

Forum: Ability to take care of yourself, neighbors is vital

Continued from Page 1A

Tyree Wilde, warning coordination meteorologist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, advised the crowd to visit the agency's website to track the expected levels of rainfall, the height of rivers and the impact of seasonable weather as it unfolds.

Wildland fires — the ones that reach the interface between the urban and forested environments — are also worrisome.

In 2014, two wildland fires sparked by slash burns and high

winds torched several hundred acres in the Arch Cape area. Last year, fires in Eastern Oregon destroyed thousands of acres and dozens of homes.

"Astoria actually has a very high risk" for wildland interface fires, said Neal Bond, protection unity forester for the Oregon Department of Forestry's Astoria district.

But here, too, property owners have some control.

It isn't the flame front they need to worry about but the embers that travel half a mile to a mile and alight on dry nee-

dles and leaves in gutters, and on wood piles beneath decks or porches.

The solution is to clean gutters regularly and remove anything from around the home that functions as kindling.

Homeowners are encouraged to clear away flammable plants from the property, use fire-resistant vegetation for landscaping, keep lawns mowed and yard debris disposed of.

In addition, people should maintain an obstruction-free driveway so fire trucks can use it to defend the home in case of fire.

"The clearer you can make your driveway, the wider you can make your driveway, the better off everyone's going to be," Bond said.

"If we can't get in there safely, and we can't get out safely, to be brutally honest with you, we're probably not going to put a whole lot of effort into your home," he added. "We have got to take care of ourselves. We've got to take care of everyone else as well."

Self-empowerment

Coming full circle, Patrick

Corcoran, coastal natural hazards specialist with Oregon State University, pointed out how difficult it is to physically prepare for Cascadia until one has psychologically prepared for it.

Humans, he said, are not hardwired to brace for events of such low frequency and high magnitude.

However, "what to do becomes a very easy set of tasks once you actually expect it to happen," said Corcoran, who visited Japan shortly after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

He reminded the audi-

ence that strengthening social bonds is a form of self-resilience. Because local emergency responders will not be able to respond immediately after Cascadia, the ability to take care of yourself and your neighbors is vital.

"It will be such a big systems failure that there is nobody coming to help you in particular, that we need to empower ourselves to be our own emergency manager," he said, adding, "It's a matter of lovingly nudging ourselves and our neighbors to pay attention to this."

Lobbying: Oregon has no contribution limits

Continued from Page 1A

modernize vehicle registration, I think, will be an essential service for Oregonians throughout the state."

For the Motor Vehicle Software Corp., the governor's attendance at the office opening followed two years of investments in lobbying and political contributions in Oregon.

The company reported spending \$108,000 on lobbying from 2014 through March, and contributed \$107,500 to local and state politicians' campaigns since 2013. This included \$20,000 in contributions to Brown's campaign, with the latest contribution in early May, according to state campaign finance records.

Common practice

The combination of spending on lobbying and campaign contributions is common practice for many companies and interest groups in Oregon, which has no limits on the size of political contributions and expenditures. However, it is difficult for the public to track the connection because the state uses separate systems to record political campaign and lobbying spending. The state also does not require lobbyists to disclose if they play a role in raising political donations.

As for the Motor Vehicle Software Corp. spending, it is dwarfed by the millions invested by the state's top lobbying and political spenders.

For example, the Oregon Nurses Association reported spending \$2.3 million to lobby lawmakers and other state officials from 2007 through 2015. It was the second largest amount spent on lobbying by any private sector group during that time period, according to analysis of state records by the EO Media Group/Pamplin Media Group Capital Bureau. Since 2008, the nurses' political action committee also contributed more than \$1.5 million to a long list of state officials and lawmakers, including co-chairs of the Legislature's budget writing Joint Committee on Ways and Means.

Kevin Mealy, a spokesman



Courtesy of David Thalberg
Gov. Kate Brown spoke at the May 18 opening of the Portland office of the software company Vitu, which recently won a state contract to provide electronic registration and titling services at car dealerships in Oregon. Vitu's parent company spent more than \$200,000 on lobbying and campaign contributions in Oregon starting in late 2013, including \$20,000 in contributions to Brown's gubernatorial election campaign.

for the Oregon Nurses Association, said during this time period the group advocated for legislation that ultimately increased school nurse staffing and improved staffing at hospitals. "The nurses have always been patients' most important advocates, and nurses don't think that stops at the patient's bedside," Mealy said.

The private sector entity that spent the most on lobbying over the last nine years was Umatilla Electric Cooperative in Hermiston, at \$2.7 million. The cooperative spent a much smaller amount — approximately \$170,000 — on political donations since 2006, mostly to political action committees that contribute to individual state lawmakers' campaigns.

Steve Meyers, member services administrator for the cooperative, declined to cite any specific legislation or outcome the cooperative hoped to achieve through its lobbying and political spending, and the state does not require entities

to report that information.

"Umatilla Electric has long advocated for the interests of our 10,000 members and the surrounding region, on issues that include energy, salmon restoration, water conservation and rural economic development," Meyers wrote in an email. "UEC will continue to advocate for our members and constituents on these important issues."

No contribution limit

Government agencies and associations were also among the top spenders on lobbying in recent years, but they cannot contribute to political campaigns.

Although some groups spend as much on lobbying as political donations, Dan Meek, a public interest attorney and co-chair of the Independent Party of Oregon, said he is more concerned about Oregon's lack of campaign contribution limits.

"Lobbying expenses and reporting is overshadowed by campaign contributions," Meek said. "I also think lobbyists are only as effective as the campaign contributions they can deliver."

Meek also downplayed the importance of the software company contributing \$20,000 to the governor's campaign. "Twenty thousand dollars would be significant in another state," Meek said. "In Oregon, it's trivial."

Liz Accola Meunier, a spokeswoman for Brown's gubernatorial campaign, wrote in an email that the governor's decision to speak at Vitu's office opening was unrelated to the software provider's campaign contribution.

Bill Cross, a lobbyist whose clients do not include the nurses, electric cooperative or software company, disagreed with Meek's claim that delivering campaign contributions is a key measure of lobbyists' success.

"Some of us I think are good lobbyists and we don't have big PAC's," Cross said. "Money doesn't drive everything, but I recognize it is a big factor. But I don't think it's necessarily the role of a lobby-

ist and a measure of success as to how much he can generate. Because in some cases your clients — it's not going to be a realistic strategy they can use."

Expanding business

As it turns out, vehicle electronic registration and titling is just the start of the services Vitu hopes to eventually provide in Oregon. The software company already provides software that allows governments to track transactions from vehicle sales to salvage, "so basically the birth to death of a car," said John Brueggeman, the company's Vitu division president.

The company lobbied in the last couple of years for legislation to allow the Oregon Department of Motor Vehicles to accept more electronic transactions in the future. "We had a bill last year and the year before cleaning up some of this stuff," Brueggeman said.

Brueggeman said the company has been lobbying Oregon lawmakers and officials in support of legislation that would allow the company to continue expanding the services it offers.

"As we're bringing these types of services into areas, a lot of times the law didn't foresee what technology made possible," Brueggeman said.

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Developer: His primary focus is on the potential hotel

Continued from Page 1A

"I'm anxious to get rolling there and study that project," Hollander said. "I'm confident I'm going to land something there."

While his focus is primarily on the potential hotel, he said his strategy when entering a new town is to invest in multiple properties for more efficiency.

Historic boiler

On the river in front of The Ship Inn is the boiler from the former White Star Cannery, which was designated historic last year by city's Historic Landmarks Commission. Hollander's purchase comes with the lease Stokeld pays to the Department of State Lands around the boiler to protect the restaurant's view of the bridge and the Columbia River.

The city has limited development around the

boiler to the height of the riverbank. Any development must also take the historic nature of the boiler and nearby piling field and ballast rock into consideration, and must be approved by the Historic Landmarks Commission.

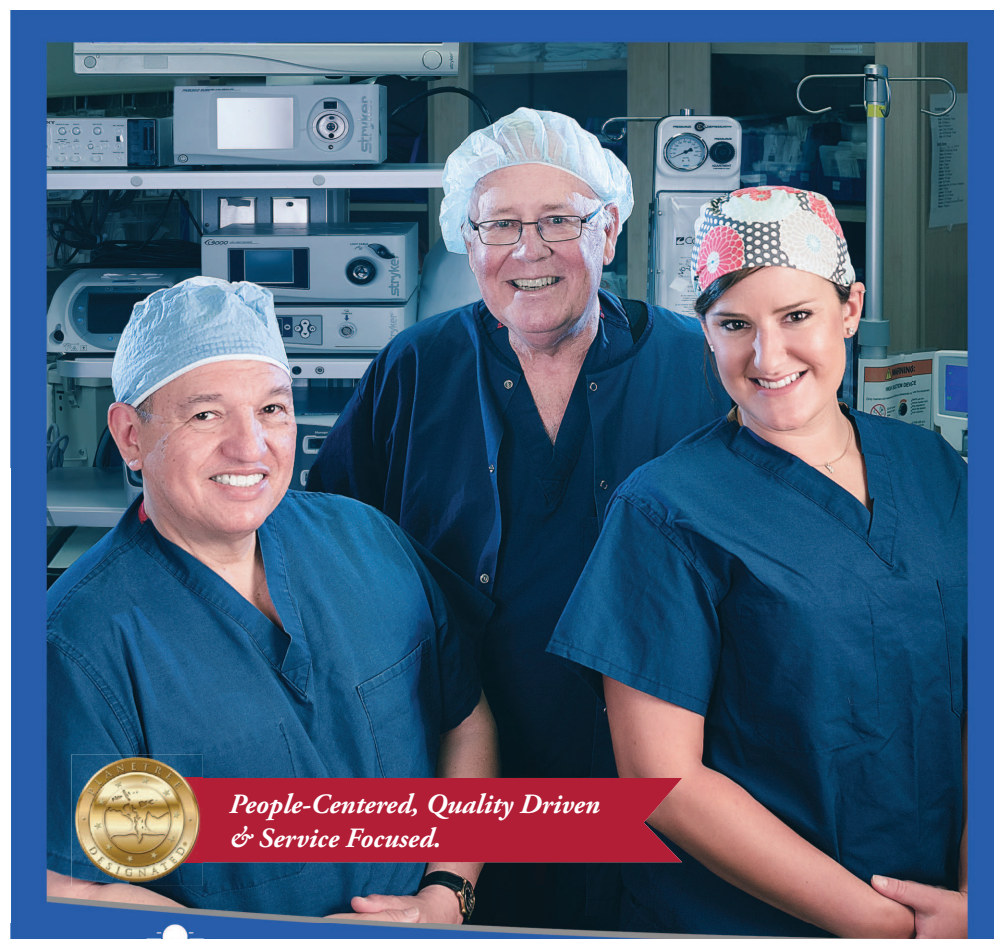
A long run

Stokeld, from Cornwall, England, started The Ship Inn in 1974 with her late husband, Fenton, who was from Yorkshire. She said the two were driven to open the pub and fish and chips place after visiting on vacation and noticing a lack of seafood restaurants in the fishermen's town.

Fenton Stokeld, who had wanted to develop a marina near the restaurant, died in 2004. Since then, Stokeld said, she's been trying to retire.

"I'm going to be here for another year," she said. "I have no idea after the year."

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