



Ron Neva, left, and Tryan Hartill gather Dungeness crab while preparing an order at Northwest Wild Products last week. The business moved into the Chinook Building six years ago. Photos by Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

DA says no to charging Smithart

Former inn operator owes Port and city hundreds of thousands

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

District Attorney Joshua Marquis said he has no plans to file criminal charges against Brad Smithart, the heavily indebted former operator of the Astoria Riverwalk Inn.



Brad Smithart

In order to make criminal charges stick, Marquis said, there needs to be proof Smithart intended to defraud the city and Port of Astoria, which owns the hotel.

Smithart, through Hospitality Masters, took over operation of the former Red Lion Hotel in 2012 with business partner Seth Davis. Davis eventually left the partnership, and Smithart has fallen behind multiple times on hotel room taxes to the city and on revenue and rent to the Port.

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SEAFARE RISING? NEW LIFE ON WEST END

A rebirth could be at hand for eatery, others

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

Tenants at the Chinook Building have long enjoyed budget lease rates in an older building with a \$1 million panoramic view of Pier 1, the West End Mooring Basin, Cannery Pier Hotel and the Astoria Bridge.

But interest is growing in the Astoria Riverwalk Inn and former Seafare Restaurant next door, along with the entire waterfront district around the West End Mooring Basin, and some tenants are wondering about the future on the central waterfront.

At a meeting earlier this month, the Port of Astoria Commission voted to have staff create a request for proposals for someone to come and develop the former Seafare Restaurant in between the Chinook Building and the Astoria Riverwalk Inn. The vote included the Chinook Building as a potential option in proposals.

The former Seafare restaurant opened as the Thunderbird around the same time as the Thunderbird Motel and the Astoria Bridge in the mid-1960s. It has played host to scenes from "Kindergarten Cop" in 1990, but went vacant in the 2000s and has fallen into disrepair. But like the Astoria Riverwalk Inn directly west, the restaurant has drawn interest from several unnamed parties.

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The Chinook Building pictured before Christmas.



Tables and chairs are stacked inside the former Seafare Restaurant.

Astoria to get the dirt out

Soil set for removal from Heritage Square

By DERRICK DePLEDGE
The Daily Astorian

Contaminated soil piled high at Heritage Square will soon be gone.

Crews will start hauling the soil next week to an old quarry that the city owns off Pipeline Road. The dirt, which is considered lightly contaminated, was unearthed during the construction of the Garden of Surging Waves and has sat festering under tarps in the hole left when the foundation of the former Safeway collapsed.

A smaller amount of contaminated soil underneath the northwest edge of the parking lot at Duane and 12th Streets is more dangerous and will have to be trucked to a hazardous waste landfill in Arlington.

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The American dream through entrepreneurship

Couple comes to America and builds lives in Warrenton

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — With several bachelor's and two master's degrees between them, Lovekesh and Alpana Kumar are not the first couple who would expect to find running a convenience store in Warrenton.

But the couple, who emigrated from northern India



and also own a convenience store in Cloverdale, have crafted their version of the American dream through small-town entrepreneurship.

The Kumars moved to Warrenton from Cloverdale in June after opening their second Super Mart location at the corner of Main Avenue and Third Street. Their company, Kamakshi Inc., is named after their 2-year-old daughter. The

Kumars also have a 12-year-old son, Kevin, and a 10-year-old daughter, Samantha.

Arranged life, love

"Everything is freedom here," said Lovekesh, 43, who has lived in the U.S. for 14 years; his wife Alpana, 38, for three. "In India, if you need money, you can't get the

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Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

From left, Kevin, Alpana and Lovekesh Kumar moved to the U.S. from India in pursuit of the American dream. Alpana and Lovekesh run convenience stores in Cloverdale and Warrenton under the business name Kamakshi Inc., named after their 3-year-old daughter.

