

# Port settles with two former employees

## Browne and her lawyer receive \$478,000; Herman case ongoing

By EDWARD STRATTON  
*The Daily Astorian*

The Port of Astoria on Thursday released two agreements signed last month to separate the agency from two former employees.

The agency signed a separation agreement with Mike Weston, the former director of business development and operations whose last day was Monday. In a separate agreement, it settled a lawsuit with Colleen Browne, the former finance

manager fired a year ago.

In the settlement, Browne and her attorney Anne Foster will receive a total of \$478,900 from the Port of Astoria's insurer, the Special Districts Association of Oregon. The Port fired both Browne and former Facilities

Manager Tammi Herman a year ago. Foster represented both when they filed a civil suit in U.S. District Court against the Port and Weston in February.

Browne and Herman claimed Weston abused his authority during his

tenure as interim executive director, and that the agency retaliated against them for reporting his indiscretions. Weston held the position between September 2013, when former Executive Director Hank Bynaker resigned, and October 2014, when Executive Director Jim Knight was hired.

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# Wetlands plan first, then open for business



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

A sign designates the location of North Coast Business Park near Southeast 19th Street and Southeast Ensign Lane in Warrenton.

## County in talks with potential developer for Warrenton area

By KYLE SPURR  
*The Daily Astorian*

WARRENTON — Earlier this year, all signs pointed to development at the North Coast Business Park.

Having already been designated a Regionally Significant Industrial Area, the 162-acre lot across from Costco in Warrenton also became part of the Clatsop Enterprise Zone, where property tax exemptions could be offered to encourage new projects.

The next step for the county-owned property was to take offers from interested businesses.

However, the county recently learned that no mitigation had been done on the site's many wetlands. An application — submitted in October to the Oregon Department of State Lands and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers — could take up to 18 months for approval, pushing the timeline for development into 2017.

"They didn't understand turning in the paperwork was not the end of the story, it was just the beginning," Clatsop County Community Development Director Heather Hansen said of county administrators.

**'It wasn't as shovel-ready as advertised.'**

Dirk Rohne  
Clatsop County commissioner

The news came as a surprise to the county Board of Commissioners.

County commissioners learned about the delay this fall in executive session during negotiations with an interested developer. Before executing an agreement, the county's land use attorney informed the board about the need for wetland mitigation.

"It wasn't as shovel-ready as advertised," Commissioner Dirk Rohne said.

County staff was not at the table once negotiations started.

Hansen, who helped submit the 1,200-page application, said former County Manager Scott Somers had the impression the wetland mitigation was not going to hinder development.

"Scott was just confused," Hansen said. "He just thought when we turned the application in,

it was over. I don't think he realized the application could take a year or year and a half."

### Speculative approach

Submitting an all-encompassing application at once is part of a new "speculative approach," Hansen said, which is being encouraged by the Department of State Lands.

Traditionally, applications would be sent one by one for specific development plans.

The new approach allows wetland mitigation to be done on an entire site, taking out any uncertainty for future developers.

"If you could get this taken care of in advance, it's more marketable," Hansen said.

The application focuses on compensatory mitigation, where the county plans to preserve wetlands on about a dozen other properties in order to be able to impact wetlands at the North Coast Business Park.

By compensating for the loss of wetlands, the county will not have to purchase wetland credits, which can cost up to \$100,000 each.

If a developer is seriously interested in a portion of the park, Hansen said, they could submit

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# Wyden questions USPS threat to Observer

## Pot ads generate inquiry from Pacific County Post Office

*The Daily Astorian*

LONG BEACH, Wash. — Confusion over whether the U.S. Postal Service can mail the Chinook Observer and other newspapers with marijuana advertising will reach the desk of the postmaster general.

In a letter to Postmaster General and Postal Service CEO Megan J. Brennan, U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden and his colleagues — U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley and U.S. Reps. Suzanne Bonamici and Earl Blumenauer — seek clarity on how federal postal regulations intersect with state laws that legalize recreational marijuana.

Washington state and Oregon are among the states that have legalized recreational marijuana, but the drug remains illegal under federal law. The U.S. Department of Justice, however, has encouraged states to establish strict regulations on legal pot and has said that federal enforcement priorities do not include prosecution for possession of small amounts of marijuana for personal use.

On Monday, Long Beach Postmaster Mark Scarborough contacted Chinook Observer Publisher Matt Winters with a memo dated Nov. 27 from managers of the Portland District. "The memo contained the eye-catching line: 'If a mailpiece contains an advertisement for marijuana, that piece is unmailable ...,'" Winters said.

The Observer and The Daily Astorian share a weekly publication, Coast Weekend, which frequently carries advertising for marijuana dispensaries in Pacific County, Washington, and Clatsop County. About half of the Observer's newspapers are sent through the mail. A small portion of Astorian subscribers are served by mail.

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# Spring launch at hand for Cannon Beach market

## Natural foods, wide range of beer and wine among choices

By DANI PALMER  
*EO Media Group*

Tolovana Park will likely have a new multimillion dollar grocery, fully stocked, by next summer. With financing in place, Tim Welsh, his brother Jon Welsh and their father James plan to begin construction and open Fresh Foods Cannon Beach in late-

May or early June.

In April, the Welsh family members purchased a vacant lot at 3401 S. Hemlock St., across the street from the Tolovana Inn, near the on-ramp to U.S. Highway 101. Site plans for the 10,000-square-foot market were approved by the Design Review Board at its May meeting. There will be 29 off-street parking spaces at the site, and a sidewalk will be added on the west side of the property.

On the shelves, product will lean heavily toward natural choices, Tim Welsh said, but a "broad spectrum" of options will be available.

A full-service market,

Fresh Foods Cannon Beach will offer a health and beauty section, "an incredible beer and wine selection," a produce department, a meat and dairy section and a deli with soups and sandwiches along with a coffee bar.

Welsh said they will work with local vendors to supply items like baked goods and partner with Sleepy Monk for coffee. The cafe area will feature an inside eating area, seating 17, an outside sitting area and Wi-Fi connection.

A second floor will consist of offices.

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