelsler why the unnamed provider remained on the list so many months, but the criteria to get on the list include “high severity or high quantity of allegations,” a state licensing action such as suspension, political implications, potential media attention and “chronic non-compliance or ‘yo-yo’ compliance.”

The list covers all facilities the Department of Human Services licenses, including assisted living facilities and therapeutic boarding schools, and state licensing staff email the list on a monthly basis to the agency director, deputy directors, program director, communications director, the director of the Office of Adult Abuse Prevention and Investigation, the long-term care ombudsman and the Legislative Office.

Lawyers for the state are reviewing whether the Department of Human Services can release the name of that unidentified provider and other information from the list, said department spokeswoman Andrea Cantu-Schomus. The EO Media Group/Pamplin Media Group Capital Bureau and other news outlets have filed public records requests for the list or information on it.

No sense of urgency

Lois Day, the state’s child welfare director, said during a meeting of the Senate Interim Committee on Human Services and Early Childhood Monday that in retrospect, it is clear the agency has more information about foster care facilities than officials might have realized. At the same time, the RADAR list, one of the key information sources they did have, did not inspire a sense of urgency for the agency to stop placing children with the most problematic providers.

Day and other Department of Human Services administrators described a decentralized child welfare system, in which licensing, inspection, contracting and compliance workers aren’t necessarily communicating or even looking at the same information about the programs caring for kids.

City moves forward on Neighborhood Greenway

City Council also postpones hearing on appeal of Verizon monopole

By **DERRICK DEPLEDGE**
The Daily Astorian

The Astoria City Council Monday night gave initial approval to the Neighborhood Greenway phase of the city’s Riverfront Vision Plan.

Neighborhood Greenway, which covers the Alderbrook neighborhood on the city’s east side, would further restrict new development along the Columbia River.

The zoning along the river would change from aquatic conservation to aquatic natural, which basically limits new structures to piers and docks.

On land, new design guidelines would be imposed on multifamily and commercial projects such as apartments or day care centers.

Neighborhood Greenway would recognize the traffic concerns raised by Alderbrook residents and envision that the Astoria Riverfront Trolley might eventually extend into the neighborhood.

Alderbrook residents had told the city they wanted min-

imal land-use changes in their community.

The City Council is expected to give final approval to the Neighborhood Greenway phase in December.

The council has already adopted the Civic Greenway and Bridge Vista phases of the Riverfront Vision Plan, which is designed to set land-use guidelines along the river. The Urban Core leg downtown is the last remaining section.

In other business Monday night, the City Council:

- Postponed a hearing on an appeal against a new Verizon Wireless monopole in Shively Park.

Ron Zilli, a forester, has challenged the 150-foot-tall tower as incompatible with the historic park. He has warned the city that the monopole will be more visible above the tree line than Verizon has indicated.

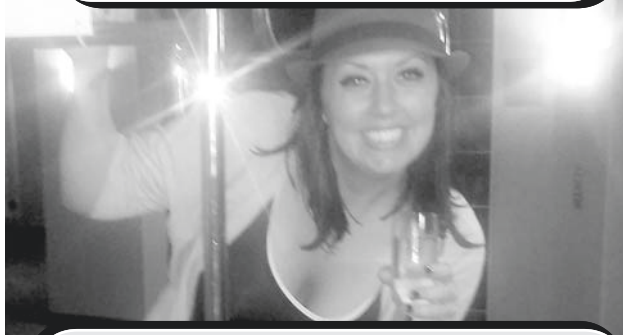
The monopole is part of an agreement between the city and Verizon to move an aging communications tower off Coxcomb Hill and away from the Astoria Column.

The agreement includes a new tower the city and Verizon will share off Reservoir Road as well as the new Verizon monopole at Shively Park and equipment atop the Astor Building.

Verizon asked to postpone the hearing, which is now scheduled for early January.

• Announced, through City Councilor Cindy Price, a dedication for the new Irving Avenue Bridge near 19th Street. The event is at 11 a.m. Thursday at the new \$5.8 million bridge.

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