

# Respite center could lessen burden on hospitals, police

Some still want more assurances on security

By DERRICK DePLEGGE  
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — Advocates for the mentally ill said Tuesday night that a new crisis respite center could help people before their behavior spins out of control, potentially reducing the burden on hospitals and law enforcement.

The respite center in Warrenton would have 16 beds, half reserved for residential treatment and half that could offer temporary relief for people in crisis.

Up to four beds could be secure under the state's second-highest class of supervision, so patients would be locked inside and could not walk away. But patients would not be secluded, restrained or compelled to take medication, the highest class of supervision.

The patients who would most likely be taken to the secure section would be under holds, civil commitment, a diversion program or guardianship.

Sumner Watkins, the executive director of Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare, which will operate the respite center, and



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

A crisis respite center is planned for Warrenton.

Marc Chinard, a consultant, briefed the Warrenton City Commission at a work session.

The partnership behind the respite center — Clatsop County, Columbia Memorial Hospital, Providence Seaside Hospital and Greater Oregon Behavioral Health — backed the secure rooms last week after complaints from law enforcement and city leaders in Astoria and Warrenton that potentially violent patients would be allowed to leave.

Warrenton Mayor Mark Kujala and others on the City Commission strongly urged the respite center to follow through with the security improvements.

"I think it would have been very difficult. Absolutely," Kujala, speaking after the briefing, said of whether he could support the respite center without the secure rooms. "I think

that's something that was essential."

City Commissioner Henry Balensifer said he still has significant concerns. "I don't see why it would be practical to support anything that didn't have at least the option for security," he said. "And I'm going to hold their feet to the fire that we still have those secure beds."

Some worry that patients will walk away from the respite center and cause problems for police and disrupt businesses.

"What I'm saying is, why not put it out in the country? Where, No. 1, is they're less likely to walk out. And, No. 2, is to keep it away from people that are trying to continue a business in a very difficult environment," Jim Gannaway, a co-owner of GB Jewelers, told commissioners.

Commissioner Tom Dyer, an Oregon State Police officer,

believes the respite center could help keep some people off the street. Others in law enforcement have said they hope the center can be an alternative to hospitals and jail.

"Eight beds doesn't even touch our problem we have," Dyer said of the mental health issues facing the county.

Watkins said the goal of the respite center is to provide a place where people can voluntarily seek help before they need to be taken to the emergency room or have encounters with police.

She told commissioners it is important to remember that many of the people in crisis are "your neighbors. They're your family members. They're the average person walking down the street who is happening to have this episode — crisis — for whatever reason."

# Lawmakers make progress on housing legislation

By PARIS ACHEN  
Capital Bureau

SALEM — State lawmakers made progress Tuesday on two significant housing bills — churning out a last-minute deal with builders and real estate lobbyists on inclusionary zoning and passing a bill out of the House that increases notice for raising rent.

The Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue unanimously recommended passing a bill to lift a ban on cities and counties requiring developers to include affordable housing units in their plans, which also is known as inclusionary zoning. The bill is now headed for the Senate floor.

"It appears there is an agreement that everyone can come to the center on," said state Sen. Mark Hass, D-Beaverton.

Senate Bill 1533 is "a monumental bill for this Legislature, which has been struggling with inclusionary zoning for many years," Hass said.

## Developer incentives

Due to resistance from builders and the real estate industry, lawmakers offered a compromise that would ensure developers would receive incentives for offering affordable housing, including tax exemptions, fee waivers or expedited services.

The measure allows local governments to require developers to offer up to 20 percent of units at below market rates in exchange for at least one incentive. Developers also may opt to pay a fee in lieu of the requirement. The requirements would apply only to multifamily housing proj-

ects with 20 or more units. The units would be offered to those who earn up to 80 percent of area median income.

The compromise bill also allows local governments to levy an up to 1 percent construction tax to help pay for developer incentives, pay for housing programs and provide down payment assistance for home ownership.

## Notice for rent increases

Meanwhile, the House passed a bill to increase notice for raising rent in month-to-month tenancies. The measure passed 48-11 with bipartisan support and now heads to the Senate.

The bill was part of an omnibus housing package negotiated by House Democrats, landlords, builders and affordable housing advocates

to address the state's affordable housing shortage.

Much of the housing package has fallen by the wayside — including addressing problematic no-cause evictions — in the compression of a 35-day legislative session.

Rep. Alissa Keny-Guyer, D-Portland, chairwoman of the House Committee on Human Services and Housing, said lawmakers failed to reach a deal on some of the other issues in time.

"This bill which aims to increase stability is a small step in the right direction," Keny-Guyer said of Tuesday's tenant protections bill. "It does not say what the rent should be. It just says give tenants more time."

The Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.

# State House OKs lodging tax hike

By HILLARY BORRUD  
Capital Bureau

legislators, Nathanson asked for it to be referred back to the House Committee on Revenue for changes.

## Concern in rural areas

SALEM — A bill that will nearly double Oregon's statewide tourist lodging tax is headed to the state Senate, after lawmakers in the House voted 37-20 Tuesday to pass the bill.

The bill hikes the tax rate from 1 percent to 1.8 percent.

Lawmakers drafted the bill in response to a request for a state subsidy from organizers of a world track championship in Eugene in 2021. Nike and University of Oregon officials have pushed for the state to help pay for the event since at least 2014 and, according to news reports, the Eugene non-profit TrackTown USA wants the state to provide \$25 million for the event.

State Rep. Nancy Nathanson, D-Eugene, a chief sponsor of the bill, described the measure as "an economic development proposal."

"More than three-quarters of this (tax) is paid by people from out of state," Nathanson said. "Tourism is a significant sector in Oregon's economy."

## Expands beyond marketing

State law currently requires the government to spend at least 80 percent of hotel tax revenues on tourism marketing. House Bill 4146 would allow the state to spend that money on any "tourism programs," including to subsidize the costs of events such as the track championship.

The bill would require the state's tourism commission, TravelOregon, to distribute set amounts of lodging tax revenue around the state through regional allocations and competitive grants.

In the two-year budget that begins in mid-2017, the bill would result in \$27.4 million in new tax revenue, according to an estimate from the Legislative Revenue Office. The state would send \$11 million in existing and new tax revenue to regional tourism agencies around the state during that period, and award \$5.4 million in competitive grants to encourage tourism.

Lawmakers were originally scheduled to hold a floor vote on the bill Friday, but in response to criticism from both Portland-area tourism officials and rural

Rural Republicans said hotel and motel owners in their districts did not expect to benefit from the additional tax revenues, while tourism officials in the Portland metropolitan area worried that doubling the state lodging tax would put Portland at a competitive disadvantage to other cities with lower tax rates.

Democrats from the coast spoke and a Republican from Eastern Oregon also spoke in favor of the bill. "I'm going to support this bill because what's good for tourism is good for the coast," said Rep. David Gomberg, D-Otis, although he added that "most of the people that visit dwellings on the coast are from your districts, not from out of state."

Rep. Caddy McKeown, D-Coos Bay, is a chief sponsor of the bill and had high praise for the 2021 track championship.

McKeown said the event will take place at the track center of the United States and "arguably the world," and broadcast in hundreds of countries. "There will be people traveling here to train," McKeown said. "There will be a spotlight on this state of the magnitude that is mind boggling. I'm very proud of the opportunity that we have to bring visitors from across the state to our small state."

Rep. Greg Smith, R-Heppner, said tourism is not a major industry in his district but he expects the bill will benefit other communities around the state. "Folks are not coming to District 57 for tourism related reasons," Smith said. "They don't stop in Rufus or Biggs for an afternoon of tourism ... We're industrial, we're agricultural." However, Smith said this bill is about the good of Oregon as a whole.

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# Consult a PROFESSIONAL

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**Christie Taylor**  
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