

Astoria to study water main resiliency

Earthquake, landslide, erosion potential causing concern for city

By ERICK BENGEL
The Daily Astorian

The Astoria City Council is looking to determine how vulnerable a city water main would be during an earthquake — and to identify new transmission routes less likely to fail.

At Tuesday's meeting, the council passed a resolution accepting a \$15,500 grant from the state Infrastructure Finance Authority to fund a

resiliency study of the 12-mile-long line that conveys water from the Bear Creek watershed east of town to reservoirs No. 2 and 3.

The council also authorized the city to award a contract to Hart Crowser, an engineering firm, to conduct a study of that segment of water infrastructure.

An additional \$4,500 from the city's engineering budget will complete the projected \$20,000 scope of work.

"I think this is a really, really, really important project ... not just for a large seismic event, but for things happening right now, like erosion and landslides and other things that threaten the water main," City Councilor Zetty Nemlowill said.

A staff report notes that the city has already experienced a waterline failure because of landslide activity, and a potential failure because of stream erosion.

Nemlowill said she imagines that, once the study is completed, "we're going to find out that it would be really expensive to replace or upgrade the water main."

In other business, the City Council:

- Held a first reading on an ordinance to increase the city manager's spending authority from \$10,000 — the amount it has remained at since 1999 — to \$50,000.

Ten thousand dollars, Mayor Arline LaMear said, "isn't much these days."

By contrast, Warrenton's city man-

ager has a \$25,000 spending authority, Clatsop County's enjoys \$30,000, Seaside \$50,000 and Cannon Beach \$50,000.

• Revised city policy on how departments apply for grants.

Going forward, department heads won't have to come before the City Council if a grant they seek does not require a cash-match commitment from the city; staff will instead be able to apply for grants directly.

For grants that do have a cash-match commitment, the proposal would be forwarded to the council for consideration.

• Held a second reading of an ordinance revising city code to reflect "preponderance of the evidence" as the burden of proof that must be

met in determining whether a dog is dangerous.

Recently, an owner whose dog had been identified by the Astoria Police Department as dangerous appealed the classification. Municipal Court Judge Kris Kaino pointed out a lack of guidance in city code for a burden-of-proof standard to apply.

The code was amended to include the "preponderance of the evidence standard" — rather than the more stringent "clear and convincing evidence" or "beyond a reasonable doubt" standards.

• Held a second reading of an ordinance allowing for the collection and enforcement of a 3-percent marijuana sales tax approved by voters in November.



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

The Port of Astoria will remain in a \$1.4 billion timber suit against the state.

Timber suit: Potential conflict of interest declared in session

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Superintendent Alice Hunsaker said the school district would decide this week.

Port commissioners met in executive session to discuss the lawsuit with Linn County Commissioner Roger Nyquist and attorney John DiLorenzo.

While commissioners did not explain their decision publicly, Commissioner Stephen Fulton, who works for Warrenton Fiber, declared a potential conflict of interest.

"There are hundreds of companies and thousands of employees that have financial connections to activities associated with harvesting in the Ore-

gon state forests," Fulton said in a prepared statement. "My employer is a small member of that class."

In other news:

• The Port Commission voted to have staff enter negotiations with air medevac service Life Flight Network for a new hangar on a patch of land at the south end of the Astoria Regional Airport in Warrenton. The site is seen by staff and a majority of the Port Commission as preferential for Life Flight and future airport development, but comes with an additional estimated price tag of anywhere between \$650,000 to about \$1 million to mitigate wetland issues, extend utilities

and develop surrounding infrastructure. The Port has not identified where that money will come from.

• The Port Commission voted unanimously to subordinate its security interest in Englund Marine & Industrial Supply's building on Portway Avenue, along with equipment, to a lender, as the company undergoes a reorganization. The approval of the subordination is contingent on review by the Port's attorney. Shane Jensen, the Port's property manager, said the subordination of interest does not include the Port's land underneath Englund Marine's building.

Closure: 'We will continue to test each beach on a regular basis and will open as soon as we can'

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draw up to 30,000 people to Washington's beaches, according to state figures, with a high percentage coming to Long Beach.

"It's my understanding that this beach will host anywhere from 10,000 to 15,000 on a given day," Tom Downer, president of Jack's country store, said. The longstanding general merchandise store is situated near a popular beach access point in Ocean Park. The precipitous drop in tourism has had an impact on sales.

"We notice the absence," he said.

Staff impacted

The lost revenue eventually trickles into payroll.

"Every dollar of revenue translates into payroll. When business is slower, we don't have as many people on staff," Downer said.

"It affects our crew as much as it affects anybody." Despite recent dips in revenue, Downer has been able to retain their 34 full-time staff. Other businesses, including one that has built their name around the razor clam industry, haven't been as fortunate.

"The difference between having clams and not having clams is an 85 percent difference in our income from month to month," Sportsmen's Cannery owner Tina Ward said. "It's very significant."

The family-owned and operated cannery regularly employs five or six local workers during the open clam dig dates to clean and custom can or vacuum pack clams.

"All of those people are out of work now," Ward said.

"They're dying to get back to work whether it's seven days or just the weekend. The hours are unlimited as long as the product is there."

Less traffic

The business has also missed the brisk traffic a busy clamming weekend can bring when passersby notice and stop at their Seaview store.

"For our business, it brings in a lot of extra traffic that buys our smoked products and other things we have available," Ward said. "The retail aspect is considerably down from not having the foot traffic coming in the building."

While many restaurants and small businesses are struggling, the impact isn't lost on local retailers.

"Usually on clam tide we can count on a few thousand dollars increase on every day," Dennis Co. store manager Glen Admire said. Clamming isn't the backbone of business for Dennis Co., but it can provide an important boost before the spring planting season, according to Admire.

"It's a huge bonus, but it's not anything we count on or have to have because we

never know when we're going to get them anyways."

The unpredictability of the clamming season has led local tourism experts to promote other local recreational experiences.

"We try to talk about our fresh, local food, our beaches, parks and trails — things that are available all the time," Long Beach Peninsula Visitors Bureau executive director Andi Day said. "This is a perfect example of why."

Domoic delay

The continued closure of razor clamming on the Long Beach Peninsula is due to elevated levels of domoic acid, a naturally occurring toxin. The latest Long Beach samples show domoic levels dropping but still at or above the 20 parts per million limit deemed unsafe by the state Department of Health.

"We remain very disappointed that we've been unable to open Long Beach at all this season and offer no digging at Twin Harbors since early November," said Dan Ayres, a state coastal shellfish manager.

"We have not seen any new domoic acid producing harmful algae species since September and we are all just waiting for razor clams to rid themselves of the toxin they picked up then. We will continue to test each beach on a regular basis and will open as soon as we can," Ayres said.

Director: 'I love being in Astoria'

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Universal arts access

Originally from Grand Rapids, Michigan, Jones-Centeno, 51, moved to Astoria with her husband a year ago to serve as the interim managing director of the Astoria Music Festival. She had worked for the festival since 2009.

She holds a master's degree in music from the University of Oregon and is now pursuing her Ph.D. in musicology with a supporting area in arts administration. She commutes to Oregon State University in Corvallis, where she gives music lessons.

In Eugene, Jones-Centeno co-founded Cascadia Concert Opera and, while involved with the Eugene Opera, developed the Eugene Opera Academy, which teaches high schoolers what it means to put on an opera production. She would like to begin a similar program at the Liberty.

Last month, Gov. Kate Brown appointed her to the Oregon Cultural Trust Board of Directors.

As for the second reason she choose Astoria as the place to ply her trade:



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

Bereniece Jones-Centeno, the artistic director of the Liberty Theater, and Jennifer Crockett, the theater's executive director, will be helping to shape the Liberty's identity in the coming years.

"When you're a person, like me, who loves the arts, and you want to make sure everybody gets an opportunity to enjoy it, as you've had access, what becomes important to you is to be in a location where you can actually use your skills, your gifts, your talents — what drives you to make you wake up every day — and that's what Astoria does for me. I get to do something with what is important to me.

"So, while I love Portland

and I love Eugene, I enjoy going to those places and sitting on my butt and letting somebody else do the work," she said, laughing. "I love to watch the ballets and that kind of thing. But then I love being in a place that really needs someone to help them grow ...

"So that's why I love being in Astoria: It's a place where I get to spread my wings a little bit, help develop things, in a community that's just beautiful."

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