

# Candidates: Housing scarcity poses unique problem

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## Can't please everyone

Jones, a retired U.S. Coast Guard commander, has canvassed door-to-door on the east side. Housing, he said, is the most critical issue identified by the residents he spoke with.

But, in Astoria, the housing scarcity poses a unique problem for politicians:

"There's not a single option you can think of to address this issue which isn't going to upset a constituency. Not a single one," he said.

Therefore, he continued, "you have to decide: Do we either just say we're not going to do anything about it, or do we accept the fact we're going to make a few people unhappy and just try to mitigate that as best as possible? I'm in favor of that approach."

Jones said he supports exploring the recommendations, laid out last year in Astoria's housing study, that could put a dent in the problem.

These include setting up an ad hoc housing task force that could identify locations for affordable housing and regulatory changes to stimulate affordable housing.

Jones does not believe the shortage can be seriously dealt with unless the city looks at high-density housing, whether in abandoned downtown buildings or on the scant parcels of developable land



**Bruce Bobek**



**Deborah Boone**



**Tom Brownson**



**Bruce Jones**



**Cory Pederson**

Astoria has left.

"This is a huge problem, it's not going away, and we have to do something about it," he said. "And I think the idea that we should freeze Astoria in time and not allow for any new construction is crazy. Astoria has evolved for over 200 years and will continue to evolve."

## 'A very tough situation'

Pederson, a music teacher and symphony conductor, acknowledged that, with tourists passing through and so many properties used as vacation rentals, "it's a very tough — a very tough — situation to handle."

He wondered why some vacant downtown structures have not been rehabilitated for housing purposes. He also believes the historic character of Astoria must be preserved.

"You've got a community where you want to keep the architecture," he said. "You want to keep the style. You want to keep the originality of

it. That's apparent. You must keep that — that's what's so charming about Astoria."

Brownson, a retired contractor, said that "10 years ago, this didn't seem like it was going to be a problem," he said. "And it has just blossomed into a serious problem."

It is difficult, he said, to offer specific solutions to the housing crisis, but, as a city councilor, he can work to encourage development that fits the town.

"Astoria may not be where all the housing takes place," he said, "but we need to really sit down and get a good, strong vision of what we want Astoria to look like."

Brownson said the city should reach out to housing development corporations that can help sort out the challenges to building new housing.

## 'A group effort'

Bobek, a physician and president of the medical staff at Columbia Memorial Hos-

pital, said the lack of housing is a statewide issue. He noted that several coastal communities have made the creation of more housing units a goal.

When it comes to policies related to zoning and housing density, communities looking to increase the housing stock need to "be a little bit flexible," said Bobek, a former Warrenton city commissioner.

"Where we have land, we should build (housing)," he said, adding: "This is going to be a group effort."

Boone, who has served as the District 32 representative since 2004, suggested turning to Oregon Solutions, whose mission is "to develop sustainable solutions to community-based problems that support economic, environmental, and community objectives and are built through the collaborative efforts of businesses, government, and non-profit organizations." (Flood mitigation in the Tillamook Basin, for example, was one such problem.)

A group of stakeholders, convened by the governor, would meet to discuss how best to resolve the issue. Boone, whose background is in construction and oceanography, has worked with Oregon Solutions.

In addition, state agencies that deal with land use and development would make good partners in the effort to create more housing, she said.

"There's a lot of opportunities out there," she said.

## Jobs

Garner asked the panel what they can do to help bring sustainable industry to the area, and provide living wages to residents.

Boone said her go-to sector is renewable energy. The state is working to ensure its largest utilities provide 50 percent of their electricity through certified renewable resources by 2040.

"It's just the way of the future, I think," she said.

The renewable energy sec-

tor, she said, needs educated workers, such as engineers, and will provide portable, well-paying jobs.

Boone, the legislative lead on the Oregon Resilience Plan, added the state will need these skilled workers to prepare for the Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake, which is likely to take down transmission lines, possibly for years.

Bobek said Oregon needs angel investors to enter the state and promote small businesses. The state, he added, should embrace new technologies, as well.

Jones said the most exciting thing happening in Astoria right now is the city's economic development strategy, "Advance Astoria."

"I think there's a great potential to attract small firms — white-collar and blue-collar firms — to Astoria, (work) together holistically with all those different partners that are on the economic development team, and to bring living-wage jobs to our community that would also help the city's taxes."

Brownson agreed that "Advance Astoria" is a good start. One of the strategy's goals is to diversify local industry.

He said it is tempting to ride the wave of tourism "because here it is." But, in his view, the city should try to attract businesses that will continue to thrive if tourism drops.

# Seafood: Per capita consumption in US went up by nearly a pound

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Landings and the value of the seafood landed were positive, Merrick said, and recreational fisheries on both sides of the country remained strong.

Pollock, menhaden and salmon topped the list for volume of landings, while lobsters, crab and shrimp were the most valuable of landings. Alaska, of course, led all the states in both value of landings — \$1.8 billion — and in quantity of commercial landings.

Per capita consumption of seafood by Americans went up by nearly a whole pound and U.S. commercial fishermen landed 9.7 billion pounds in ports scattered across the nation for a value of \$244 million, an increase in landings but a decrease in value as compared to 2014.

## West Coast landings

Zoom in on the West Coast, however, and the story becomes more nuanced.

Astoria overtook Newport as the top West Coast port for commercial fishing. Astoria recorded 92 million pounds of commercial fish, the 13th highest mark in the nation. The catch was down from 122 million pounds in 2014, when the city was the 12th highest.

The value of Astoria's commercial catch was \$38 million, down from \$43 million in 2014.

Newport had 65 million pounds of commercial fish — 21st — down from 124 million pounds in 2014. Newport's catch also declined in value, dropping to \$33 million, down from \$53 million in 2014.

Westport, Washington, recorded 84 million pounds of commercial fish, down from 100 million pounds in 2014. The value of the commercial catch in Westport increased to \$65 million, up from \$64 million in 2014.

Illwaco-Chinook, Washington, had 15 million pounds of commercial fish, down from 27 million in 2014.

Fishermen on the Pacific saw strong halibut and salmon seasons. Commercial landings of salmon, in particular, were up by 345 million pounds across the West Coast, though for both Oregon and Washington state there was a decrease in salmon landed. On the recreational side of things, anglers took 4 million trips and caught over 14 million fish in California, Oregon and Washington state. The bulk of these trips — roughly 92 percent — occurred in California.

Still, the NOAA study



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Washington State Climatologist Nick Bond was the first to apply the 1950s movie monster name "The Blob" to a disruptive zone of warm water off the Pacific Northwest coast.

records declines in landings for many fisheries here while the Pacific sardine fishery closed entirely, as did the Dungeness crab fishery for a time.

## Year of the Blob

For fishermen based on Oregon's North Coast and in southwest Washington at the mouth of the Columbia River, 2015 was the year of the Blob, a persistent expanse of warm water that began in the Gulf of Alaska in 2013 and moved south in 2014. It brought tropical and subtropical strangers to Oregon and Washington's chilly waters: moonfish, swordfish and even several very hypothermic Olive Ridley turtles.

The Blob, a name coined by Washington state climatologist Nick Bond, persisted off the Oregon and Washington coasts throughout 2015, helped out by the arrival of El Niño conditions. For sockeye and summer-run Chinook migrating back to the Columbia River that summer, it proved deadly.

Drought, believed to be related to the unusually warm water off the coast, meant low-flowing, uncomfortably warm rivers and streams for the returning salmon. Coho returns to the Columbia River that fall were the lowest in 25 years, according to NOAA, while the impacts on young salmon that migrated to the ocean that spring and summer will not be known for several more years.

And then there was the largest and most widespread harmful algal bloom NOAA believes has ever been recorded.

Fisheries biologists noted high levels of the naturally-oc-

curing marine toxin domoic acid in razor clams and, ultimately, shut down popular razor clam digs in both Oregon and Washington. When the toxin was later seen in Dungeness crab at unsafely high levels, fishery managers closed or severely limited the lucrative crab fisheries in California, Oregon and Washington.

Fishermen and fishing communities in all three states are still feeling the effects. Domoic acid levels continued to fluctuate into 2016, delaying the start of the Dungeness crab season this year in Oregon and Washington. And razor clam digs in both states were closed again recently because of high levels of the toxin.

But in fishing, an activity always at the mercy of a host of constantly shifting factors, there's usually some good mixed in with the uncertain: One big persistent problem that plagued 2015 could be finally going away.

As recent storms have swept through the area, churning up the ocean, the Blob "appears to be breaking down," said Toby Garfield, director of environmental research at NOAA's Southwest Fisheries Science Center.

And, as the Pacific Northwest leaves El Niño behind and enters La Niña conditions, strong upwelling and the more frequent storms associated with La Niña conditions could help keep large algal blooms and domoic acid scarce at bay.

Such blooms are dependent on weather conditions, Garfield said, and it looks like the West Coast is returning to "more normal conditions. But, he added, "We won't know until farther into the spring."



Stephanie Yao Long/The Oregonian  
Joseph Tanner, center, survived a shark attack while surfing on the Oregon Coast earlier this month. With him were West Woodworth, who helped pull Tanner from the ocean; Roye Ely, Tanner's mother; and Stephen Tanner, father.

# Surfer: Shark missed bone, key nerves

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"I just paddled my life away. That was probably the scariest moment, trying to get back to the shore and leaving a trail of blood," Tanner said. "I couldn't lift up my arms anymore and I just rolled off my board in six inches of water and people came from all over."

## Directing care

Tanner, a critical care nurse at Legacy Emmanuel Hospital's intensive care unit, immediately began telling his rescuers what to do.

He directed them to make a tourniquet from a T-shirt and, when that wasn't tight enough, he told them to make another out of the leash from his board.

Six people used a surfboard like a backboard and carried him up a steep slope

and over rocky ground to the parking lot above.

While they waited for help, Tanner had them call the ambulance and provide his blood type in case he needed a transfusion.

He also told them to cut off his wetsuit so paramedics could start an IV when they arrived.

All the while, Tanner could feel himself getting weaker, he recalled.

"I started getting lightheaded and that freaked me out because I know that's the first sign of shock," Tanner said.

When paramedics arrived, Tanner insisted that the rescue helicopter fly him to Legacy Emmanuel, where he knows the trauma staff.

"I remember being in the trauma bay and two of my co-workers were on either side

of me. They were in drapes and lights and they literally looked angelic. It was like a breath of relief to see these familiar faces," Tanner said.

He required three surgeries and will need physical therapy, but the shark missed his bone and key nerves.

No one got a good look at the shark, but Tanner said he's been told by several experts that it was likely a great white, based on the jaw mark on his leg.

As he recovers, Tanner hopes other surfers can learn from his experience.

All surfers should know how to tie a tourniquet and know their blood type — and a thick wetsuit doesn't hurt, he added.

"I wore the thickest wetsuit that they sell," he said. "That wetsuit quite possibly saved my life."

## PAM ACKLEY

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- ★ Support building, fishing & forestry industries
- ★ Work to solve juvenile substance abuse in our community

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