

# Consultant suggests improvements to state crisis unit

## Unit operates 23 homes for people with severe needs

By **CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE**  
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Feedback from a consultant hired to assess safety within the state's residential crisis services for people with developmental disabilities is "not glowing," according to the director of the state's Stabilization and Crisis Unit.

The crisis unit operates 23 homes along the I-5 corridor between Portland and Eugene,

according to the state Department of Human Services. About 100 people live in these facilities, which are intended to help people with severe needs.

SACU Director Jana McLellan, in a presentation Monday to the Client Staff and Safety Task Force, said the consultant has tentatively recommended the unit improve staff training and take a more individualized approach to residents.

The task force was established in 2015 and directed by the Legislature to evaluate safety and make recommendations on staff safety, resident care and the operation of crisis unit facilities.

Although the task force was required to provide its rec-

ommendations to the Legislature by Sept. 15, it determined then that none were "ready for submission."

A consultant, Benchmark Human Services, Inc., was brought on this spring to investigate safety and health issues of people both working for and getting services from the crisis unit.

McLellan said Monday she expects Benchmark's report to be complete next month. The consultancy has reviewed information provided by the crisis unit and has conducted interviews with more than 30 staff, management and other stakeholders in the system.

McLellan said the consultant's report will focus on several best practice areas, include staff training, medication man-

agement, access to psychiatric services, residential capacity and using data to inform policy and programming decisions. The final report is expected to have several components, including recommendations on implementing the findings.

According to early findings, McLellan said, the crisis unit is perceived as separate from and not integrated with the larger system of services and care for people with developmental disabilities; and the unit may not be adapting to the changing needs of the population it serves.

State Sen. Sara Gelsler, D-Corvallis, who co-chairs the task force, and Eva Rippeteau, a task force member and political coordinator for the Associ-

ation of Federal, State, County and Municipal Employees, said that many of the consultant's initial findings were not surprising.

Gelsler asked McLellan what the crisis unit was doing now to address the issues, some of which Gelsler said did not require funding to improve.

McLellan, pointing to particular feedback indicating that crisis unit residents did not appear to spend enough time in "meaningful engagement" in the community, said the unit is still trying to get more information.

McLellan said she believed on average a crisis unit resident has 10 hours a month of "meaningful engagement," which the consultant considered low and which McLellan

said was not an "acceptable" number of hours.

It's possible there are a variety of reasons for that low number, McLellan said — there may not be enough staff or transportation to support many community outings, for example.

A representative from the consultancy is expected to attend the next task force meeting to discuss the findings.

McLellan also qualified her report to the task force, saying it was based on her conversations with the consultant, and that the recommendations may look different when compiled into a final report.

The Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.

# Coast River Inn debuts new look with 'budget boutique' style

## Remodeled hotel seeks to fill a niche

By **KATHERINE LACAZE**  
For The Daily Astorian

SEASIDE — Here's one boutique hotel geared to be affordable.

Hotelier Masudur Khan, managing director of Seaside Lodging, purchased the Coast River Inn and adjacent River View Inn on Holladay Drive and Avenue G as a package deal in August 2015. The two properties and accompanying buildings were combined to create the 42-bedroom "budget boutique" hotel, designed to attract guests in the mid-scale level, Khan said.

Khan was first offered the properties about three years ago. He declined but changed his mind after recognizing potential in the lodging facilities, which were not receiving adequate use or attention.

"One day I thought, 'Maybe I'll take this and see what happens,'" he said, adding he hoped to improve the buildings' aesthetics to appeal to travelers along Holladay, a main thoroughfare in Seaside. "This is a property you can see right away."

The Coast River Inn recently underwent an approximately \$400,000 exterior and interior face-lift after being acquired by Seaside Lodging.



This image from Seaside Lodging compares the Coast River Inn before its renovation, started last fall, and after.

The renovation began last fall, as the tourist season began to wane. Khan did not want the project to interrupt summer business, he said. Even then, the renovation focused on one building first, followed by the other, so the hotel could continue functioning throughout the remodel.

"We didn't actually shut down the whole hotel," Khan said.

About 80 percent of the renovation was completed by March, with just a few custom-made orders outstanding.

While most of the renovation took place on the exterior of the buildings, some interior



Don Frank Photography

The interior of the 42-bedroom Coast River Inn was remodeled in addition to the exterior. The rooms received new furniture, appliances, bed and bedding.

updates included new furniture, appliances and bedding, along with the installation of complimentary high-speed wireless internet.

On the outside, the buildings received new cedar staining, lighting and signage. A sidewalk was installed to connect the former River View Inn to the original Coast River Inn building. The hotel was given a new logo and orange color scheme, which was incorporated into the landscaping.

Guests wanting to tour Seaside can use the hotel's new complimentary bike rental service. Management initially purchased two bikes, unsure how the service would be received. Before long, they were compelled to increase the stock from two to seven to meet demand.

"Guests like to explore Seaside" on the bicycles, said

Kaarina Vera, the sales, marketing and revenue manager.

With the addition of the Coast River Inn, Seaside Lodging's portfolio of independent hotels grew to four, including the Inn at Seaside, the River Inn at Seaside and the City Center Motel. Each lodging facility is targeted toward a different market segment, from economy to upper midscale.

With a fairly central location but few amenities, such as a swimming pool or complimentary breakfast, Khan said the Coast River Inn appeals to a younger, modern crowd looking for something new in Seaside that is reasonably priced for the market.

"They're getting good rooms," Khan added. "It's not too crowded and it's quiet."

Under new management and with the renovation,



Submitted Photo

The Coast River Inn offers a bike service, which gives guests use of the bikes for an hour for free.

the Coast River Inn's rating among Seaside hotels has steadily increased during the past six months. While it formerly sat near the bottom, it was ranked No. 10 on TripAdvisor recently, although the ratings can frequently fluctuate.

Under Seaside Lodging's ownership, the property has increased employment with the addition of eight to 10 full-time employees. While previously the properties housed longer-term tenants for weeks or months at a time, the Coast River Inn now focuses on the more traditional hotel model of guests staying only a few days, which contributes a significant lodging tax increase to the city. Now that the renovation is finished, Khan said, "we are expecting higher occupancy next year."

# City Council gives the nod to design work on trestle repairs

## Work needed for trolley to run next year

By **DERRICK DePLEDGE**  
The Daily Astorian

The city has set in motion the trestle repairs necessary for the Astoria Riverfront Trolley to operate next year.

The City Council on Monday night approved more than \$23,000 for design services on a construction project estimated to cost \$319,500. The city will use tourism money in the Promote Astoria fund to finance the project.

The city will focus on the 3 miles of track and four trestles used by the trolley between Portway Street and 39th Street. Councilors sepa-

rately approved about \$14,500 for repairs to the trestle along the Astoria Riverwalk near Alderbrook.

"If the trolley is going to run this next summer, this work has to happen," City Manager Brett Estes said.

Annual maintenance costs will approach about \$276,000 over the next decade. The city is in talks with the trolley association about sharing the costs.

"Well this is definitely a tough pill to swallow," City Councilor Zetty Nemlowill said. "It's not the first time we've heard about it, but the Riverwalk is of utmost priority in Astoria, so I don't see that we have any other choice but to award this contract tonight."

The city is also doing about \$206,000 in emergency repair work to wooden bridges on the

north ends of Sixth through 11th streets near the Riverwalk. The work is a temporary fix while the city moves forward with a \$12 million project to replace the short, street-end bridges over the next few years.

In other business Monday night:

• The City Council updated a legal services contract with City Attorney Blair Henningsgaard. The agreement includes a \$3,000 pay raise, from \$84,000 to \$87,000 a year. The rate Henningsgaard charges to handle nonroutine city matters will also go up by \$10 an hour, from \$180 to \$190 an hour.

# Recreational marijuana sales reach \$160 million this year

Associated Press

EUGENE — Marijuana dispensaries have sold more than \$160 million worth of recreational marijuana so far this year.

The Register-Guard reported that according to sales tax figures released Monday by the state Department

of Revenue, more than \$160 million worth of pot was sold in the first nine months of the year, bringing in \$40.2 million in sales tax payments.

State-regulated medical marijuana dispensaries charge a 25 percent sales tax to customers for recreational marijuana products.

The figures come weeks

after the Oregon Liquor Control Commission licensed the first retailers in its recreational marijuana program. Those retailers charge a 17 percent state sales tax for all recre-

ational marijuana products.

Medical dispensaries must become licensed with the OLCC if they want to continue to sell recreational pot in 2017.

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