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SPORTS • 4A

## Riverwalk Inn fight spills over into court

Portland hotelier claims fraud, breach of contract

By EDWARD STRATTON  
*The Daily Astorian*

The battle over the operation of the Astoria Riverwalk Inn is headed

to a court hearing in April after the parties tried and failed to resolve their differences.

Param Hotel Group, a Portland hotel operator, sued the Port of Astoria, which owns the hotel, in November on claims of fraud and breach of contract.

The company's lawyer, Colin Hunter, also added Chester Trabucco and William Orr, the locally connected representatives of hotel operator Asto-

ria Hospitality Ventures, as co-defendants under the claim they intentionally interfered with a previous agreement between the Port and Param.

Orr holds a majority ownership in Hospitality Ventures with his wife, Sara Orr, whose brother is Port Commissioner Stephen Fulton. Hospitality Ventures is registered to 1050 34th St. in Astoria, owned by a Fulton family trust.

"They pursued backroom deals with the Port and its governing Commission in an intentional effort to interfere with Param's existing agreement to take over the Riverwalk Inn," Hunter's original complaint said of Orr and Trabucco. "They accomplished this interference through improper means, including use of Orr's family relationship to a Port Commission member, misrepresentations regarding their funding and qualifications, and false, disparaging comments about Param's business."

The parties first canceled a hearing scheduled in February to pursue mediation. When mediation failed, a hearing scheduled for last week was moved to April 18 so the parties could have more time to prepare.

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Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Visitors look for clams to dig along the beach at Fort Stevens State Park in February. The usually quiet months between November and February have seen visitor increases to the park in recent years.

## Fort Stevens is always in season

There is new visitor interest at state park in winter months

By KYLE SPURR  
*The Daily Astorian*

WARRENTON — Fort Stevens State Park no longer has much of an offseason.

Traditionally slow winter months have sped up at the state park with more visitors braving the weather to recreate or deciding to stay warm inside new deluxe cabins. Consistent visitation leaves little time for park rangers to finish maintenance projects in time for the peak summer months.

"There were the times when some parks even closed in the winter on the coast," Fort Stevens State Park Manager Teri Wing said. "Not any more. We are open year-round."



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

People fish at Coffenbury Lake at Fort Stevens State Park. The park is forming a partnership with Clatsop Paddle Co. to offer adventure packages that bundle a stay at the park with paddleboarding on the lake.

Attendance peaked last year in July, when 15,921 campsites were occupied. On some days in the summer, the park's population mirrors the largest cities in Clatsop County.

While the park expects high turnout around July, the usually quiet months between November and February have seen visitor increases in recent years.

Campsites occupied in those

four months increased from 5,184 to 6,644 between 2013-2014 and 2014-2015. That is an increase of 1,460 campsites used in one year.

This past winter saw a consistent turnout of more than 6,500 campsites used from November to February.

What was considered a four-month offseason has shrunk to December and January, when visiting dips below 2,000 full campsites each month.

### 'Cozy and warm'

Since the park added 11 deluxe cabins five years ago, Wing said, more visitors have been enticed to stay during the winter.

The deluxe cabins, which sleep four to five people, have a living room, bathroom and kitchen. The living room has a futon couch and flat screen TV with a DVD player. No linens or utensils are provided, but the cabins have electricity and heat.

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## Coast Guard calls off search for plane

Sheriff's Office hopes to send dive team down

By ERICK BENDEL  
*The Daily Astorian*

The U.S. Coast Guard has suspended its search for two missing Washington state residents whose plane crash-landed into the Columbia River off Pier 39 in Astoria late Wednesday afternoon.

The Clatsop County Sheriff's Office, however, plans to send a dive team into the water Friday to explore what the Coast Guard has described as an "uncharted n o m a l y" picked up on sonar.

John McKibbin — a former Washington state representative and Clark County commissioner and an amateur pilot — was in the private plane with a family friend, Irene Mustain, of Woodland, Washington.

They had planned to scatter the ashes of Mustain's husband, Terry, who died in October 2013. Wednesday would have been Terry Mustain's 69th birthday.

"She just wanted to spread his ashes at the beach on his birthday," Irene's son, Christopher Mustain, of Seattle, said. "She was doing something on his birthday that she felt that she needed to do."

His parents enjoyed the beach, he added.

McKibbin, 69, was last seen at approximately 3:30 p.m. Wednesday when he and Mustain took off from Pearson Field in Vancouver,

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## Initiative would put liquor on the grocery list

Sponsors can now begin collecting signatures

By PARIS ACHEN  
*Capital Bureau*

SALEM — The Oregon Supreme Court certified the ballot title for a grocer-backed privatization initiative that would privatize liquor sales in Oregon.

The certification on Thursday came after the court denied a request by sponsors of Initiative Petition 71 to

revise the ballot title written by the Oregon Attorney General's Office. Sponsors Gerry Dory and Lynn Gust of Wilsonville objected to a statement in the title that said the measure would "eliminate liquor revenue."

The ballot certification clears the way for the sponsors to collect the 88,184 signatures needed to place the measure on the November ballot.

"We're pleased with the court's review is concluded and eager to begin engaging directly with Oregonians about getting the state out of the business of promoting and selling liquor," Rudy Dory,

co-founder of Bend's employee-owned Newport Avenue Market and co-sponsor of the initiative, said in a statement.

The measure would end state sale and distribution of liquor and allow beer and wine retailers, including grocery stores, to sell liquor.

Privatization would result in the loss of more than \$200 million in state revenue used to pay for state and local services, according to Oregonians Against The Takeover, a coalition of labor organizations, craft brewers, distillers and winemakers that opposes the ballot initiative.

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Don Ryan/AP Photo

Brittany Whalen makes change for a sale at a liquor store in Portland. Operating under a group called Oregonians for Competition, Oregon grocers have had their ballot title certified for a ballot measure that would allow hard liquor sales to be privatized.