

Port interested in South Tongue Point

Mushen takes Port Commission chairman post

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

Add the Port of Astoria to the mix of suitors interested in South Tongue Point.

During a Port Commission meeting Tuesday, Executive Director Jim Knight said the Port sent a letter to the Oregon Department of State Lands stating that the agency is interested in buying some or all of South Tongue Point.

The land, located east of Astoria off of U.S. Highway 30 south of the industrial property at North Tongue Point, was created between the mid-1940s through the 1970s by soil dredged from the Columbia River shipping channel by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Zoned marine industrial but still mostly undeveloped, the land is valued as both wildlife habitat and for potential industrial development because of its location between a derelict rail spur and a deepwater channel off the river.

In March, Clatsop Community College applied to buy the 7.5 acres the college leases for its Marine and Environmental Research and Training Station campus. As a separate part of the



Jim Knight



John Raichl

application, the college applied to buy more than 100 acres of the undeveloped property for a living classroom, with the help of conservation groups Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce

and the Columbia Land Trust, which hope to raise state and federal funds to buy the land and create more estuarine salmon habitat.

Commission Chairman John Raichl said the Port and the college could enter their own partnership of the Port's industrial development coupled with the college's career technical training programs.

"I don't think the Port can afford to watch industrial property go away to watch birds," Port Commissioner Bill Hunsinger said, adding the Port should aggressively pursue the land.

Hunsinger said the property is essential for establishing a freight railroad, part of the reason the agency leases

much of the industrial tarmac, hangars and piers at North Tongue Point.

Little interest before

South Tongue Point was acquired by the state from the federal government as part of a dispute settlement in the 1990s, with the idea of turning the land into an industrial port. But the state has had little success in attracting interest.

In December 2013, Warrenton Fiber Co. applied to buy the land for log storage and a possible export site for its wood-chipping business, initiating a due diligence review by the state.

See PORT, Page 7A

SEAPORT TREASURES



Photos by Natalie St. John/EO Media Group

After 15 years of running the Seaport Museum together, "Capt. Pete" Darrah and his friend and longtime volunteer Virginia Wallace can finish one another's sentences. They kept up a steady stream of banter while giving a tour of the museum. More photos at www.dailyastorian.com

Hidden Raymond museum celebrates local maritime culture

By NATALIE ST. JOHN
EO Media Group

RAYMOND, Wash. — It seems appropriate that a museum dedicated to maritime treasures is, itself, a hidden treasure.

The plain exterior of the Willapa Seaport Museum conceals something of a Cave of Wonders. Proprietor "Capt. Pete" Darrah, 80, has amassed a fascinating collection that spans centuries and continents.

Much of the collection is nautically themed. There are antique sailors' instruments, rubble from shipwrecks, a voluptuous figurehead and a corner devoted to pirates. But the cavernous, dimly lit interior also contains a diverse collection of less-expected displays, covering everything from local history and culture to the branches of the American military.

Together, the exhibits pay tribute to an era of American history when residents both relied

upon, and lived in fear of, the natural world; a time when things were made by hand and built to last.

Keeping local history alive

Sitting side by side in the front of the museum on a chilly late-November afternoon, Darrah, and his longtime friend and assistant Virginia Wallace, 79, told the story of the Seaport Museum.

The museum, which runs on a tiny budget, has always relied on a small, but loyal group of volunteer "keepers," said Darrah, who is spry and animated, with a story for every occasion. As the most veteran volunteer, Wallace has become an indispensable part of the museum's operations and ambiance. The two seamlessly

See SEAPORT, Page 7A

IF YOU GO

The Willapa Seaport Museum is open from noon to 4 p.m. Wednesday to Sunday, depending on the availability of volunteers. The suggested donation for admission is \$3. To check hours, or ask for a tour outside of those hours, call the museum at 360-942-4149. The museum is actively seeking new volunteers.



'Chief Keeper' Virginia Wallace looks into a display that shows what life was like aboard a World War II-era Navy ship.

Party barn's hefty fines upheld

'It's not right,' Smith says

By R.J. MARX
The Daily Astorian

GEARHART — After meeting for more than five hours, the Gearhart City Council on Tuesday upheld more than \$30,000 in penalties against Neacoxie Creek Barn owner Shannon Smith but agreed to cut the fine in half.

Smith appeared before the council to appeal the civil administrative fines levied by Building Official Jim Brien for renting out her barn without an occupancy permit.

"It's not right," Smith said after the decision was rendered. "It's not fair."

Councilors upheld Brien's penalties, issued for use of the barn for weddings and special events throughout the summer on six separate occasions, each carrying a \$5,000 penalty.

"All six of these violations, I personally visited the site," Brien said. "In the beginning, I tried to work with Ms. Smith. I wanted her to make some money. She promised that if I didn't close her down, she wouldn't do it again. This has been going on for over four years."

'Disaster waiting to happen'

He said restrooms are required in public buildings, and regulated by the building official. The facility relies on portable toilets for guests.

"The code is very clear," Brien said. "The whole thing is, she has not put toilets in there."

He said the barn was a "disaster waiting to happen," with construction flaws that could put guests at risk.

The lack of hot water for dishwashing and food preparation distressed Councilor Paulina Cockrum.

See PARTY BARN, Page 4A

Willapa Bay gillnetters lock horns with state

Agency blames problems on drought

By KATIE WILSON
For EO Media Group

WILLAPA BAY, Wash. — Drought hit Willapa Bay salmon runs hard this year while questions remain about how a new commercial salmon fishing policy affects local fishermen.

At a recent meeting at Naselle High School, representatives from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife expected to field questions regarding the die-off of approximately 10,000 salmon below the Naselle Hatchery due to low stream flow and other drought-related factors this fall.

Instead, they spent most of the time hearing concerns from commercial gillnet fishermen living on both sides of the Columbia River

regarding the salmon fishing policy that went into effect earlier this year.

The concerns were pretty much the same as what both fishermen and seafood processors stated before the policy went into effect, according to Steve Thiesfeld, regional fish program manager for the Department of Fish and Wildlife. But he believes the policy is sound.

"I think the fishing season in and of itself and how it transpired will help us craft seasons into next year," he said in an interview, adding many of the fishermen present seemed to want to judge the merits of the policy solely on the most recent season — a season he said was complicated by drought conditions and a much lower than expected return of coho salmon.

"I think folks need to be careful not to judge on one year's performance," he said.



Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Gillnetters (this one is pictured on the Columbia River in July) are challenging new salmon regulations on Willapa Bay.

See GILLNETTERS, Page 3A

