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ONE DOLLAR

Former clerk 'vindicated' in ballot-error lawsuit Election official awarded more than \$400,000

By **KYLE SPURR**
The Daily Astorian

Former Clatsop County Clerk Maeve Kennedy Grimes said she felt vindicated after a jury awarded her more than \$400,000 in damages in a lawsuit against the county over her dismissal.

The former clerk was fired after two errors were discovered on the November 2014 general election ballot. Former County Manager Scott Somers called her insubordinate for pursuing the Secretary of State's directive to issue corrected ballots without consulting him.

"I was not terminated for the right

reasons," she said during the trial. "I was made out to be a person who I am not. I was made out to look like someone who didn't know how to do my job, and that is not true."

A 12-person jury unanimously agreed Friday that Kennedy Grimes was fired because she disclosed information she reasonably believed was evidence of the county violating the law, mismanagement, wasting funds and abusing authority. The jury also found the county interfered with Kennedy Grimes' disclosure.

Kennedy Grimes was awarded \$168,136 in economic damages and \$271,610 in noneconomic damages, totaling nearly \$440,000. Noneconomic

damages apply to her emotional distress and the damage to her professional reputation. The county will also have to cover her attorney's fees.

Ballot errors

In October 2014, a citizen alerted Kennedy Grimes to a small typographical error on the ballot. The clerk then discovered a second ballot error shortly after.

One ballot mistake left off a zero in the amount of a Clatsop Community College bond measure as "not exceeding \$8,200,00." The second mistake gave Cannon Beach voters incorrect instructions in an at-large



Scott Somers



Maeve Kennedy Grimes

Somers and former Clatsop Community College President Lawrence Galizio wanted to possibly send out an explanatory letter to voters — a cheaper option for the county — or take no action since the errors were considered insignificant.

Somers, who testified at trial via video link from his new job as city manager of College Park, Maryland, said he was concerned when Kennedy Grimes did not include him in the decision to send out supplemental ballots.

"It was a very big decision. It was a very public error," Somers said. "The decision on how to rectify the ballot error was very important. I think it would have been appropriate for

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A life in free fall

A mother and her son tried to navigate limited drug treatment options before his incarceration

By **ERICK BENDEL**
The Daily Astorian

It didn't take long for Vincent Davidson-Gilbert's life to fall apart once he started using drugs again.

The former Seaside resident had a house, a good job and an eight-year marriage. Though he went to prison at 18 for stealing cars — crimes committed during his first streak of drug abuse in Portland — he'd spent eight years living as a productive member of North Coast society.

But in September he lost his supervisor job at Home Depot in Warrenton. Then he began to get high, first with black-market OxyContin, then with heroin and methamphetamines. Everything in his world began to crumble.

"It happened all so quick," he said.

As his relapse worsened, Vincent asked his mother, Kathleen Gilbert, for help. Together, they explored different treatment options. She'd been through this search before with her older son, Devin.

They checked with Astoria Pointe, KLEAN in Long Beach, Washington, and elsewhere for inpatient treatment, and with Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare and the Oregon Health Authority for outpatient care.

But with no insurance, little money and drugs overriding his judgment, Vincent felt powerless.

"I know I needed help, but I wasn't able to do anything; I was really on the drugs," he said.

Meanwhile, his usage intensified. Drug-induced drama played out as he mixed with dealers and other junkies, made unwise decisions and frightened his loved ones.

"In six months, (he) completely destroyed his life," said Kathleen, a sterile supply technician at Providence Seaside Hospital who often



Vincent Davidson-Gilbert is escorted by officers into the courtroom Friday for his sentencing at Clatsop County Circuit Court.



Kathleen Gilbert, mother of Vincent Davidson-Gilbert, listens during her son's sentencing Friday at Clatsop County Circuit Court.

sees patients in the throes of drug abuse.

Before Vincent could get help, he was arrested Jan. 25 — his 27th birthday — for burglary and for being a felon in possession of a firearm. After his family posted his bail, Vin-

cent committed a second burglary, in which his estranged wife was named among the witnesses.

On Friday, Circuit Court Judge Cindee Matyas sentenced Davidson-Gilbert to five-and-a-half years in prison.

It didn't matter that Vincent's first felony occurred almost a decade ago. It didn't matter that he had volunteered for a local food bank and helped Providence Seaside Hospital set up for community parades. It didn't matter that he was a loving son and brother, and a much-loved uncle to his niece and nephews.

What mattered is that Vincent was a felon with guns, and, whatever the bitter backstory behind the burglaries, law enforcement determined he met the legal definition of a burglar.

"It's horrible," Kathleen said. "And he did it to himself."

Without means

Stories like Vincent's are depressingly common in Clatsop County and throughout Oregon: A person abuses painkillers before turning to harder drugs, has trouble finding or affording proper treatment, engages in criminal activity as the addiction becomes a lifestyle, and ends up in prison.

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Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian
Capt. William Timmons, right, shakes Capt. Daniel Travers' hand, left, as Rear Admiral Richard Gromlich, center, congratulates them both during the change-of-command ceremony Friday.

Coast Guard changes command

Timmons replaces Travers as sector leader

By **EDWARD STRATTON**
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — Capt. William Timmons, a former executive officer for the U.S. Coast Guard Sector Columbia River, is glad to be back.

Standing beneath an American flag three stories high in his old unit's hangar Friday, Timmons took command of the sector from Capt. Daniel Travers, who is retiring to Astoria after 26 years of service.

The two served together at Air Station Sitka in Alaska.

"It is an honor and a privilege to have this incredible opportunity to serve as sector commander," Timmons said. "And it's icing on the cake to take the handoff from Capt. Travers."

Sector Columbia River includes 500 active-duty personnel, 440 auxiliaries, 105 reservists and 33 civilians ensuring safe and lawful navigation along more than 480 miles of coastline and 535 miles of the Columbia, Willamette and Snake rivers.

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Environmental advocate steps up at the Rock

New volunteer coordinator protects whales

CANNON BEACH — In 2014, Frances Holtman was among crew members detained when four small boats were seized by Danish authorities for protesting the slaughter of pilot whales in the Faroe Islands.

That incident is behind her, but Holtman's dedication to environmental conservation continues in Cannon Beach as the Haystack Rock Awareness Program's new volunteer coordinator. She began working with the program as a staff interpreter in February.



On a bright May morning, Holtman, 25, awaited a group of local elementary school students to arrive for a field trip.

Holtman said ocean ecosystems provide air for every second breath we take.

"The oceans are an intricate ecosystem that we rely upon to survive," she said. "It's really fulfilling to be able to address that."

Holtman noted that the Haystack Rock Awareness Program has an educational program open to students of all ages



Lyra Fontaine/The Daily Astorian
Frances Holtman is the new volunteer coordinator for the Haystack Rock Awareness Program.

that regularly sees students from across the state.

"I think this is an important part of making a positive

impact," she said. "A lot of adults have been telling me that one of the things they remember the most from when they were a

kid is coming out on field trips to Haystack Rock. And I know myself, when I was a kid, going on field trips really stand out for me."

Holtman emphasized the importance of both year-round and one-time volunteers in protecting Haystack Rock, a national wildlife refuge and marine garden.

"I can see the effect that we're having and that's what is really important to me, to be able to directly protect these ecosystems," she said.

Holtman has found it useful to have an interpreter useful to have an interpreter useful of the rock inform people about wildlife in the marine garden — like sea anemones — and let

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