

Respite center commits to secure rooms

Police, city leaders were worried patients might walk away

By **DERRICK DePLEDGE**
The Daily Astorian

A crisis respite center for the mentally ill will have up to four secure rooms, the interim Clatsop County manager said Wednesday, soothing police and city leaders who feared potentially violent patients would be free to walk away.

The security improvements to the 16-bed center in Warrenton will likely increase costs and delay a tentative April opening by four to eight weeks.

"The changes affected other issues that need to be resolved. But I'm optimistic that the concept of secure rooms will become a reality," said Rich Mays, the interim county manager.

Astoria Police Chief Brad Johnston and others in law enforcement were concerned that violent patients would be able to walk away from the respite center, undermining the purpose of providing a mental health safety net that could function as an alternative to local hospitals and jail.

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State labor dismisses Tongue Point suit

Fired employee had alleged discrimination

By **EDWARD STRATTON**
The Daily Astorian

The state Bureau of Labor and Industries has dismissed a civil rights claim brought by a former culinary instructor at Tongue Point Job Corps Center who was fired a year ago.

Deborah Ferguson had filed a complaint against Management and Training Corp., which operates the Job Corps Center in Astoria, claiming her dismissal was because of her disability and gender. She claimed to have faced a hostile work environment and sexual harassment and alleged she was forced to pass a student under threat of dismissal.

"Although evidence established female employees were treated differently, complainant was unable to offer substantial evidence it rose to the level of a violation of law," Tiffany Ray, an investigator, wrote in a memo recommending dismissal of Ferguson's complaint.

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Photos by Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Steve Sontag, right, drives a log truck from Pier 3 to Pier 1 while longshoreman Patrick Jasper, left, sits in the passenger seat Tuesday.

'GHOST RIDERS' REQUIRED

Port of Astoria subsidizes log movement for exporters

By **EDWARD STRATTON**
The Daily Astorian

Log trucks rumble back and forth along Gateway Avenue at the Port of Astoria each weekday, hired by Astoria Forest Products to move timber from the company's storage and processing yard on Pier 3 to the union longshoremen on Pier 1 who load the logs on oceangoing carriers.

The company is also obligated to pay for so-called "ghost riders" from the International Longshore and Warehouse Union to ride shotgun on the trucks, because the union has jurisdiction over cargo on Port property.

But Astoria Forest Products has balked at paying for "ghost riders" to stack logs at Pier 1 before ships arrive, so the Port has been temporarily covering the tab. Over the past several months, though, the company has stopped paying at all, and according to Port financial staff, still owes the agency more than \$72,000 in back wages for the longshoremen.

"We'll get that, but not likely without a battle," said Jim Knight, the Port's executive director, who shared his concerns over the log operation at a Port Commission goal-setting workshop last week.

The subsidy has prevented the Port from taking full financial advantage of what has become a booming log export operation. The Port became the third-largest public exporter of logs on the West Coast in 2015, according to Jones Stevedoring, after ports in Longview and Olympia, Washington.

Logs have become a cash cow for the Port. But Knight said the agency only approaches a break-even point while having to cover the ghost riders. "That worries me, because we will have to start pinching pennies for infrastructure issues," he said.

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Labeled logs are stacked along Pier 1.



After the logs are unloaded, a driver and longshoreman drive back to Pier 3 to collect more logs.

Lowering the boom on peninsula's rowdy Fourth

Fireworks safety group, state parks aim to spread word

By **CYNTHIA WASHICKO**
EO Media Group

LONG BEACH, Wash. — A group dedicated to reforming the way the Fourth of July is celebrated on the Long Beach Peninsula has developed a list of recommendations that it hopes will improve future celebrations of the holiday.

Not a Ban — A Better Plan laid out a series of recommendations for changes in messaging, enforcement and environmental protection in a letter to agencies in Pacific County. The recommendations are meant to prevent some of the problems that came to

a head during the 2015 celebrations. These included a still-unresolved assault death.

The draft recommendations include a total of \$14,500 to fund measures meant to improve communication to visitors and help enforce existing regulations, among other efforts. Those funds will ideally come from a number of agencies along the peninsula and in the county donating funds to come up with the total amount, said group leaders.

The proposed funds include \$3,500 to place lighted signs at access points to the peninsula to remind visitors that camping on the beach is not allowed, and another \$6,000 to pay for additional dumpsters at beach approaches.

The idea behind the recommendations is to promote what the group calls responsible tourism.



EO Media Group/File Photo

See **JULY 4**, Page 10A A beach visitor watches the July 4, 2014, festivities.

