

Port sets new development, financial goals for coming year

North Tongue Point, expelling sea lions also among priorities

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

The Port of Astoria Commission voted Tuesday to focus on developing North Tongue Point, improving dredging, expelling sea lions from the East End Mooring Basin and repairing its docks, fixing crumbling piers and further improving the agency's finances as priorities for the coming fiscal year and beyond.

Commissioners provided several priorities they felt the agency should focus on in the coming year.

Tongue Point

The Port's lease on North Tongue Point from Missoula, Montana-based Washington Development Corp. is up in 2019. Four commissioners agreed Tuesday that the Port should buy the land.

The site encompasses about 30 acres of tarmac, several finger piers jutting into a shipping channel off the Columbia River and access to a derelict rail spur. The Port has entertained a myriad of grandiose proposals there, from exporting wood products and agricultural commodities to dismantling vessels and importing cars, but has so far done no better than tread water on a facility many have said will cost more than \$100 million to modernize. Executive Director Jim Knight recently said the Port has several interested parties.

The agency also has several tenants located there, including J&H Boatworks and Pacific Seafoods, which temporarily relocated there after the company's plant in Warrenton burned down. The company is planning to move back to Warrenton by next year.



Alex Pajunas/The Daily Astorian

Development of North Tongue Point is a Port priority for the upcoming fiscal year.



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Sea lions occupy the docks at the East End Mooring Basin. The Port wants to remove the animals and bring in paying customers.

Dredging

"The Port of Astoria is the recipient of everybody's sediment from upstream," said Permit and Project Manager Rob Evert, reporting on the Port's dredging operations over the past year.

The Port spent more than \$400,000 over the past year dredging more than 130,000 cubic yards of accumulated sediment from around its piers to accommodate ships. The agency is looking at whether to continue dredging with the 44-year-old vessel Felkins, buy a new dredge or seek outside help.

Todd Kimball, an accountant from CFO Selections working with the Port, presented a cost analysis showing the agency spent \$3.07 per cubic yard to dredge sediment this year. The cost would rise to \$3.26 if the Port performed significant maintenance on the Felkins, and

to \$4.55 if the Port bought a new dredge.

Port staff estimated a bid from Ross Island Sand and Gravel Co. in Portland would cost \$8.42 per cubic yard, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers \$8.89. Higher contracting costs are largely associated with moving a dredge to and from Astoria.

Sea lions

The Port has been waging a mostly losing battle for a couple of years to expel sea lions from the docks at the East End Mooring Basin and fill them with paying moorages. Four commissioners agreed that battle should continue as a high priority.

The agency has tried everything from surveying tape and beach balls to inflatable air dancers and a fake orca, but to little avail. Students from Knappa High School are fabri-

cating metal railings to line the docks. Knight said he was told by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration the strategy has proven effective at other marinas.

Fixing piers

Three of the commissioners said fixing the Port's main piers on the central waterfront should be one of the highest priorities.

The Port recently allocated \$300,000 to make emergency repairs on Pier 2. A large portion of the pier's eastern dock was put on a 3-ton weight restriction after an inspection by the state Department of Transportation, which recommended closure of the dock by July if the Port could not make significant repairs.

To repair the deteriorated western dock of Pier 2, the Port has requested \$4.8 million from the state's ConnectOregon VI infrastructure grant program. Estimates to repair the entire pier have ranged above \$10 million.

Finances

After firing former Finance Manager Colleen Browne and Facilities Manager Tammi Herman, Knight hired Finance Manager Jim Grey and Staff Accountant Will Isom.

The Port, unsure of its financial figures dating back to 2013, failed to turn in a required audit to the state by the beginning of last year. Knight contracted with CFO Selections to comb through the finances, check the accuracy and help prepare the Port for future audits.

The Port hired accounting firm Moss Adams, which reported in January that the Port had improved its net financial position by more than \$1 million between July 1, 2014, and June 30, as part of a three-year positive trend.

The Port is upgrading its accounting and property management software, and purchased a high-performance server specifically for finances, as it tries to build more advanced analytics to help manage business.

Baby chickens, ducklings killed in shed fire

The Daily Astorian

Baby chickens, ducklings and a turkey were killed Monday morning when a shed on a property in Gearhart caught fire.

The cause of the fire is undetermined, but firefighters are pointing to a heat lamp in the shed for the baby chickens and ducklings that may have started the fire.

Residents of the property on the 89000 block of West Anderson Road were not home at the time. A neighbor reported the fire and Gearhart Volunteer Fire Department responded at about 9:30 a.m. The shed was fully engulfed in flames and is considered a total loss. No other buildings were damaged.

Gearhart Fire Chief Bill Eddy said some of the baby

chickens and ducklings were able to get out. It is unknown how many were killed, since the shed was completely destroyed and unsafe for firefighters to enter and investigate.

Fire crews stayed on scene for about a half hour putting out hidden hot spots around the structure. Gearhart Fire was assisted by the Seaside and Warrenton fire departments.

Talk walks through 'hidden gems' downtown

The Daily Astorian

The Astoria Downtown Historic District Association presents the sixth of its merchant-focused series of short NED (Novel Efforts Downtown) Talks with "Hidden Gems: A New Look at Old Buildings in Downtown," which takes place at 6 p.m. tonight at City Hall.

Celebrating Historic Preservation Month and led by historic preservation consultant John Goodenberger and Astoria Community Development Director Kevin Cronin, the one-hour tour begins at City Hall and also features iconic buildings of the past,

and others forgotten by time. The event is free and open to the public.

For information on the NEDTalk, contact Alana Garner at 503-791-7940 or alana@astoriadowntown.com or visit our Facebook event page at <http://bit.ly/1TXyQKr>

Meet with City Councilor Herzig on Saturday

The Daily Astorian

The public is invited to meet with Astoria City Councilor Drew Herzig from noon to 1:30 p.m. Saturday in the Flag Room at the Astoria Public Library.

All are welcome to come and share their thoughts, suggestions, questions and concerns about the city.

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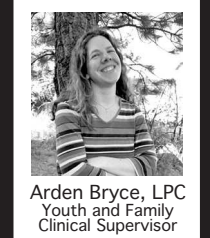
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Q: Does The Daily Astorian have a Seaside office?

A: Yes it does, located at 1555 N. Roosevelt Dr. on Highway 101, between Stop 'N Go and the Human Bean. Office hours are 8-5 p.m. Monday-Friday. We are here to help with any of your Daily Astorian, Coast Weekend, and Chinook Observer, Seaside Signal, Cannon Beach Gazette and Coast River Business Journal needs.

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