

Port: There are now three active court cases regarding the inn

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Because of that, the Port claims, Smithart is no longer entitled to limitations on personal liability from his former limited liability company. The Port also claims that Smithart distributed some or all of the assets of Hospitality Masters to himself, making them fair game as the agency seeks repayment. Smithart owns the Arc Arcade downtown, which he opened while operating the hotel.

The Port seeks \$322,981 from

Smithart for the breach of contract, along with 9 percent annual interest and a 5 percent fee on each overdue payment. For Smithart's operations after Hospitality Masters' dissolution, the Port seeks \$73,999, along with interest and late charges.

Smithart was not immediately available for comment.

Hotel suits

The Port's action now makes three active court cases regarding the Astoria Riverwalk Inn.

The city of Astoria filed for judg-

ment against Smithart last week, seeking \$118,331 in outstanding room taxes. Smithart had agreed in June to pay the city back or face judgment.

The Port's action against Smithart comes while the agency is being sued by Portland-based Param Hotel Corp. The company had courted Smithart since late 2014, offering to pay off his debts in exchange for the two remaining years and five-year extension in his lease.

The Port Commission voted in June 2015 to transfer Smithart's

remaining lease to Param, but the deal never materialized. The Port's attorney claims Param canceled contract negotiations before they were completed. Param's lawyer claims the Port wrongfully walked away from a binding agreement.

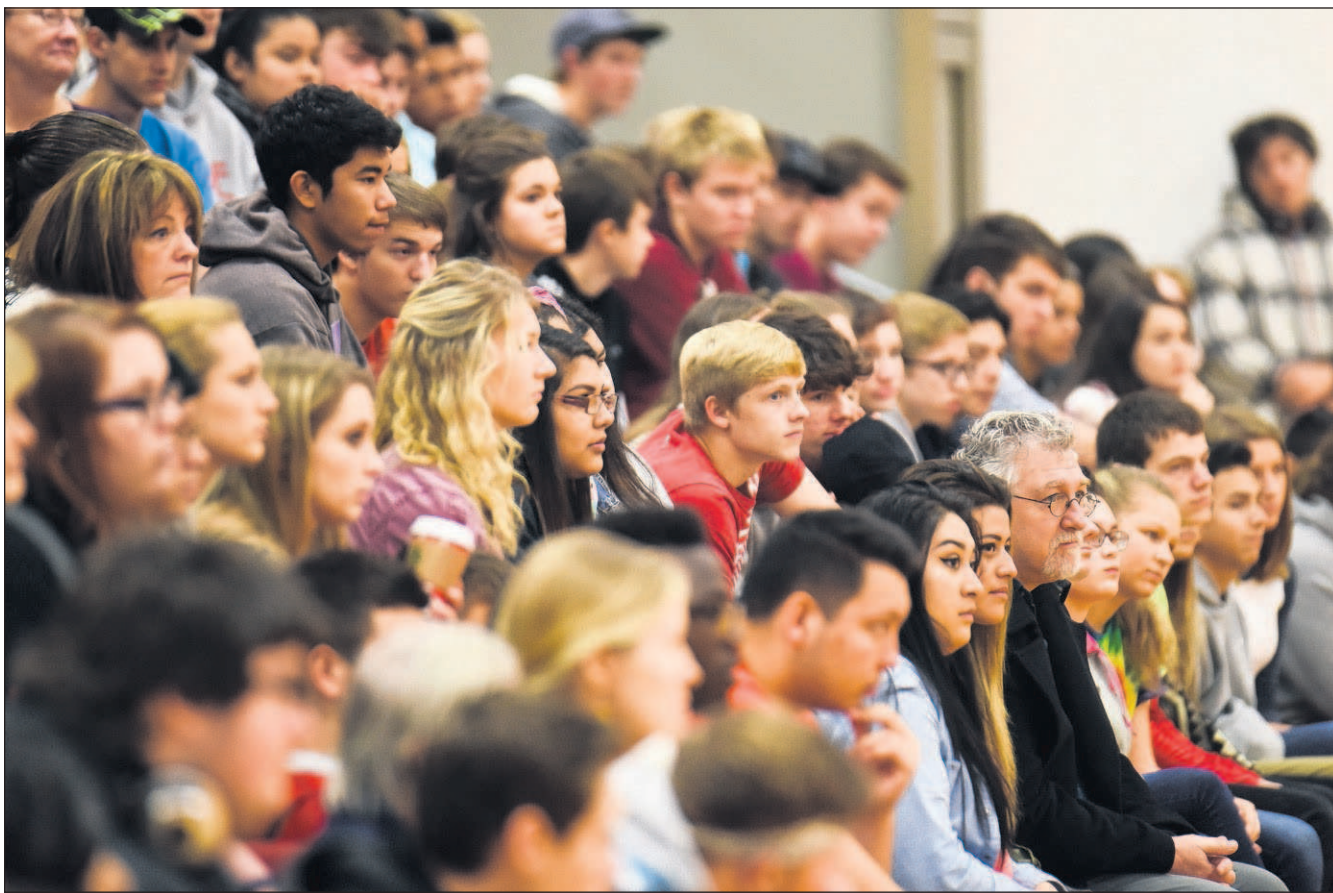
In September 2015, the Port Commission instead chose Astoria Hospitality Ventures to run the Riverwalk Inn temporarily while staff prepared to advertise for long-term operators. The company is run by William Orr, an Astoria native and Seattle businessman in the fishing

industry, and Chester Trabucco, the former developer behind the Hotel Elliott and the Nos. 1 and 10 Sixth St. waterfront commercial complex.

Param sued the Port and Hospitality Ventures a year ago, claiming the agency showed local bias toward Orr and Trabucco. Orr is the brother-in-law of Port Commissioner Stephen Fulton, and purported by Param to be a friend of Commissioner Bill Hunsinger.

The Port, Param and Hospitality Ventures are scheduled for a week-long trial in February.

Shakespeare: 'The students surprise me with how astute and aware they are'



ABOVE: Seaside High School students and faculty listen to actors from the Oregon Shakespeare Festival perform during an assembly on Wednesday at Seaside High School.

RIGHT: Kristin Hammargren, left, and David Huynh, with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, perform in front of the school during an assembly Wednesday at Seaside High School.

Photos by Danny Miller
The Daily Astorian



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As an exercise to get in the ancient Roman spirit, students played "assassins," in which certain students slayed senators with a deadly wrist tap. Huynh encouraged students to "be big and bold."

Students dramatically doubled over and fell onto the padded floor after their "assassination," crying out as they died gruesome "deaths" during the otherwise nonverbal game.

Next, students in six groups read and acted out "freeze frames" from three different takes on the same event: a festival where a character offers the crown to Caesar. To see how the point of view can alter a story, students performed the perspectives of Greek biographer Plutarch and Shakespeare characters Mark Antony and Casca, who have opposing opinions. Students then analyzed how each person felt about aspects of the story.

"I learned about what the people thought about Caesar," Mica Paranal said after the workshop. "It was interesting how we played the assassins game."

It was Paola Campuzano's first time participating in an Oregon Shakespeare Festival workshop. Certain classes, primarily English and drama, take part in the program.

"I liked it because it summed up the play," she said. "I read it sophomore year, but I don't really remember it."

Meant to be seen

In a performance for all students and staff, the actors — playing multiple characters — performed scenes from Shakespeare's "Romeo and

Juliet," "As You Like It," and more, alongside modern references. Students said they enjoyed a Star Wars-inspired part and a humorously awkward love scene.

In the afternoon, Hammargren and Huynh led another workshop and performed an abridged "Julius Caesar."

"The workshops are great because you get a chance to give them some hands-on experience with the text, which can sometimes be very intimidating," Hammargren said. "We've got all these great ways of breaking down the text and making it physical. It ends up being fun and rewarding for us to see the students understanding it and being able to discuss it."

"Sometimes the students surprise me with how astute and aware they are," Huynh said. "Some of the best talks that we've had on the three perspectives involve subconscious bias and how that shapes our world view."

English teacher Susan Baertlein appreciates the impact the program has.

"To see actual Shakespearean actors at our school and have all our students exposed to that is huge," she said. "It's enjoyable for the staff, and the students get a lot out of it."

Baertlein said it's important for students to see Shakespeare performed, as his works are "meant to be seen, not read."

"The way they do their workshops and performances, there's a focus on the big ideas from the text and not all of the little details that weigh kids down," Baertlein said. "Focusing on the themes and the point of the whole play, what message they are trying to convey, helps the students understand it better."

Job growth: Oregon still outpaces most other states in terms of employment growth

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propose a balanced budget on Dec. 1, and that it will accommodate the revenue shortfall. That shortfall was approximately \$1.3 billion before the election but with the fiscal impact of ballot measures that passed, it is now closer to \$1.7 billion, Grainger said in an email.

That budget shortfall comes from increased health-care costs, including the state's share of the cost to implement the Affordable Care Act after federal funds for start-up vanish;

the fiscal impact of ballot measures that specify and redirect state spending; and the Public Employees Retirement System unfunded liability, Grainger said.

A remedy to the shortfall that Brown had backed — Measure 97, that would have brought in billions in corporate sales taxes — was rejected in last week's election.

The forecast said new employment data and state income tax withholdings from paychecks of Oregonians show the economic slowdown is already here. While Oregon's

labor market growth is slowing somewhat, the state is at or near full employment. "Going forward, slower, more sustainable growth rates are expected to be the norm," said the forecast compiled by the Office of Economic Analysis of the Department of Administrative Services.

Not sustainable

State economist Mark McMullen said high growth rates measured in previous assessments of Oregon's economy were not sustainable. Oregon still outpaces most other

states in terms of employment growth.

As employment improves, poverty rates may also start to improve, and caseloads for state services may also decrease, though such changes are only starting to take root.

State economists have noted in the past that economic improvements also take longer to manifest in the state's rural communities.

Income for Oregonians with the lowest 20 percent of incomes and middle 20 percent of incomes are improving, although they've not reached

precession levels.

McMullen noted that last week's election of Donald Trump as president presented a "wild card": the economist said it is too early to tell how the president-elect's specific policies could impact the national and state economies.

Trump promised tax cuts as well as major infrastructure investments during the campaign.

Currently, state revenues are expected to land within \$8 million of the estimate from the close of the last legislative session. The slowdown had been

expected and was built into the baseline forecast.

Brown said the 2017-19 budget that she will propose "will reflect my top priority — investing in kids and lifting families out of poverty — but will necessarily include a level of program cuts I find unacceptable."

She said she has started discussions with legislative leaders about how "to better align state resources with our aspirations for a stronger, better Oregon."

Claire Withycombe of our Capital Bureau contributed to this report.

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