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SPORTS • 7A

# Courthouse security revised after concerns

Sheriff objected to new measures

By KYLE SPURR  
The Daily Astorian

A new security protocol at Clatsop County Circuit Court was lifted this week after concerns were raised by

the sheriff and others over the extra cost and resources needed to screen all visitors.

Visitors to the courthouse can again enter the building without being screened. A metal detector is now set up outside Courtroom 300, where the death penalty trial of Randy Lee Roden, the man accused of murdering a Seaside toddler, is being held.

Judge Paula Brownhill, who pre-

sides over Circuit Court, enacted tougher security at the courthouse last week in time for the Roden trial in her courtroom. Visitors were directed through a metal detector at one secure entrance off Commercial Street in downtown Astoria. Two other entrances on the south side of the building were blocked off with security signs, although one was still accessible to the disabled.

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

Sheriff Tom Bergin met with his staff and County Manager Cameron Moore on Friday to further discuss concerns with the closure of the courthouse during the Roden trial, which

could last more than two months.

"It all boils down to money, and we don't have the resources or the manpower," Bergin said.

The Sheriff's Office has state funds to cover labor costs during the death penalty trial. However, Bergin said, the office does not have the budget to permanently station multiple deputies

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# Preschool offers room to grow



Photos by Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

Christy Bisping, owner and teacher at Gearhart Kids Academy, works with Arabelle Osterhold of Astoria and Jonathan Rosenfeld of Cannon Beach during free play Monday.

## Childhood specialists stress importance of quality preschool

By EDWARD STRATTON  
The Daily Astorian

**G**EARHART — After Cannon Beach Preschool and Children's Center shut down in May, former director Christy Bisping spent at least \$12,000 building out Gearhart Kids Academy, her new preschool and daycare along U.S. Highway 101. Hers is the only preschool in Clatsop County rated through the Oregon Quality Rating Improvement System, the state's foremost method for ensuring quality in preschools.

Like other providers, Bisping doesn't have much trouble filling her infant and toddler daycare rooms. But two weeks after the start of K-12 classes, she only has four students out of a possible 20 in her preschool. She said price is the biggest inhibitor, along with a lack of understanding about the importance of preschool.

Bisping's concerns are at the forefront of

**MORE INFO**

For more information on how to become a licensed childcare provider, contact Tara Mestrich with the Family Care Connection program at 503-325-1220.

**MORE INSIDE**

Seaside receives preschool startup grant from the state. **Page 10A**

efforts by local early childhood specialists to better prepare kids for the future.

### Improving quality

Tara Mestrich, coordinator of Oregon State University Extension Service's Family Care Connection program, said the county has about 35 licensed preschool providers offering a potential 586 preschool slots.

There are usually plenty of preschool slots available, she said, while the real demand is driven by infant, toddler and after-school care.

Bisping said she worked really hard for the quality rating in Cannon Beach and in Gearhart, but that it hasn't paid many

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Preschoolers Anna Schroer, left, and Ryder Ramsdell take a slip down a slide behind Capt. Robert Gray School during Monday. The two are part of Astoria School District's new preschool, launched with state funding.

# Warrenton could take control of the dam

Attorney: Water district has no ownership right

By DERRICK DePLEDGE  
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — The city could take control of the Eighth Street Dam and either operate the aging structure for flood control or hold the dam as an asset and later remove it to offset the wetlands impact of a future development project.

Akin Blitz, a Portland attorney hired by the city to conduct a fact-finding report on the dam, argues that the Skipanon Water Control District has no ownership claim and forfeited a city easement when the district ceased operating the dam as intended.



Akin Blitz

Blitz maintains that the city owns the underlying property so, with no valid easement, the dam reverts to the city.

"Any claim the district makes to the contrary is baseless as far as I'm concerned," Blitz said at a City Commission meeting Tuesday night.

Blitz's findings could prompt a legal fight between the city and the water district, which has operated the dam since it was built by the federal government in 1963. If the water district does not cede ownership interest, the attorney suggested, the city could file a lawsuit to determine title or seize the dam and put the legal onus on the district to prove an ownership stake.

The water district has sought to remove the dam as obsolete and a hazard, as well as to improve fish passage on the river.

Tessa Scheller, the chairwoman of the water district's board, does not think the water district will simply accept the city's argument. Some on the board, however, have said in the past that the water district should turn the dam over to the city for \$1 to be free from liability.

"I wasn't persuaded by anything except that, this seems to me, if I had to characterize it, it would be a witch hunt," Scheller said. "That would be my characterization of what I heard tonight."

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# Planning Commission mulls ways to gain homes

## Tiny houses, garage units on the table

By ERICK BENGEL  
The Daily Astorian

The Astoria Planning Commission is considering development code changes that would allow property owners to rent out detached garages and build tiny homes on their land.

The amendments are designed to help alleviate Astoria's affordable housing scarcity but raised red flags for residents concerned

about increased density and parking overflow, and about whether tiny homes and "accessory dwelling units" would mar the community's historic character.

One of the City Council's goals for the previous fiscal year was to promote "housing that Astorians can afford."

A regional supply of every housing category is at an all-time low, while demand has reached an all-time high, in part because of the North Coast's low unemployment



Kevin Cronin

rate, according to Community Development Director Kevin Cronin.

A 2015 housing study led to a list of recommendations — an affordable housing strategy — to spur more housing opportunities in town. The City Council in July did not embrace all of Cronin's initial ideas, but did signal some support for developing accessory dwelling units.

Cronin's proposed set of new zoning standards would include reducing restrictions on accessory dwelling units

to "encourage more base-ment and garage conversions," and "for construction of new units built above new garages" or as part of new single-family, detached construction.

In addition, the new standards would encourage tiny homes to be developed on single-family lots "under certain conditions."

"Under this proposal, you will be able to use the property much more efficiently," Cronin said, adding that owners could use the additional income to fix up their house, or "do whatever they feel like doing with it."

Asked how many units the

code changes would create, Cronin said, "I can't forecast that. I don't know. What I do know is, we're not going to get any if we continue with the existing standard. We know that."

Noting that the city has received one ADU application in the past five years, he added, "I would be surprised if we have more than two or three per year. Pleasantly surprised."

### Concerns

Some residents feared the proposal would lead to tiny homes cluttering up Astoria's historic neighborhoods.

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