

2015: A lot happened in Clatsop County politics

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Clatsop County manager resigns

Scott Somers, Clatsop County manager since July 2012, resigned in August to accept a job offer to become the city manager of College Park, Md., a Washington, D.C., suburb and home to the University of Maryland.

During his tenure, Somers helped launch Clatsop Vision 2030 Together, a visioning project to guide long-range planning by the Board of Commissioners and departments, and gained state approval for a local enterprise zone and designation of the North Coast Business Park as a regionally significant industrial area.

An independent review of Clatsop County management released in July found the county was operating effectively under Somers, but also concluded that tension and confusion among county workers could have been avoided had management and benefit changes been better explained.

Former Cannon Beach City Manager Rich Mays is serving as interim county manager.

The Board of Commissioners is scheduled to select county manager finalists at its Jan. 13 meeting.

Finalists will be brought in for a public meet-and-greet on Jan. 28 and interviews with three panels on Jan. 29. Clatsop County has had nine different county managers in 15 years.

Astoria politics

Arline LaMear was sworn-in as Astoria mayor in January, replacing Willis Van Dusen, a larger-than-life personality who had guided the city for 24 years.

Zetty Nemlowill and Cindy Price also took seats on the City Council, providing a fresh perspective on policy issues. It is the first time in the city's history that women make up a majority on the council.

In January, LaMear and the new council nimbly settled a long-running controversy over whether drunken-driving cases should to be handled in the city's Municipal Court rather than the county's Circuit Court.

District Attorney Josh Marquis had wanted the cases prosecuted in Circuit Court, where he believes there is a higher standard of justice, but the courts have ruled that the city has discretion over where to assign the cases.

LaMear, who had previously backed keeping the cases in Municipal Court, agreed to shift the prosecutions to Circuit Court to "put the issue behind us."

In an odd 2-2 vote in March, the City Council chose not to join the county, Warrenton and the Port of Astoria in a new enterprise zone to help lure businesses through property tax exemptions. The mayor and council had appeared open to an enterprise zone, but some councilors cited concerns about partnering with the Port after years of distrust.

In a bizarre incident at City Hall in June, a man tried to make a citizen's arrest of LaMear and Police Chief Brad Johnston during a council meeting and was tackled by Johnston. Zachary Seidel, who is facing criminal trespass, disorderly conduct and resisting arrest charges, was unhappy about a plan to relocate a Verizon Wireless communications tower from Coxcomb Hill to Reservoir Road and build another Verizon tower in Shively Park.

The City Council voted in June to approve the Bridge Vista phase of the city's Riverfront Vision Plan, which balances the protection of iconic views of the Astoria Bridge with the need to preserve Uniontown as a working waterfront. In December, the city signed off on the Neighborhood Greenway leg, which protects the riverfront in Alderbrook. The council had approved the Civic Greenway portion of the plan last year, and only has one phase — the Urban Core — left in the land-use blueprint.

A city affordable housing report released in August found that there is a shortage of both rentals and housing for sale, making it difficult for low and middle-income workers, in particular, to find housing.

In December, doubts were raised about a new library with housing at Heritage Square after city staff and consultants estimated the project could cost from \$29.7 million to \$38.7 million.

The City Council had urged staff to look at Heritage Square after backtracking earlier this year on a \$4.6 million renovation of the existing public library on 10th Street into the vacant Waldorf Hotel next door.

How will Seaside grow?

Seaside will expand its urban boundaries, but planning commissioners are still wrestling as to what areas might see growth.

They will be undertaking a 14-year land-needs analysis to bring 141 acres into the Urban Growth Boundary expansion. Typically a 20-year forecast, the city is responding to state guidelines which recommended the relatively shorter-term outlook.

Since the commission started considering the expansion, members focused on the Southeast Hills site, to the south and east of Spruce Drive and



Daily Astorian/File Photo
Mayor Arline LaMear addresses the crowd during her first City Council meeting as mayor in January.

Wahanna Road. They determined that area alone could provide enough developable land to meet the city's land supply needs.

Landowners in that area, which currently is part of unincorporated Clatsop County, have questioned the expansion and how it would impact property tax evaluations, traffic patterns, infrastructure and lifestyles.

Aggressive elk cause problems

A surprising amount of elk were more aggressive than usual toward people this fall, leading to injuries and property damage.

Law enforcement and wildlife officials responded to multiple reports of aggressive elk and worried that people who are feeding or taking pictures of the animals were in danger.

The most notable incident occurred in Hammond when a man and teenage girl were chased by a bull elk. The man was checking his mail when the elk charged at him, knocked him to the ground with its antlers and chased him back into his house. The man had scratches on his side from the antlers.

An Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife Division officer responded to the incident, and days later had to shoot and kill the aggressive elk.

College breaks ground on Patriot Hall

A state seismic report from 2007 gave Towler and Patriot halls on Clatsop Community College's main campus a 100 percent chance of collapsing in a major earthquake. A refurbished, seismically stable Towler Hall debuted in 2010. But by this year, Patriot Hall remained unstable, a quarter of the building unusable because of a lack of access for people with disabilities.

After securing \$8 million from county voters to match with \$8 million in state bonds, the college broke ground in June on the Patriot Hall Redevelopment. The project will result in a modern academic Hall and gymnasium, topped by an elevated running track with sweeping views of the Columbia.

The new academic hall will also result in new paramedic, substance-abuse counseling and exercise physiology programs at the college. The general contractor, P&C Construction, hopes to have the project finished by the start of the 2015-16 school year in September.

Just say 'die' already!

The Goonies 30th anniversary celebration organized by the Astoria-Warrenton Chamber of Commerce drew an estimated 12,000 to 15,000 to the North Coast in June. Fans of the 1985 cult classic participated in fun-filled activities staged in Astoria and Cannon Beach.

But the beloved Goonies house — a private residence in Uppertown Astoria — went off limits to the public a couple of months later.

The owner, Sandi Preston, had long allowed Goonies devotees to approach and photograph the world-famous dwelling. However, the relentless tide of tourists — and the rude behavior of a few — had become intolerable for Preston and her husband.

In an interview with The Daily Astorian, Sean Astin, who played Mikey in "The Goonies," told fans to "respect the dang house."

Pillar of pride

The Astoria Column, a 125-foot pillar whose spiraling mural depicts the city's early history, underwent its first major restoration in 20 years.

The landmark on Coxcomb Hill was closed to visitors from June through October, engirdled by scaffolding and — until the restoration team allowed a late-August windstorm to blow it away — a white netting.

Meanwhile, the team removed biological growth, filled the cracks, strengthened the plaster, repaired the cupola and worked to recreate the "look" of the original 1926 frieze.

Hood to Coast gets a reprieve

The city of Seaside and Hood to Coast reached an agreement in October to continue their 25-year relationship. Seaside is the final leg of the 197-mile relay, which originates in Mount Hood and draws up to 20,000 visitors to Seaside each year.

The rapprochement occurred only a few weeks after 87 business owners presented a petition seek-



Daily Astorian/File Photo
Clatsop County Manager Scott Somers looks on during a Clatsop County Commissioners meeting in August.

ing a date change for the event. During the first Hood to Coast workshop, audience members complained about rude behavior by runners, "arrogant" organizers and vendors who tapped into private power supplies. With the beach closed off at this year's race because of high winds and stormy weather, runners filled the streets and blocked store entrances, business owners said.

Only a week later, councilors were unanimous in their support of granting a permit for the race for two more years.

Councilors asked for ways to involve more businesses and retailers on the beach, with the addition of local food vendors.

Kidnapping suspect caught

Accused kidnapper and rapist Russell Wayne Deviney pleaded not guilty in May to multiple felony charges.

Deviney, 48, Everett, Washington, is accused of kidnapping and raping a 15-year-old California girl before leaving the girl May 11 in Astoria, which police said, was not his intended destination.

He pleaded not guilty to 12 felony charges. He allegedly kidnapped the girl on May 9 in Sanger, Calif. He left the girl and his 2004 Nissan Pickup at McDonald's in Astoria two days later. The girl has since reunited with her family.

Cannon Beach Police and FBI agents found Deviney May 14 behind a locked gate in a privately owned wooded area south of Cannon Beach, after a passer-by reported seeing him and called the police. Deviney is scheduled for a final resolution conference in February.

Seaside tables panhandler fees

An amendment to a Seaside city ordinance designed to regulate panhandlers, musicians and itinerant merchants got no further this year.

The ordinance, in place since 1984, requires a license to solicit and the amendment would have expanded it to and applies to include any person who provides a service "or solicits for any form of compensation or remuneration."

License fees would have started at \$50 per day, with a maximum of \$1,000 in a calendar year. Fines would also have been increased, from \$500 to \$700.

Members of the audience vigorously opposed



Daily Astorian/File Photo
Russell Wayne Deviney is walked back to the Clatsop County Jail after a status hearing at the Clatsop County Courthouse in September.

the ordinance and the proposed amendment, citing First Amendment rights and its impact on those in need.

New trail coalition forms

The grassroots nonprofit Warrenton Trails Association transformed this year into a regional group with a wider focus.

The local association became the Northwest Coast Trails Coalition. It includes about 16 members from all corners of the county, including from Cannon Beach Public Works, Clatsop County Public Health and Lewis and Clark National Historical Park.

The first step for the group is to get all trail-related activities in one place, as a part of the coalition. Work is centered on building a website, doing outreach at the places such as the Astoria Sunday Market and eventually organizing people to do more trail maintenance.

Academy approved, at long last

The new Cannon Beach Academy, on track to open next year, will get at least \$250,000 of the Seaside School District's budget. Funds will come from the district's existing four schools in order to serve the charter school students, but where cuts will be made has yet to be determined.

The district's overall budget is slightly more than \$21 million.

To start, the board will craft a three-year contract with the academy administration that allows the school to begin classes with kindergarten and first grade and then add a new grade level each subsequent school year. The academy plans to offer education for kindergarten to fifth-grade students.



What's on your wish list for the Parks and Recreation Department?

The City of Astoria Parks and Recreation Department is conducting a Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan to help establish a short and long-term vision and identify priorities for the Parks Department's parks, facilities, and program offerings.

Take a few moments to give us your feedback by taking our survey and let us know what is important to you.

Enter to win a \$50 Punch Pass in our daily drawing now through January 1, 2016.



TAKE OUR SURVEY!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/APRDSurvey>
or go to:

<http://www.astoriaparks.com/>



EO Media Group/File Photo
Runners and spectators endured a blustery day in August to finish strong in the Hood to Coast and Portland to Coast relays.