

# Boatworks: Focus is on creating a seamless transition for employees

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"There were some lean times," Hill said. "We survived by working like crazy when there was work."

Jacques, a well-known construction manager for local projects, such as CMH Field, left the company in 1980 and returned for several years in the late 1980s.

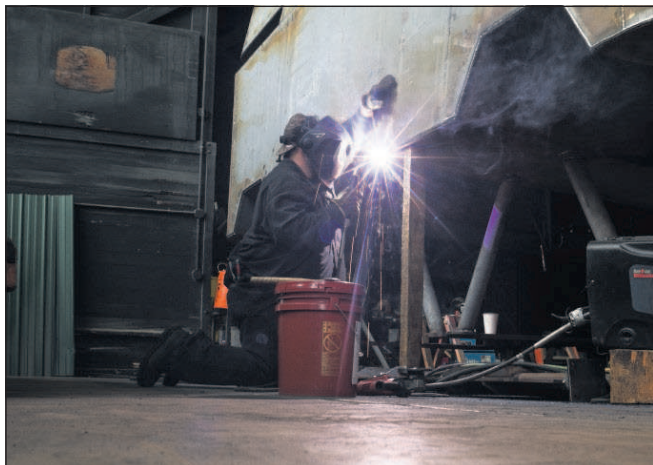
## A hidden gem

In 2010, Hill leased part of a former seaplane hangar and became one of the Port's first new tenants at North Tongue Point, needing indoor workspace to lengthen and widen Haggren's Defiant. The project ended up adding a whole new sector to J&H's business.

"We immediately followed up every year with a widening project," Hill said.

While there's been a momentary downturn in activity because of warm El Niño waters hurting fishing, Hill said he expects the aging fishing fleet to provide plenty of work for boat workers into the future. Hill employs 10 to 15 people at North Tongue Point, similar figures to his next-door neighbor, boat-building business WCT Marine & Construction Inc. The two companies, which partner on some projects, are part of a shrinking cadre of ship-working companies, with Astoria Marine facing closure amid a \$2 million cleanup of World War II-era pollution, and Columbia Pacific Marine Works, Inc., having already packed up.

Hill, along with Carol and Willie Toristoja, who branched out from their family's boat-working business in Vancouver, Washington, less than three years ago to start WCT Marine, say Tongue Point has the right attributes to be a first-



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

WCT Marine & Construction employee Charles Appling welds part of a boat.

class boat-working center, with ramps to take out large vessels without a crane, and the hangars providing the largest indoor workspace in the region. All it takes, they say, are improvements in the buildings, utilities and tarmac.

"It's not in perfect condition, but at least it's not a sand dune," Hill said, referencing the Port's idea to co-locate a brand-new boatyard and ship-working facility on dredge spoil land the agency owns on the Skipanon Peninsula in Warrenton.

## Bigger ideas

"We could turn Tongue Point into a shipyard, but it has deep-water and rail access, so it would be a better location for a shipping terminal than a boatyard," said Port Executive Director Jim Knight.

North Tongue Point's 30 acres of tarmac, lodged between a Portland & Western short-line rail spur and a deepwater channel of the Columbia River, has for more than half a century drawn interest as a marine terminal for handling bulk cargo, be it scrap, cars, agricultural commodities, forest products or

fuel. The feds sold the land in 1980 to the state.

In 2000, Missoula, Montana, based Washington Development Co. acquired the property. The company in 2009 leased North Tongue Point to the Port, which has fielded several grandiose proposals, but mostly lost money or treaded water on the facility.

The Port Commission voted recently to try and buy the property before the agency's lease expires in 2019.

In the most recent development proposal for the site, the Port is negotiating a contract with entrepreneur Rece Bly for compensation if he can bring in an as-yet unspecified cargo. Knight said negotiations are on hold until Port Commissioner Bill Hunsinger returns from fishing in Alaska later this month. Knight said there is also continued interest in Tongue Point from a public-private partnership based in South Korea.

Knight said he's willing to sit down with the tenants of Tongue Point about what improvements they'd like to see. But "every day we get closer to the drop-dead date (on the Port's lease),



Photo courtesy of J&H Boatworks Inc. The Milky Way was the first fishing vessel launched by J&H Boatworks after it started in 1976.



Photo courtesy of J&H Boatworks Inc. For its second project, J&H Boatworks built the fishing vessel Defiant for Mike Haggren, launching it in 1980.

so it's hard to make those commitments until we know our plan with Tongue Point," he said.

Tim and Debi Hill are focused on creating a seamless transition for their employees, who they call their greatest asset. But Tim Hill said it's unlikely his company would be able to find another suitable boat-working space like North Tongue Point if forced to move.

"For us and for Willie out there with WCT Marine, the question we have is, 'What does it mean for us?'" Hill said. "And there are no concrete answers, so we just keep going the direction we're going right now: work. That's all we can do."

# Divided: 'Brother, I want to get home, too'

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While Perry gives cops their due, he keeps his distance. Two years ago, within walking distance of this spot, a black man named Eric Garner died in a confrontation with police officers. Garner was suspected of selling loose cigarettes; an officer wrestled him to the ground by his neck. His last words — "I can't breathe" — were captured on cellphone video that rocketed across the internet.

"I know those officers did not mean to kill Eric," says Perry, a 37-year-old father of two who knew Garner.

But, "you need to look an officer in the eye who doesn't understand and go, 'Brother, I want to get home, too.' They're defending these communities that they don't know."

## A step ahead

As Americans struggle with the deaths of black men in encounters with police across the country, and now the killing of five Dallas officers, Perry and his fellow Staten Islanders have the dubious distinction of being a step ahead. Since Garner's death in July 2014, they have confronted a measure of the anger and pain the nation now shares.

A nationwide poll last summer by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs found that 81 percent of black Americans said police are

too quick to use deadly force, compared with 33 percent of whites. But the voices of Staten Islanders speak to attitudes and experiences that are often more complicated than poll numbers.

About 3,000 police officers live there, many in the heavily white neighborhoods on the southern two-thirds of the Island. In those neighborhoods, protests that followed Garner's death in July 2014 were met with "God Bless the NYPD" yard signs and pro-police rallies. The tensions intensified after a grand jury decided not to indict the officer for Garner's death. Two weeks later, a man claiming vengeance killed two officers in Brooklyn.

On an island of 475,000 that is 75 percent white and mostly suburban, the North Shore's comparatively dense neighborhoods are home to nearly all of the borough's African-Americans.

Leroy Downs, 41, has lived on Staten Island since he was 5 and works as a drug treatment counselor. But tonight he talks about, just maybe, becoming a cop, though as a black man he has been stopped repeatedly by police — without cause, he says.

Downs testified against the NYPD when a legal advocacy group sued and won a 2013 ruling that sweeping stop-and-frisks violate the constitutional rights of minority New Yorkers.

He sees little change in the relationship between cops and

minorities despite the verdict. But he hasn't given up hoping.

"I can't imagine the world without police," he says. "It'd be anarchy."

## Some progress

The city says it has made some progress. Last year, it began assigning pairs of officers to specific neighborhoods, rather than having them rush from call to call across precincts. They are mandated to spend a third of their shift "off-radio," talking with residents to forge relationships.

Jessi D'Ambrosio, 32, and Mary Gillespie, 28, are the new "neighborhood coordinating officers" for the six-building Richmond Terrace project where Garner once lived. When the two officers, both white and longtime Staten Islanders, walk through the grounds, residents readily return their greetings.

"They're such homeboy, homegirl," tenants association president Eunice Love says of the two officers. "They know how to get along with people and relate and we love that."

D'Ambrosio measures progress in everyday experience. When one resident called to report a teen wanted for breaking into nearby houses, he took it as a sign of trust.

"It's small steps," he says. "You know you can't just wake up tomorrow and think the world is going to change.

But they seem, still, to have accepted us."

Gwen Carr, Eric Garner's mother, wants more. She stands in the small park across the street from the spot where he fell and cringes as a man who appears to be homeless sprawls across a bench, asleep though it's not yet 1 p.m. And a young woman — "Alcohol Gives You Wings," tattooed down her left arm — sits on the edge of a dry fountain, trying to sell used shoes.

"How much good did they do?" Carr says of police. "Where are they when you need them?"

If her son's death means something, Carr says, officials can clean up this block where regulars say drinking and drugs have increased since Garner's death. She wants New York to turn the park into a playground, reserved for children and guardians.

Doug Brinson, who sells T-shirts from sidewalk tables, rails against police for Garner's death. But fighting and drinking on this block makes clear the need for police, he said.

"You've got to coexist with the guys on the beat. You've got to," he says. "It's only fair."



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

Just a few tenants remain at Pier 38 RV Park on Thursday in Astoria. The park is closing down as the owner, who also owns the Hampton Inn & Suites to the right, plans for other uses for the land.

# RV park: 'There is no definitive answer of what they're doing'

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Blair Henningsgaard, an attorney for Pier 38, said he has been asked by the owners to draft eviction notices for several remaining tenants.

## Change in owners

Floyd Holcom bought the RV park in 2006. He said there was a lot of prostitution and drug activity that he cleaned up as owner. He later sold his interest in the park and hotel property to Patel, but said he remains a partner in the RV park property. He said the park was never meant for long-term stays, but rather an RV park for visitors, although multiple residents say they have lived there several months to more than two years.

Holcom said he was asked recently to come over and help deal with drug problems and residents who had not been following the rules, had not kept their registration or insurance up to date and had created a liability issue for the RV park. Residents got used to not following the rules, he said, and got upset when someone came in to lay the rules down.

Holcom owns the nearby Pier 39 commercial building, along with lots over the Columbia River in front of Pier 38, around Pier 39 and to the east.

## Cease and desist

Portland attorney Scott Staab is representing Pier 38 tenant Josh Redburn and Michelle Charlton, who said she had paid her rent in advance but was not allowed to park the trailer she had towed from Portland. Staab said he delivered a cease and desist letter recently ordering the company to follow landlord-tenant laws in its evictions of residents. Tenants of an RV park are allowed at least a 30-day eviction notice, but Staab said some have been receiving verbal 24-hour notices. He claimed the landlords have also been intermittently shutting off water and power, threatening to tow away trailers and using police contact as a way to evict tenants.

"They're essentially trying just to strong-arm their long-term residents, saying they have no rights," he said.

Henningsgaard, who also serves as the city attorney, said he has seen the accusations

from Staab, but has yet to hear what Pier 38 did illegally.

Staab said he is seeking compensation for his clients and will file a lawsuit if necessary.

## Questionable tactics

Charlton and Redburn both called the police on Pier 38 July 5, claiming they had been confronted by management and verbally harassed by Holcom when Charlton arrived in Astoria after having her trailer towed from Portland. Charlton said the park paid for her trailer to be towed back to Portland and is now staying with Redburn, who said the park has subsequently tried to kick him out. He said he refuses to leave without a written 30-day eviction notice.

Jeremy Fischer, a former resident of the park for more than two years, said he recently left his trailer and moved in with friends after management would not allow him to pay rent and shut off his utilities.

"There is no definitive answer of what they're doing," he said. "They're just kicking people out."

The park switched managers from Chad Copeland to Michael Herbst last month. Holcom, who suggested Herbst, said the previous manager seemed to be taking advantage of people and taking their money, even though when he acquired the park in 2006, he informed the state it was no longer for long-term use.

This year, according to the Astoria Police Department, there have been 33 log entries and 19 cases at Pier 38. Those include 12 complaints against Herbst since June 17. Multiple log entries show Herbst attempting to make residents leave and being told by officers he needs to follow the proper eviction process.

On June 21, Herbst called to report that a resident, Frank Riley, might have a possible methamphetamine lab in his trailer. Police searched his trailer and found no evidence of a lab.

Riley said management came by the last week of June and gave him until the end of the month to move.

"They came in and tried to use a bunch of scare tactics and bully tactics," said Riley, who found a spot for his trailer on the other side of town.

# Barn: Smith plans to bring barn up to code

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"My property has been listed recently in legal notices, due in part, to personal impacts upon me and ... most of all through political ill-will," Shannon Smith said at a July Gearhart City Council meeting. "I am in conversation with prospective investors and co-partners who share my goal of preserving this unique historic resource for all of Gearhart to use and enjoy for many years to come."

On Thursday, she said the loan is in modification consideration by the lender, which could end the sale proceeding. "Foreclosures are more common than people know," she said. "They

often get to this level and they get resolved. I'm extremely optimistic."

Smith said she became an "underwater property owner" in 2007, within months of her purchase of the barn, when she was hard-hit by the economic downturn. "I have held on despite the land use and zoning approaches taken by the city's officials in their interpretation of the allowed use of one's property."

A court order has suspended use of the barn until Smith meets conditions of city approval. In



Shannon Smith

May, Smith said she plans to bring the building up to code.

If Smith violates the court order, she would receive a \$500 fine for a zone code violation. This would be in addition to more than \$30,000 in administrative fines racked up by Smith, an amount reduced to \$15,000 by the Gearhart City Council in December.

Clatsop County Circuit Court Judge Philip Nelson extended an order keeping the former livery stable off-limits for parties and special events, at least until October.

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