

THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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The Daily Astorian/File Photo
 Lewis and Clark National Historical Park Superintendent Scott Tucker pauses along a trail in the park. He is hopeful Congress will approve a centennial funding bill for deferred maintenance.

Time to shore up aging national parks

Our Columbia-Pacific region is fortunate to have a dynamic national park spread across two counties and several communities, but all is far from well with the national park system as a whole.

Lewis and Clark National Historical Park was a product of decades of local, state and federal efforts, which came together in time for the bicentennial of the 1804-06 cross-continent expedition. The former national monument at Fort Clatsop was expanded and upgraded to include many of the significant sites associated with the 19 weeks the explorers spent on the Columbia estuary.

As is true throughout the nation, our national park preserves an essential element of American heritage. It confers prestige on our area, conserves valuable land for recreation and the environment, and makes major contributions to our economy. It was neither a frivolous gesture nor a federal land grab. We appreciate park employees and see the park as a permanent investment that should endure as long as there is a U.S.A.

Overall, American national parks are not as cherished by national leaders as they are by citizens. Visitor numbers are strong. The parks have never been more popular. But as National Public Radio reported this week, there is a nearly \$12 billion maintenance backlog of long-deferred work that can in no way be accomplished with the system's \$3 billion annual budget appropriation by Congress. (See tinyurl.com/NPSbacklog.) While \$12 billion is certainly a lot of money, it is about 2 percent as much as we spend each year on the active military.

Congress is considering a more comprehensive answer to park needs in legislation linked to the system's Aug. 25 centennial. It should certainly approve this legislation and set the stage for the second century of the world's most remarkable park system.

So what is the situation in our national park?

Superintendent Scott Tucker provided this answer Wednesday:

"Lewis and Clark National Historical Park went from \$4.3 million in deferred maintenance in Fiscal Year 2014 to \$1.5 million in FY 15. This is due a highway package that was funded in FY 15 that resurfaced all of our roads and parking lots. Our goal is the same as all 410 National Park Sites across the country, to provide the best possible visitor experience while at the same time protecting and preserving these amazing places.

"We are inviting the world to discover the special places in the National Park System like Lewis and Clark National Historical Park during our centennial celebration. We need to have facilities that can accommodate guests and provide the best possible visitor experience.

Just like our funded highway project in 2015, recent increases to fund nationally significant transportation projects will address some of the National Park Service's large, critical deferred maintenance transportation projects. Completing those projects will improve national park experiences for the hundreds of millions of visitors that come to national parks each year. We hope to see additional resources for parks to improve visitor services through maintenance projects in the Centennial bill Congress is considering presently.

"The funds Congress provided for 2016 will help us as we move toward the goal of restoring our highest priority non-transportation assets to good condition. With Congress still considering a Centennial bill, we look forward to having additional resources to reach the goal of having those high priority assets restored to good condition."

Finding a home on minimum wage

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

By R.J. MARX



SEASIDE — We heard an impassioned plea last week at the Seaside City Council.

John Hagerty stood before councilors during public comment and said "I need a simple, inexpensive apartment in Seaside."

His words stirred councilors. In a city where housing is the key to a functioning workforce, they didn't need explaining.

"I am currently employed and work 30 to 40 hours per week," he said. "I generally net between \$1,200 to \$1,500 per month. I have no criminal record. I have good credit. I have no pets. I do not drink, smoke or do drugs. I rarely have company visit. I have no prior evictions."

Hagerty's problem is his owner is moving back into his apartment. Hagerty must be out by March 19.

"The rental market in Seaside is extremely limited," he said. "I have exhausted all the more traditional ways of looking for an apartment. I describe my references from previous landlords as 'absolutely golden.'"

No shrinking violet, Hagerty took his campaign to the streets as well, standing in the Safeway lot with a sign dramatizing his plight.

He not only designed and held a sign seeking an affordable rental, but provided a "fact sheet" with contact information, rationale, a work resume and even a list of his previous landlords for the past 10 years, with phone numbers and contact emails included.

Hagerty is an articulate voice for those he described as "the working poor."

"You have a serious problem in Seaside that has a very dramatic effect on the citizens you are responsible for," he told councilors.

"There are not enough apartments in Seaside to provide housing for its residents who are unable to afford to purchase their own home. The result of that shortage is that apartments that do become available are overpriced in a seller's market, making them unaffordable to the people who work the minimum- to low-wage jobs that support this town."

City Council listens

If Hagerty were a politician, he'd probably be pretty good at it. His presentation was as robust as his plea.

"Currently, I can only find one apartment to rent in the city of Seaside, a



Katherine Lacaze/For EO Media Group

John Hagerty stands on the sidewalk in front of Safeway with a sign to express his concern about Seaside's limited long-term rental market.

RESOURCES ONLINE

The state provides a list of income-based housing opportunities at egov.hcs.state.or.us.

If Hagerty were a politician, he'd probably be pretty good at it.

three-bedroom for over \$1,000 a month, way out of my price range," Hagerty said. "I have people who are supportive and helpful who are networking for me and acting as references. The company that currently manages the place I live in is working to find me an affordable alternative. I'm on a first-name basis with every landlord in this city who will allow me to talk to them. I may now have to quit my job, apply for unemployment, try to explain this to them, and then move away to the charity of relatives on the other side of the state if I cannot find a place to live.

"I have not been late with my rent since 1990," he continued. "They like me at my job. I love my job. But I'm old. I'm broke-down. There's not that many jobs that I can physically do, but I'm still an asset to this community and I go out of my way to maintain that status wherever I live.

"The city of Seaside needs to do something for our citizens."

Response

Hagerty is not alone. At every level from high to low, a housing shortage exists, a result of the enticing environment and economic opportunities. There are jobs as Hagerty points out, but local businesses are hard-pressed to exceed the minimum wage.

The U.S. Census Bureau deems "30

percent rule" a guideline for the portion of income a family can spend for rent and still have enough left over for other nondiscretionary spending.

The 2014 U.S. Census reports a population of 6,481 in Seaside, with 4,501 housing units to serve them.

With the Oregon minimum wage at \$9.25 per hour or \$390 for a 40-hour week before taxes, that would represent a gross income of \$1,560 per month. Forty percent of that for rent would be \$624 per month.

On Craigslist, the only apartment fitting that bill was a 400-foot cabin in Seaview, Washington, for \$625. The best bargain we found was in Ocean Park, Washington, a 600-foot cabin can be found for \$550. In Seaside, a duplex for \$925 is the lowest-priced listing.

On Zillow, we found a two-bedroom, one-bath apartment on Avenue I for \$850 a month, and the same rental home on Craigslist.

Even if Hagerty or other minimum-wage workers pay 50 percent of their gross income — \$780 per month — they still would not be able to afford the cheapest listing in Seaside.

Consider that year-round tenants are also competing with short-term renters who generally pay a far higher amount, the numbers are daunting.

Council is listening

Hagerty's message is loud and clear and it was obvious Seaside city councilors heard it last week.

Mayor Don Larsen pointed out affordable units under construction behind Coast Hardware and another 74-home plan in the works.

Expansion of the city's urban growth boundary could provide more land for real estate development, but that comes with its own costs, City Manager Mark Winstanley said.

R.J. Marx is *The Daily Astorian's* South County reporter and editor of *the Seaside Signal* and *Cannon Beach Gazette*.

When fallacies collide, where do we turn?

By PAUL KRUGMAN
New York Times News Service

The formal debates among the Republicans who would be president have exceeded all expectations.

Even the most hardened cynics couldn't have imagined that the candidates would sink so low, and stay so focused on personal insults.

Yet last week, offstage, there was in effect a real debate about economic policy between Donald Trump and Mitt Romney, who is trying to block his nomination.

Unfortunately, both men are talking nonsense. Are you surprised?

The starting point for this debate is Trump's deviation from free-market orthodoxy on international trade. Attacks on immigrants are still the central theme of the Republican front-runner's campaign, but he has opened a second front on trade deficits, which he asserts are being caused by the currency manipulation of other countries, especially China. This manipulation, he says, is "robbing Americans of billions of dollars of capital and millions of jobs."

His solution is "countervailing duties" — basically tariffs — similar to those we routinely impose when foreign countries are found to be subsidizing exports in violation of trade agreements.

Romney claims to be aghast. In his stop-Trump speech last week he warned that if The Donald became president America would "sink into prolonged recession." Why? The only specific reason he gave was that those duties would "instigate a trade war and that would raise prices for consumers, kill our export jobs and lead entrepre-

neurs and businesses of all stripes to flee America."

This is pretty funny if you remember anything about the 2012 campaign. Back then, in accepting Trump's endorsement, Romney praised the businessman (who was already a well-known "birther") as someone with an "extraordinary ability to understand how our economy works." But wait, it gets better: at the time, Romney was saying almost exactly the same things Trump is saying now. He promised to — you guessed it — declare China a currency manipulator, while attacking President Barack Obama for failing to do so. And he brushed off concerns about starting a trade war, declaring that one was underway: "It's a silent one, and they're winning."

More important than Romney's awkward history here, however, is the fact that his economic analysis is all wrong. Protectionism can do real harm, making economies less efficient and reducing long-run growth.

But it doesn't cause recessions.

Why not? Doesn't a trade war reduce employment in export industries? Yes, and it also increases employment in industries that compete with imports. In fact, a worldwide trade war would, by definition, reduce imports by exactly the same amount that it reduces exports. There's no reason to assume that the net effect on employment would be strongly negative.

But didn't protectionism cause the Great Depression? No, it didn't — protectionism was a result of the Depression, not its cause. By the way, if you want an example of a policy that really did have a lot to do with the Great Depression's spread, that would be the



Paul Krugman

gold standard — which Ted Cruz wants to restore.

So Romney is talking nonsense. But so is Trump.

Five years ago the Trump complaint that Chinese currency manipulation was costing U.S. jobs had some validity — in fact, serious economists were making the same point. But these days China is in big trouble, and is trying to keep the value

of its currency up, not down: foreign exchange reserves are plunging in the face of huge capital flight, to the tune of a trillion dollars over the past year.

Nor is China alone. All around the world, capital is fleeing troubled economies — including, by the way, the euro area, which these days tends to run bigger trade surpluses than China. And much of that flight capital is heading for the United States, pushing up the dollar and making our industries less competitive. It's a real problem; U.S. economic fundamentals are fairly strong, but we risk, in effect, importing economic weakness from the rest of the world. But it's not a problem we can address by lashing out at foreigners we falsely imagine are winning at our expense.

What can we do to fight imported economic weakness? That's a big subject, but one thing is for sure: given the pressures from abroad, and the worrying strength of the dollar, the Federal Reserve really, really needs to hold off on raising interest rates. Did I mention that Trump wants to see rates rise? Not only that, but he's a full-on conspiracy theorist, declaring that Janet Yellen, the Fed's chairwoman, is keeping interest rates down as a favor to Obama, who "wants to be out playing golf a year from now."

So there you have it. The good news is that there was a real policy debate going on within the GOP last week. The bad news is that it was junk economics on both sides.

Romney is talking nonsense. But so is Trump.