

CRAFT BEER
SPECIAL SECTION • INSIDE



AT THE PAC
FRIDAY EXTRA • 1C



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

Clatsop County Sheriff's Office Deputies Dave Clarke, left, and Tessy Workman wait to check people through the new metal detector on Thursday at Clatsop County Circuit Court in Astoria. The new measures were installed in time for a death penalty trial.

Shut the barn doors

Gearhart seeks to get Neacoxie Creek Barn into compliance

By R.J. MARX
The Daily Astorian

GEARHART — Last fall, a judge said Gearhart's zoning code wasn't enough to close down Neacoxie Creek Barn, a former livery stable turned event space.

But it's not the zoning code that matters, it's the building code, Gearhart officials say.

The city used the building code to assess nearly \$20,000 in fines since 2011 and seeks to permanently shut down Neacoxie Creek Barn until owner Shannon Smith receives a certificate of occupancy.

Gearhart officials say the former livery stable has been operating as a wedding venue illegally for years. The barn "has been determined by the city to be uninhabitable because it poses an immediate threat to the health and safety, not only of (defendants') guests but the general public," according to Building Official Jim Brien.

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COURTHOUSE SECURITY IN QUESTION

Prosecutor, sheriff, county manager concerned about change

By KYLE SPURR
The Daily Astorian

Tougher security at Clatsop County Circuit Court is intended to improve public safety, but the new protocol has divided the presiding judge and the prosecutor and sheriff.

Visitors to the courthouse in downtown Astoria are now directed through a metal detector at one secure entrance off Commercial Street. Two other entrances on the south side of the building are blocked off with security signs, although the entrance on the bottom floor is still open to the disabled.

The change was approved in February by a court security advisory committee over the objections of the prosecutor, sheriff and interim county manager, who wanted more discussion over security design.

Judge Paula Brownhill, who presides over Circuit Court, said the heightened security was timed for the death penalty trial of Randy Lee Roden in the murder of a Seaside toddler.

"Today was the target date," Brownhill said Tuesday, when the trial opened in her courtroom.

Alternatives

Some at the county do not necessarily see the change as a permanent solution.

District Attorney Josh Marquis, Sheriff Tom Bergin and former interim County Manager Rich Mays all voted against the change in February as members of the court security advisory committee.

Each official agrees the courthouse needs stronger security, but they want to consider alternatives. One proposal is to build a separate security screening entrance for the public, including people with disabilities.

The new security plan asks the disabled to



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

Sheriff's Deputy Dave Clarke, left, checks a bag while Deputy Tessy Workman watches Thursday at Clatsop County Circuit Court.

use an intercom at the blocked off entrance on the lower level of the building, then wait for a sheriff's deputy to let them in the courthouse.

"We all agreed permanent screening of the public was a good idea, but had to be done on a permanent basis and not render the county liable to lawsuits by disabled people," Marquis said.

The recommendation for the new security plan came from a security wing of the state court office, which evaluates security at each Circuit Court. The state's suggestion

started intense conversations between local officials.

Even after the court security committee voted, Marquis and the other dissenting voices thought everyone agreed more study was needed before launching the new security plan.

"For almost a year now there has been considerable controversy about how and when the courthouse itself will be secured," Marquis said.

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Cormorant case heads to Oregon

Activists filmed federal bird killings

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

The federal lawsuit brought by an animal welfare group against the U.S. Coast Guard over the group's efforts to document the controversial shooting of double-crested cormorants near East Sand Island has been moved from San Diego to Portland.

U.S. District Judge Anthony Battaglia in San Diego sided with the Coast Guard, ruling on Wednesday that moving the lawsuit to Portland is warranted for the convenience of witnesses, because of local interest in the controversy and because of similarities with a lawsuit brought by the Audubon Society of Portland against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers over the killing of cormorants.

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Staff shortages hamper US wildlife refuges

Three refuges are in our area

By GILLIAN FLACCUS
Associated Press

PORTLAND — Hundreds of national wildlife refuges that provide critical habitat for migratory birds and other species are crippled by a staffing shortage that has curtailed educational programs, hampered the fight against invasive species and weakened security at facilities that attract nearly 50 million visitors annually, a group of public employees and law enforcement said Wednesday.

Staffing at the nation's 565 wildlife refuges and related properties shrank nearly 15 percent in the past decade, and more than one-third of those locations don't have any staff on site, the Washington, D.C.-based Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility said. More than half of the refuges no longer have their own manager and have been combined into massive "complexes" that are overseen by someone who might be hundreds of miles away, said Jeff Ruch, executive director of the nonprofit alliance.

Malheur concerns
The report raises concerns

about low staffing levels given the recent armed takeover of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in remote southeast Oregon. More than two dozen occupied the refuge's headquarters in January, launching a 41-day standoff with authorities that ended two weeks after one of them was fatally shot.

The occupiers were protesting the prosecution of two ranchers who set fires on federal lands. Seven of them are now on trial in federal court in Portland.

The crisis set off alarm bells and prompted officials to spend \$6 million from an already tight

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Meghan Kearney/U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Trail around Julia Butler Hansen National Wildlife Refuge in Washington.

