

Herzig: Councilor's last meeting will be Tuesday night

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Difficult topics

Herzig, who led the Lower Columbia Diversity Project, advocated for tolerance and confronting homophobia, transphobia and racism — topics that many small towns don't publicly address.

Two years ago, Herzig worked to convince the council to expand the city's non-discrimination policy to prevent exclusion of any person based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

"Clatsop County has been fairly rural, fairly isolated, and extremely homogeneous for a long, long period of time, and so they aren't used to thinking in terms of diversity," Herzig said.

But shifting social and economic demographics are altering the identity of the region, he said.

"Things are changing, people are fearful, and we need to talk about it so that we can be afraid of the correct things, and in the correct way, rather than start to scapegoat," he said.

That same year, he persuaded the city to financially support the warming center during its first season. The center operated in the Astoria Senior Center, which was then under renovation. Last year, the shelter moved into the First United Methodist Church



Alex Pajunas/The Daily Astorian

Astoria City Councilor Drew Herzig, in red, who is also the chairman of the Lower Columbia Diversity Project, leads a candlelight march in January 2014 through downtown Astoria in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

basement and expanded services.

City Councilor Russ Warr, a more conservative voice on the council who frequently clashed with Herzig, said the warming center is his colleague's hallmark accomplishment and called it a very good public service.

"By any measure, that was a good thing to do," Warr said, "and it took a lot of work and effort on his part."

Criticism

Warr, who chose not to run for re-election this year after three terms, is less approving of Herzig's conduct on the council.

"He monopolized the conversation. He spent a lot of time talking about things that weren't really city business during his reports of councilors, and I think primarily that just wasted the time of the business of the city," Warr said.

He added that Herzig's refusal to act as a team player on occasions when the council could only move forward through consensus could be disruptive.

However, Warr said he believes Herzig "felt that he was doing the work of the city, or at least representing his constituency, and I think he worked very hard."

"He was always extremely well prepared, in that he spent

hours reading and thinking about information that he got in the packet — probably more than any other councilor."

Herzig suspects his outsider status led critics to hold him to a higher standard than his fellow councilors.

"A number of people who were not opposed to me have often thanked me for asking those questions ... for examining things at council meetings

that otherwise would just be passed over," he said.

"It depends on whether you liked me or didn't like me, I guess," he added with laugh.

Get involved

Herzig said he often asked many questions, and extended council meetings, to keep the process transparent.

"Democracy is doing public business in public, and that's what City Council meetings are supposed to be: that the public comes and watches us do their business and explain what we're doing," he said.

Herzig's last council meeting will be Tuesday night. He and Schweigert have sold their South Slope home and plan to leave town the following week. Tom Brownson, a retired contractor, is the only candidate for the Ward 2 seat in November.

City politics can be frustrating, Herzig said, and many of his constituents have given up.

"I've talked to so many people who say, 'I just don't bother anymore. They're going to do what they're going to do regardless of what we want,'" he said.

But he argues that local politics is ground zero for creating positive change, and Herzig wishes more folks would get involved.

"If people keep walking away from democracy," he said, "we're not going to have it anymore."

RV park: Company installing new bottomless sand filter

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Gary Artman, an inspector with the state, said the company has been staying under the limits by pumping about 800 gallons of sewage a day. Meanwhile, the company has been installing a new bottom-

less sand filter, which Artman said will likely be complete within the state's deadline.

Case settled

In 2013, the county sued Hick to enforce a compliance order from 2011 limiting the park to 43 residential spaces,

including 18 mobile homes, 25 RVs and an additional 38 spaces for visitors.

"The parties now agree that (Hick and Resources Northwest) are in substantial compliance with the terms of the settlement," Matyas wrote in a judgment issued last month.



Sunset Lake Resort & RV Park south of Warrenton has reached a settlement with the county regarding its occupancy, and is meeting the state's requirement to replace a failing septic system.

The Daily Astorian
File Photo



Submitted Photo

Aerial view of 532 N. Laurel St. in Cannon Beach.

Housing plan: Appeals board denied all arguments

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Commission, then tentatively approved by City Council in 2015 and affirmed in a previous state decision.

In January, planning commissioners said the development plan lacked details, including when and how the new houses would be built, landscaping and protections for neighbors during construction. Friends of Cannon Beach said the approval set an unwanted precedent for future development, since the City Council's tentative approval came after a threatened lawsuit by the developer.

"LUBA confirmed overwhelmingly that the appeal was completely without any merit whatsoever," Nicholson said in a statement.

The 70-member Friends of Cannon Beach raised about \$25,000 to fight the decision.

"Once again, LUBA did not affirm this was a good decision, but rather that the City Council had the right to make it," Harrison said in a statement. "For Cannon Beach, this most unfortunate action shrugs at our ordinances and is in no way good for our town."

Board denied all arguments

The appeals board denied arguments that the final plan lacked sufficient detail, veered from the approved preliminary plan and lacked a development schedule.

Harrison and others argued that the final plan was incomplete and failed to "indicate fully the ultimate operation and appearance of the development," including what the constructed homes would look like, the final opinion stated.

The city's lawyers and Nich-

olson described the detailed building plan, grading plan and landscaping measures.

Petitioners also unsuccessfully argued the City Council lacked jurisdiction to make a final decision on Nicholson's application, since the Planning Commission denied the application.

The appeals board affirmed the council had authority to make a final decision after holding a hearing on the application. The .57-acre property where Nicholson intends to rebuild the existing house and construct new homes, located at 532 N. Laurel St., has been for sale since April.

Nicholson, who said he agreed to about 18 different conditions during the approval process, plans to build the driveway soon, then rebuild the old home. The timeline is uncertain due to costs from lawsuits against the city, he said.

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