

Lead: Warrenton-Hammond, Knappa school districts still waiting for results

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The school district, which tested at several spots in each school, shut off all other fountains at the high school as a precaution while it runs additional tests to determine whether on-campus plumbing or water coming into the school is the issue.

"Astoria School District and the city are dedicated to eliminating lead from drinking water, but it's not uncommon for small amounts to be found due to leaching from service lines, parts, and fittings," Hoppes wrote in a letter sent to parents and guardians Monday. "These trace amounts of lead rarely if ever cause acute illnesses. Only with prolonged exposure can lead bioaccumulate in the body and cause health issues."

In the letter, Hoppes said tests at 30 spots around the city last year showed clean drinking water below the EPA threshold for treatment.

"While the city provides water that is lead-free, it cannot control the pipes and fix-



Craig Hoppes



Sheila Roley

tures past the service connection," Hoppes wrote, encouraging water customers to use newer fixtures and lead-free plumbing.

Seaside Superintendent Sheila Roley said the school district has identified two locations with elevated lead levels.

"We tested almost 40 different locations in the schools, and only found two that had levels that exceeded" benchmarks, Roley said. She added that both were in the teens of parts per billion.

One was the hose in a

boiler room that does not provide drinking water, Roley said, while the other was a sink in the concession stand at Seaside High School primarily used for cleaning. She said the school district has also shut down other sinks approaching the threshold of 20 parts per billion and is performing additional tests to determine the cause of high lead concentrations.

Crowded labs

In addition to finding the source of the pollution, the problem is getting timely

results back. The discovery of high lead volumes in two Portland schools, along with the public relations disaster that followed, spurred many districts throughout the state to start testing this spring. Gov. Kate Brown and other state leaders have called for yearly reports on lead and other toxins from every school district.

Astoria and other Clatsop County districts started testing in June. Only in the past week did Astoria and Seaside School District receive their results back from a lab.

Officials from both Warrenton-Hammond and Knappa said their school districts are still waiting for results.

Jewell School, which provides its own water, is one of the few districts in the state that was already required to test for lead with the Oregon Health Authority. Results from previous years show the district's water quality at or below the benchmark of 0.015 milligrams of lead per liter.

Library: Vote likely means there will be no major expansion

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Councilors instead asked city staff to look at how to remodel the existing library with available public dollars and private donations. The city has about \$1.6 million put aside for a project and the library foundation could raise about \$1 million through a capital campaign.

City Councilor Cindy Price and Councilor Russ Warr favored a renovation, while Mayor Arline LaMear and Councilor Drew Herzig preferred a new library at Heritage Square. Councilor Zetty Nemlowill, who was struggling with the issue, said she believes Heritage Square was the best site, but the cost — \$10.9 million for a new library; \$24.1 million for a new library with a housing component — was too high.

"I think the cost of building a new library is too much. And too much of that cost would be borne by citizens," Nemlowill said at a special meeting at City Hall. "And I'm not convinced that there's enough community support."

After a 3-2 vote against Heritage Square, LaMear floated a stripped-down \$6.4 million expansion of the existing library into the parking lot.

But Nemlowill proposed that city staff come up with a funding strategy for a renovation project that does not require a bond. Her motion passed the council with the same 3-2 split.

City Manager Brett Estes said afterward that the council's vote likely means there will be no major expansion of the library. He said it would likely take months for staff to come back with a renovation plan and funding strategy.

David Oser, a financier who serves on the Library Board, cautioned the City Council that renovating the library would require a "gut rehab" that could be expensive. Built in the 1960s, the library has deteriorating infrastructure and is not accessible to the disabled.

"The existing building does not have the ability to be renovated cheaply," Oser said.

Financial challenges

The city had always expected to use a mix of city money and private donations for a library project, but also presumed a bond or loan would likely be necessary given the cost estimates.

City staff had estimated that a \$10 million bond would cost the average homeowner with a property valued at \$200,000 about \$200 extra in property taxes each year.

A \$5 million U.S. Department of Agriculture loan could have been paid off over time through a library utility tax.

In June, the Library Board had recommended a new 18,000-square-foot library at Heritage Square east of the Garden of Surging Waves. The City Council had previously backed away from a \$4.6 million plan to expand the library by tearing down the Waldorf Hotel next door, and had sought a review of Heritage Square, but had let the issue simmer for 18 months.

High cost

Price said the Library Board's recommendation for Heritage Square "just goes well beyond the needs of a library and our vibrant community."

She cited the city's limited funds, the uncertainty of whether voters would approve a bond measure, and the impact of a new library on other designs for Heritage Square, such

as a plaza or open space. She also questioned what would happen to the existing library.

Price used the successful renovation of the Astoria Senior Center as a model for what is possible. She favors renovating only the main floor of the library.

"This option has several advantages," Price said. "It fits the city's budget. It fits our taxpayers' wallets. It fits our staff resources. It fits our citizens' library needs, as defined by the Library of Congress, and can do so within a very short period of time."

Warr said the city is unable to adequately maintain parks and Ocean View Cemetery and has recently learned of the significant cost to repair and maintain the trestles and track used by the Astoria Riverfront Trolley.

"We could remodel what's there and do a relatively adequate job," he said of the existing library. "But as far as getting funding to build the library to the scale that everyone in the room — or most of the folks in the room — are envisioning, it's many, many years out — like Cindy said — before that's going to be a possibility."

"I would rather get it done now and accept what we can provide."

Herzig, who wanted a new library at Heritage Square and was open to a housing component, said the City Council could "decide to build for the 21st century, or we could decide to build for the 20th century."

"We can build a building that will be something that can be used for generations, or we can build a building — or renovate a building — that will be obsolete before we ever open the door."

He doubted the existing library could be easily remodeled. "No amount of cosmetic surgery will bring that building into the 21st century," he said.

LaMear, a former librarian who had made a new library a theme in her campaign for mayor in 2014, was discouraged by the rejection of Heritage Square. "I'm very disappointed," she said. "I think we're going backward instead of going forward by choosing any other option. But that's the decision of the council."

Private fundraising

Price said she is concerned about the lack of activity among library benefactors on private fundraising. In many other cities that have built new libraries, she said, "it has been someone who has been part of the foundation, who has stood up and been the champion and said, 'I will bring that money to the table.'"

"And that's what we lack here."

Without such a commitment, Price said, "it makes my choice pretty simple, which is to stay within our means."

Herzig objected to Price's characterization, calling it an "absolutely outrageous statement." "It's the council's responsibility to give the foundation a clear directive, and we have failed to do that," he said, apologizing to the library foundation. "It's our failure, not yours. And I do apologize."

Kate Summers, the chairwoman of the Library Board, said afterward that she thought the City Council might be leaning toward Heritage Square.

"And that is not what happened," she said. "I was very disappointed that Councilor Price chose to attack our fledgling foundation, as well."

Divided: Women 'win as often as men do'

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senators, and one in four state lawmakers. They serve as governors of only six states and are mayors in roughly 19 percent of the nation's largest cities.

There has been progress; as recently as 1978, there were no women U.S. senators, and now there are 20. Still, there has been little headway since a surge of women won office in the 1980s and early 1990s. Sixteen states have fewer women serving in legislatures than in 2005, and five others have shown no improvement, according to an analysis by The Associated Press of data from the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Advocates say the dearth of women officeholders has had consequences. They say women's voices have been muted in local, state and national discussions of all issues, from climate change to foreign policy, but particularly of concerns important to women and working mothers: family leave, child care and abortion, for example. They point to instances where women in office have made a difference.

Kim McMillan was first elected as a Democrat to her seat in Tennessee's House of Representatives in 1994 when she was 32 years old, a working mother of two children under the age of 3. More than once, she was told she couldn't win because she was a woman. She eventually served six terms, rising to become the first woman majority leader. A major accomplishment: expansion of prekindergarten education around the state.

"I felt like I represented people who didn't have any representation, working mothers like me," says McMillan, now the first female mayor of Clarksville, the fifth largest city in Tennessee.

New generation

Whether a Clinton win in November will inspire a new generation of female poli-



AP Photo/Don Ryan

Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum poses for a photo at her office in Portland. She says a support network has been instrumental throughout her career, beginning as a lawyer in Oregon and continuing as she was appointed a state court judge and later during her successful bid for state attorney general. Two of her early mentors were former Oregon Supreme Court Justice Betty Roberts, the first woman to serve on an Oregon appellate court, and Barbara Roberts, the first woman elected governor of Oregon.

ticians remains to be seen. While the election of a woman as U.S. president would be unprecedented, at least 52 other countries around the world have had a female head of state in the last 50 years.

Female representation varies significantly around the U.S. Six states have never elected or appointed a woman to the U.S. House of Representatives, and 22 have never

had a woman represent them in the U.S. Senate.

A major problem, activists say, is convincing women to run.

"We know that when women run for office, they win as often as men do," says Debbie Walsh, executive director of the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University. "The number of women running isn't going up,

and so the number of women in office isn't going up."

Support network

A support network has been instrumental throughout Ellen Rosenblum's career, beginning as a lawyer in Oregon and continuing as she was appointed a state court judge and later during her successful bid for state attorney general. Two of her early mentors were former Oregon Supreme Court Justice Betty Roberts and Barbara Roberts, the first woman elected governor of Oregon.

Rosenblum says she worked to pay it forward, helping to build up a statewide group of women lawyers. When it came to deciding in late 2011 whether to launch her first bid for state-wide office, that same network was instrumental.

"I needed women to talk to, to make sure I was not completely out of my mind to do this," says Rosenblum, who at the time had just retired as a judge.

In California, Hannah-Beth Jackson had long been active in her community beyond her work as a lawyer and former prosecutor, but it took the encouragement of one of her mentors to convince her to run for state Assembly in 1998.

"Women tend to ask permission, and we're never quite sure we are good enough or ready enough," she says.

Now in the state Senate, she is chairwoman of the powerful judiciary committee. Despite her influence and tenure, the Democratic lawmaker does not always succeed. Earlier this year, a bill she sponsored extending California's family leave protections to small-business employees died in an all-male committee amid concerns of regulatory burdens.

She is undeterred.

"Let's see what happens when I bring the bill back," Jackson says. "Hopefully, that committee will have some women members."

Port: Conway Construction's revised bid came in just over \$1,835, 427, still less than Big River's estimate

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staff recommended going with Ridgefield, Washington-based Conway Construction's bid of less than \$1.6 million, at the time more than \$600,000 lower than the bid of Astoria-based Big River Construction Co.

The vote was postponed, though, so Conway Construction could correct its bid to include a plan to prevent groundwater from escaping the excavated area. The requirement for preventing water in the excavated area

wasn't included in the specifications sheet for the project. But Big River's original bid included such a plan.

Even with the correction, Conway Construction's revised bid came in at just over \$1,835,427, still significantly less than Big River's \$2,262,712 estimate.

Fixing bids

Today, commissioners Stephen Fulton and Bill Hunsinger called foul on Conway Construction's contract, saying the company had been unfairly allowed to fix omis-

sions in its initial bid to the detriment of Big River.

Fulton said the Port should discuss the issue more, adding he doesn't think Conway is qualified if they didn't already know about groundwater issues.

Ada Banasik, an environmental engineer with consultant and project manager Maul Foster Alongi, said construction of the treatment system could run into wet weather if delayed.

The Port's General Counsel Tim Ramis said the Port is allowed to go back and

negotiate with the low bidder and not required to give the high bidder an opportunity to amend.

Ramis, Executive Director Jim Knight and commissioners James Campbell, John Raichl and Chairman Robert Mushen said the Port was in a tight spot, still in the good graces of the state but needing to move forward with the project.

In other news:

• The Port Commission contracted Alongi to help oversee construction of the stormwater treatment system.