

File Photo

Hotelier Mark Hollander wants to build a Marriott Hotel on Port of Astoria property in Uniontown between the Red Building and Astoria Bridge. But nearly six months after his lease was approved by the Port of Astoria Commission, it has still not been executed by staff.

Port slow to sign off on hotel lease

Hotelier wants a Marriott under Astoria Bridge

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

In October, the Port of Astoria Commission approved having staff finalize a \$2,000-a-month lease on 1.5 acres underneath the Astoria Bridge for hotelier Mark Hollander to develop a Marriott Hotel.

Nearly six months and theoretically more than \$10,000 later, the lease has still not been executed.

Jim Knight, the Port's executive director, said there is a discussion between the Port and Hollander's lawyers about property lines and tax lots.

Hollander said he has already had the land surveyed, is confident of the boundaries and is waiting for the Port's counsel to finalize the lease.

"I figure I have to be patient, because maybe they're understaffed," Hollander said.

Hollander, of Bellingham, Washington, was to pay the Port \$2,000 a month during

a 120-day feasibility study, which could be extended. Once he received a certificate of occupancy for the hotel, Hollander would pay the Port 7.5 percent of the fair market value of the building and land, which would be appraised every 10 years.

Timely leases

The delay with Hollander raised a conversation at the Port Commission meeting last week about how the agency should ensure a timely execution of leases.

Commissioner Stephen Fulton said there should be a time limit from when the Port Commission approves a lease to when it is finalized by staff and a customer.

The lease with Hollander was approved for staff to finalize, but Commissioner Bill Hunsinger said when the wording of a lease changes, it should be brought back before the commission.

Tim Ramis, the Port's attorney, said there could be a rule included that limits the Port director's authority to execute a lease to a certain number of days, before it has to go back before the commission.

switching to Democrat, and I would guess it's because they're excited about Bernie Sanders," said Jim Moore, a political science professor and director of the Tom McCall Center for Policy Innovation at Pacific University. "The evidence for that is 2008 when 150,000 new voters were registered for that primary. Most were Democrats. The vast majority was for Barack Obama."

At first glance, it might appear that the state's new automatic registration law, which took effect in January, is driving the changes, but figures from the Secretary of State's Office show that isn't the case. An influx of new nonaffiliated voters were registered automatically when getting their state driver's license but accounted for only a tiny fraction of the changes in party registration through mid-March.

That could change, as the Secretary of State's Office sent out notices last month that non-affiliated voters must be registered with a party to participate in the state's May 17 primary.

J.C. Penney turns 100 in Astoria

Retailer is a downtown landmark

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

J.C. Penney Co. opened its 109th store in Astoria 100 years ago this month. According to an old price board in English and Finnish, the store first opened in the Spexarth building before moving to its current location on Commercial Street in 1924.

Chris Hoffman, the operations manager at the local branch, started at the store 34 years ago when she was 19, after moving back from college in Idaho to help her ailing father. Her grandmother also worked at the store.

"The Penney's store down here is very good for the downtown businesses," she said. "It's the only big draw since Safeway left."

"It's one of the few places where you can find a multitude of things."

The three-story J.C. Penney, slotted into the block between Paramount Drug Co. and Allstate Insurance with a tiled entrance inscribed with the store name, was built specifically for the retailer in 1924, shortly after a large fire two years prior destroyed much of downtown. Out of J.C. Penney Co.'s thousands of stores, Hoffman said Astoria's store is one of about 13



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

J.C. Penney, which turned 100 in Astoria earlier this month, employs between nine and 15 people downtown, including (from left) Bekki McDonald, Melba O'Bryant, Patti Buckalew, Chris Hoffman and Tony Faletti.

locations left that were made to look alike.

"We get a lot of people saying, 'Are you ever going to move out to Warrenton?'" Hoffman said of the migration by major businesses from Astoria to Warrenton. "Penney's owns this building, so my theory would be ... there would have to be something happen pretty big in the area to fund a move to a new place in Warrenton."

The store will celebrate its 100th anniversary with cake and refreshments from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Thursday.



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

A former price board for J.C. Penney, which opened in April 1916, comes in both English and Finnish and espouses the Golden Rule philosophy by which James Cash Penney did business: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Closed primaries spur political party changes

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon's closed primary elections and a pair of provocative presidential candidates have fueled a striking uptick in political party changes, mostly among nonaffiliated voters.

Joining or switching affiliation is common before an open presidential election, but the number of changes so far this year is more than double what it was during the same period in 2008 — the last time an incumbent president was not on the ballot.

The vast majority of voters — about 65 percent — are switching to the Democratic Party, a trend that suggests momentum in the state for U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders, according to some political analysts.

Sanders, an independent who describes himself as a democratic socialist, is challenging former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in the Democratic primary.

"It's pretty clear voters are

Astoria man sentenced in connection to heroin overdose

By KYLE SPURR
The Daily Astorian

An Astoria man arrested last fall for delivery of heroin in connection to an overdose death of a Warrenton man was sentenced to two years probation and 45 days in jail.

Sean Anthony Hill, 27, would have faced a longer sentence but the blood drawn from the dead man for the toxicology test was lost in the mail and never turned up. The District Attorney's Office could only prosecute

Hill for the drug charges, and not seek a longer sentence for the connection to the dead man.

"The case took a turn for the worse," Chief Deputy District Attorney Ron Brown said.

Before sentencing, Hill pleaded no contest in Clatsop

County Circuit Court to unlawful delivery of heroin and unlawful delivery of methamphetamine. He was found with methamphetamine upon his arrest.

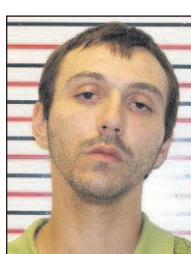
Prosecutors believed Hill was the one who provided heroin to Matthew Norris, 24, who was found dead in October from an apparent heroin overdose at a residence on the 4600 block of Cedar Street in Astoria. Police found a drug kit for using heroin at Norris' feet.

Norris was on probation for drug charges and

was a participant in Clatsop County Drug Court.

The exact cause of Norris' death was pending toxicology results from the Oregon State Medical Examiner's Office. However, the blood drawn from Norris for the toxicology test was lost in the mail. The U.S. Post Office could not account for why it did not show up.

As part of his sentence, Hill was ordered to write a letter of apology to the family of Norris within 60 days and submit the letter to the District Attorney's Office.



Sean Anthony Hill

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