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ONE DOLLAR

## Director resigns from mental health agency

Top administrators have stepped down since critical reports

By **DERRICK DePLEDGE**  
*The Daily Astorian*

Sumuer Watkins, the executive director of Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare, has

resigned, the second top administrator to step down after an internal investigation and a state review of the mental health agency's management.

The agency's board of directors did not offer an explanation for Watkins' departure but said they hoped to name an interim director soon. Sources say Watkins, who has led the agency since 2012, announced her resignation to colleagues Tuesday and cited personal reasons.

Last week, Michele Crump-Hart, the agency's clinical director since 2014, resigned by mutual agreement with Watkins.

Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare, the county's mental health contractor, has been battered over the past year with criticism about the quality of care and poor leadership.

Several high-level professionals resigned amid descriptions of low morale

and bad management. Union workers took a "no confidence" vote against Crump-Hart earlier this year and suggested that the problems extended to other top administrators.

The findings of an internal investigation into management have not been released publicly or disclosed to the county.



See **WATKINS, Page 10A** **Sumuer Watkins**

## RESIDENTS DIG IN AGAINST APARTMENT COMPLEX



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

Attorney David Noren, left, chats with his client Richard Krueger after the Clatsop County Planning Commission decided Tuesday to postpone a decision on Krueger's proposed Miles Crossing apartment complex.

Miles Crossing project could provide affordable housing

By **EDWARD STRATTON**  
*The Daily Astorian*

Residents who live near a proposed 168-unit apartment complex in Miles Crossing pressed the Clatsop County Planning Commission Tuesday to weigh the potential impact on water, sewer and traffic.

Richard Krueger wants to develop the Bella Ridge Apartments on 10.4 acres between Lewis and Clark Elementary School and the Lewis and Clark Golf & RV Resort. The project has been praised as a much-needed source of affordable housing, but neighbors have objected.

Krueger wants the county to change the zoning from rural community residential to rural community multifamily residential and



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

Bruce Francis, right, chairman of the Clatsop County Planning Commission, listens to residents speak about the proposed Miles Crossing development Tuesday at Astoria City Hall.

issue a conditional use permit.

With the Miles Crossing Sanitary Sewer District and Youngs River Lewis and Clark Water District still gathering information on the project, the Planning Commission put off a decision until July, the second time the commission has delayed a vote.

The commission also gave the public an additional week to comment.

### Enough water?

Chief among the concerns of the residents who testified against the project Tuesday was whether the region has enough water and

sewer capacity long term for the development.

David Noren, an attorney speaking for Krueger, came to the hearing with a letter to commissioners from the sewer district's Superintendent Bill Mitchell. "There is sufficient capacity for the proposed 168 apartments and for an additional 80 equivalent dwelling units before the system reaches the 85,000 (gallon) daily capacity provided in our inter-governmental agreement with the city of Astoria," Mitchell wrote.

Nearby property owner James Neikes said that by leaving room for only 80 more housing units, the development would unduly limit future building on hundreds of lots.

Elena Miller, another resident, said the local water district can't say how many future residents will request water hookups and needs to ensure existing residents have an adequate water supply.

**Too many cars, people**  
Neighbors fretted about the

See **COMPLEX, Page 10A**



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian  
Jessica Smith appeared in Clatsop County Circuit Court with her lawyers for a hearing Tuesday on her mental fitness.

## Judge rules Smith competent for trial

Ruling comes after state hospital report

By **KYLE SPURR**  
*The Daily Astorian*

A Clatsop County Circuit Court judge determined Tuesday that accused murderer Jessica Smith is competent to stand trial.

Judge Cindee Matyas accepted an Oregon State Hospital report that concluded Smith is able to aid and assist in her defense.

Matyas had said in previous court hearings she did not observe any unusual behavior from Smith, but still found reason to doubt her mental fitness based on a suicide attempt in jail and an inconclusive report from court-appointed psychologist Brooke Howard.

Howard found Smith suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, but could not conclude whether she is unable or unwilling to aid and assist in her defense.

The psychologist recommended Smith be sent to the state hospital, where she was observed and evaluated in May. The 64-page report from the state hospital was sent to the court on Friday.

Based on the state hospital's findings, Smith's defense lawyers Lynne Morgan and William Falls withdrew their request for a hearing to determine her fitness to proceed.

Smith, 42, of Vancouver, Washington, is accused of murdering her toddler and attempting to kill her teenager at a Cannon Beach resort in 2014. She remains in custody in Clatsop County Jail, where she is off suicide watch and in a regular jail cell.

At the court hearing Tuesday, District Attorney Josh Marquis requested Clatsop County Jail Dr. Roy Little be allowed to review the reports from the state hospital and court-appointed psychologist to assist in Smith's care while she awaits trial in June 2017.

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## Warrenton Community Library looks for exit plan

Ideas for old building, new funding discussed

By **ERICK BENGEL**  
*The Daily Astorian*

WARRENTON — Talks have begun over the future of the Warrenton Community Library, a treasured place that has outlived its usefulness and is becoming a safety hazard.

At a joint work session Tuesday, the City Commission and the Library Board discussed a vision for the library's future that may include moving opera-

tions from Hammond to a more central location.

The board has long known that the current spot cannot meet the needs of modern users. Housed in the former Hammond Town Hall, the quaint, historic building is a small, tightly packed space with no room to expand.

A recent inspection — which noted the library's uneven floors and skewed walls that support a settling roof — made clear an exit plan is needed.

"For the most part, the building is sound," Jim Byerly, the city's chief building official, said. "It's just not in a configuration that will stand there for very much longer."

In addition, the building has



Erick Bengel/The Daily Astorian

The Warrenton Community Library.

substandard wiring in places, he said. "It hasn't degraded to the point that it's going to catch fire yet. Yet."

Byerly said these problems could be fixed, but the foundation would need to be fully replaced, an onerous task that

would cost between \$80,000 and \$90,000, he estimated. "The building itself is not worth that."

It's almost impossible to know how long the library will remain safe enough for patrons to enjoy, he said.

"We could have a wind-storm, or we could have heavy rains supersaturate the soil, and your footing just keeps sinking," he said. "It could be in a week-end, or it could be in a year."

The situation hasn't become so dire that the library needs to cease operations immediately, he said, but it is time for the city to consider the next step.

"Come this fall, when we have our storm season, that's the

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