

# Watkins: Criticism of agency intensified over the past year

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A separate review by the Oregon Health Authority described complaints that Crump-Hart engaged in “unprofessional and disrespectful behavior, employee favoritism, and ethical violations.”

The state report, which recommended that the agency improve training and examine the causes of the high rate of staff turnover, faulted Watkins for not keeping the agency's board, the county manager and county commissioners informed about major issues.

## ‘Wishes her well’

“Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare appreciates Sumner's many years of service to our agency and wishes her well in her new endeavor,” the agency's board said in an email. “Under her leadership, the agency made tremendous progress in client care, the quality of staff, and nearly tripled in size as Oregon's health care system changed to the CCO (Coordinated Care Organization) model.

“Moving forward, our board of directors is already working closely with the county, GOBHI (Greater Oregon Behavioral Health Inc.) and the Oregon Health Authority to identify and announce an interim director. We look forward to collaborating with our community partners to ensure a smooth transition in leadership that provides continuity of service to our clients and community.”

Kevin Campbell, the CEO of Greater Oregon Behavioral Health Inc., which oversees mental health services in Clatsop and several other counties, said GOBI has offered an experienced leader to step in as interim director at Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare.

“We very much appreciate the support of the community during these difficult times and pledge our support helping the community achieving better health and better care,” Campbell said in an email.

County Manager Cameron Moore said the county would work with the agency's board to find a replacement. “Really, I think, in a circumstance like this, it's really all you can do is try to move forward,” he said.

## Criticism intensified

Critics of Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare have said that the challenges at the agency predated Watkins' and Crump-Hart's leadership and stemmed in part from a lack of federal, state and local resources to properly care for the mentally ill.

But public and private complaints about the agency intensified over the past year. District Attorney Josh Marquis and other law enforcement leaders described a county mental health system in crisis, while doubts were raised about whether the agency's management appreciated the degree of concern.

Watkins grew up on the North Coast and worked her way through the agency's

ranks over two decades. In an email to community leaders last June, she apologized after hearing what she described as consistent feedback that she had not been displaying appropriate leadership skills and was defensive and abrasive.

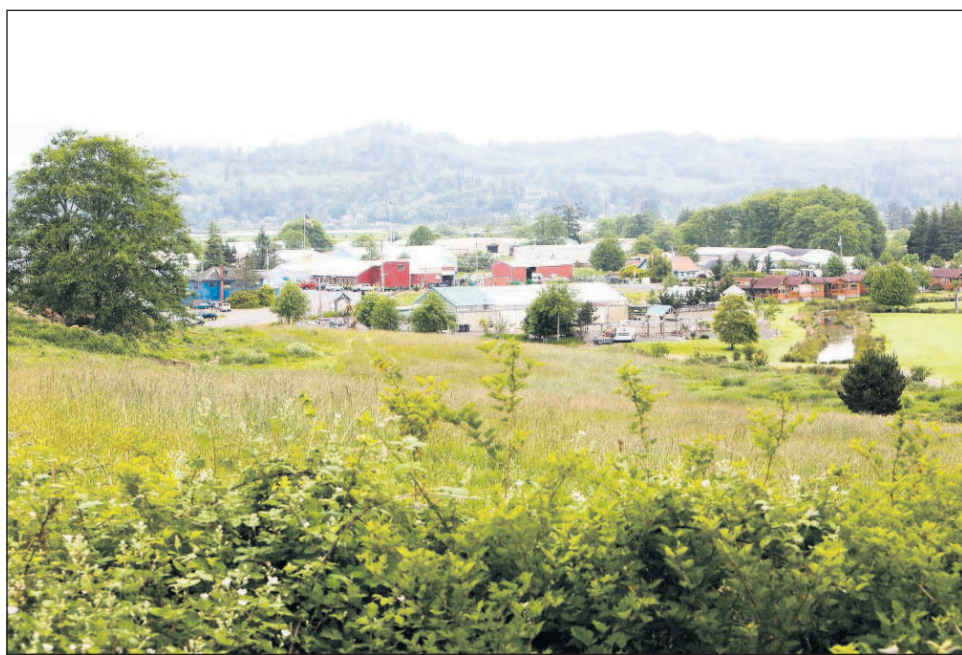
Former agency staffers have filed federal lawsuits alleging discrimination, retaliation and unethical and illegal management practices.

## ‘Kept this in the limelight’

The family of Carrie Barnhart, a 54-year-old woman with a history of mental illness who jumped off the Astoria Bridge last year, is also exploring a lawsuit. Barnhart killed herself a week after Astoria Police pulled her from the bridge after midnight and took her to Columbia Memorial Hospital, where she was evaluated by Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare and released after two hours. Police had responded to suicide threats from Barnhart four times in the months before her death.

“Her death did not go in vain,” said Norm Tutton, a retired Wyoming police officer who lived in Surf Pines and became an advocate for Barnhart's family and a thorn to Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare. He has since moved to Missouri.

“Due to concerned citizens, and concerned professionals, within the community and outside the community, that came together and kept this in the limelight until these investigations were completed.”



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

An apartment complex is being proposed on land north of Lewis and Clark Elementary School.

# Complex: It would be located on a section of road with blind corners

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impact the new complex could have on the rural Lewis and Clark Road and the intersection where it feeds into U.S. Highway 101 Business. Heather Hansen, the county's director of community development, said that while traffic will increase, the state Department of Transportation determined the incremental increase from the apartments didn't warrant any mitigation.

Chief Deputy Paul Williams from the Clatsop County Sheriff's Office said that while Sheriff Tom Bergin isn't against development, those overseeing the project should have realistic expectations for how well an already stretched department can cover a new apartment complex and how much pressure it would put on the intersection of Lewis and Clark Road and the highway.

Peter Gates, who lives about a mile from the development, said the complex would be located on a section of road with blind corners and nowhere for pedestrians and cyclists to transit safely. He said he would also like assur-

ances that the Sunset Empire Transportation District will service the complex.

Gravel Lane resident Joan Ferretti said Astoria Mayor Arline LaMear, who wrote in support of the Miles Crossing project, was trying to push housing development out of the city and onto rural residents, where traditionally only single-family homes are allowed.

“I also ask you not to allow this precedent, because from what I can gather, they're not finished with this one project,” she said. “There's a lot more acreage to be rezoned.”

## Housing needed

Kevin Leahy, who leads the local Small Business Development Center and Clatsop Economic Development Resources, said two overarching issues he hears from businesses is the need for a skilled workforce and available housing.

The project would provide much-needed workforce housing, he said, easing pressure throughout the entire county.

Richard Lee, who sold the

property to Krueger, said he did a highway study for Lewis and Clark Golf & RV Resort, a grocery store and nearby housing and found no adverse effect on Highway 101.

“We had a workforce in Jeffers Garden in the (1940s) of ... 400 to 500 people at the shipyards, and a housing project of about 1,500 in Jeffers Garden,” Lee said. “And we had two deputies, by the way, in the sheriff's department total at that time.”

Noren said a conditional approval limiting the Bella Ridge Apartments to its first two phases — totaling 96 units — could address many of the concerns over capacity. He said Krueger is in contact with the water district on how to provide additional water storage, and that the third phase of the complex could wait until the extra capacity is available.



# Smith: Pretrial hearings next month

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Allowing jail staff to review inmate medical records is important for other ailments such as diabetes or hepatitis C, Marquis said. As an example, Marquis noted Smith has complained of severe back problems.

Smith's defense lawyers initially objected to Dr. Little reviewing the reports.

“Ms. Smith was on suicide watch, she was in dire conditions,” Morgan said. “It was our view that whatever we could do to get her the help she needed was appropriate, but things have changed.”

After consulting with the doctor privately Tuesday, the defense lawyers agreed to open the records to him.

The reports and evaluations remain sealed to the public.

Smith is due back in court next month for pretrial hearings.

# Library: ‘The hub of Hammond’

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worst time for all structures in this area,” Byerly said. “I'd look at it real close then.”

## Money matters

Hammond residents are attached to their little library; one person called it “the hub of Hammond,” Site Manager Nettie-Lee Calog said.

Kelsey Balensifer, chairwoman of the Library Board, said the board members understand the old library's appeal, but if the board is to begin raising funds for an upgraded library, it would prefer “looking into an option that's not going to be a money pit.”

“We want it to go to something that's going to be around for a number of years to continue to benefit this community and provide library services,” said Balensifer, who is married to City Commissioner Henry Balensifer.

When the library relocates — possibly to a brand new building — the biggest obstacle will be finding ways to finance the move and future operations, City Manager Kurt Fritsch said.

The library is funded with a five-year tax levy that expires in 2017, but a new venue will require a great deal more money than the library collects today, he said.

Down the road, the commission may need to decide whether to keep the library under the city's direction or form a library board with taxing authority.

“Do we want to become a modern library that is much more than simply books, that has accessibility to computers, that has more visual displays, that is a gathering place for people, groups, to come together — for it to be a much broader learning experience, where a lot of libraries are going?” Fritsch asked.

The City Commission and Library Board kicked around the idea of turning the Hammond building into a satellite office for the new library to serve the Hammond population.

Another idea was to sell it to a nonprofit and use the money as startup funds for the new library.

Commissioner Pam Ackley said the “first thing is, let's get 'em out of that building.”

Mayor Mark Kujala said the discussion will continue at a later date. Calog said she would like to have a community meeting in the near future so that all local patrons can weigh in on the library's future.

## Ballot measure

The City Commission referred to the November ballot an initiative that, if passed, would amend the city charter to require double-majority voter approval before the city may sell, trade, divest or otherwise dispose of any city asset valued at more than \$100,000 in 2014 dollars.

“Currently, decisions related to the sale, trade, divestment or disposal of these types of assets are generally made by the City Commission,” the resolution's explanatory statement reads. “This measure would require the commission to refer these decisions to the voters for double-majority approval before the city could implement such decisions.”

In other words, for the city to take such an action, more than 50 percent of registered voters will have to vote on it, and a majority of the people who vote will need to approve it.

The charter amendment — a move from residents opposing a possible land exchange between the city and Warrenton Fiber at Tansy Point — is the work of the Warrenton Property Protection Committee, led by Ken Yuill.

In May, the commission voted to ensure that measures that would require supermajority or double majority voter approval to change city law or take government action first have to win voter support by the same margin.

## Rate increases

The City Commission held first readings on resolutions to increase the city's water rate by 7 percent and the sewer rate by 6 percent in the upcoming fiscal year, as discussed during last month's city budget meetings.

The water rate increase is projected to raise \$162,400 for the water fund; the sewer rate is expected to raise \$113,280 for the sewer fund.



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