



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

Plans call for a video poker area with four lottery machines in a new Gearhart brew pub.

Gearhart to schedule poker date

Owner's appeal to be heard by City Council

By R.J. MARX
The Daily Astorian

GEARHART — Video poker will be on the agenda for the City Council in April as councilors decide whether to permit four lottery machines in a new brew pub.

A special session was held Wednesday to determine the next step as Gearhart hears an appeal by property owner Terry Lowenberg of a Planning Commission decision blocking the machines in his brew pub.

Lowenberg, who closed the former Gearhart Grocery in December, received a permit for his brew pub at 599 Pacific Way last spring.

In December, he sought to add four video lottery machines.

Lowenberg said he needed the machines to make his proposed brew pub profitable.

The city responded that installation of four poker lottery machines will devote space to "adult-only activity" that may operate in conflict with surrounding properties. "The machines encourage drinking and conflict with the family-friendly character described in the original proposal," City Planner Carole Connell wrote in a staff report.

Poker lottery machines are not in compliance with some of the city's comprehensive plan policies, the planner added. "Further there is no evidence of demand for the machines in the central city core ... The city finds gambling stations

that encourage alcohol consumption do not coincide with the intent of a neighborhood cafe as defined."

Planning commissioners agreed and denied Lowenberg's request 5-2. They said the lottery machines could open the door to gambling downtown. Others were skeptical that video poker could "prop up" Lowenberg's failing business.

In an appeal, Lowenberg said the city lacked evidence to deny the machines based on studies linking gambling and drinking. The staff report, he wrote, "sounds like it was written by an angry citizen firmly against lottery machines."

Wednesday's meeting limited the council's hearing to public testimony already on the record, one of four available council actions. "The default for appeal of the Planning Commission decision is review of the record," City Attorney Peter Watts said.

Under this option, the record will include all comments and correspondence presented at earlier hearings. "That means you will see in written form everything the Planning Commission saw. Both parties will be able to testify, but will not be able to introduce new information," Watts said.

Others council options could have been to present additional evidence, conduct a new hearing or send the appeal back to the Planning Commission.

"We have a consensus, which is the recommendation of attorney and staff," Mayor Matt Brown said.

"Staff will work immediately on trying to schedule that," City Administrator Chad Sweet. "I'll do my best to get it in April."

Astoria schools add two days back to year

The Daily Astorian

The Astoria School Board voted Wednesday to add back two student days, after three were canceled because of icy weather. The board added March 6,

previously a teacher in-service day, and June 15, which will extend the school year by one day.

Visit www.astoria.k12.or.us for the revised 2016-17 school calendar.

Women's prison focus of state summit, legislative session

Researcher recommends gender-focused treatment

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

SALEM — The women's prison population has tripled in the past two decades because of sentencing reforms and a criminal justice system that is biased against women, according to a criminal justice reform researcher.

The increase is "not the result of women becoming more violent or becoming more problematic, but the fact that our sentencing laws have changed and our policies around the war on drugs has also been a war on women, particularly on women of color," said Emily Salisbury, a criminal justice associate professor at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Salisbury's provocative statement during an address at Oregon's Justice Reinvestment Summit Thursday is salient to crucial decisions lawmakers will make this legislative session.

Lawmakers will have to decide whether to spend \$17.5 million into opening a

second women's prison at the old Oregon State Penitentiary Minimum Security facility in Salem.

The state's only existing women's prison, Coffee Creek Correctional Institution in Wilsonville, has been chronically over capacity for more than a year. The population on Thursday stood at 1,290, about 10 over the limit, according to the Department of Corrections.

Meanwhile, the state faces a nearly \$1.8 billion revenue shortfall, and the state's justice reinvestment funding is at risk of reduction or elimination this budget cycle, said state budget writer Sen. Richard Devlin, D-Tualatin.

Yet lawmakers from both parties are rallying behind efforts to avoid opening another prison and to maintain funding for the criminal justice reform initiative.

"I am very excited about the fact that both Democrats and Republicans, men and women, are saying to me: Let's figure out how we can avoid opening a second women's prison, and I am like, hallelujah," said Gov. Kate Brown in a phone interview with the EO Media Group/Pamplin Media Group Capital Bureau.

"I would just say the opening of that facility is at a time

when the state resources are already limited and is contrary to Oregon's approach of justice reinvestment and focus on reducing recidivism and supporting self-sufficiency."

After seeing the turnout of 1,000 registrants at Thursday's summit, Brown said she is "confident the Legislature will continue to fund Justice Reinvestment."

The governor's proposed budget includes about \$32 million for justice reinvestment grants for counties in the next two years. Brown said that if the state can avoid opening the second women's prison, she would propose adding the savings from that to the \$32 million.

The justice reinvestment initiative came out of a 2013 law that expanded early release programs, lowered penalties for certain property and drug possession crimes and authorized about \$55 million in grants since 2013 to pay for counties to set up and enhance support services for offenders on probation and parole.

So far, the program has saved the state an estimated \$52.7 million from reducing the male and female prison population, said Rep. Duane Stark, R-Grants Pass, co-chairman of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety.

"It's a proven investment that is reducing public safety costs and improving communities," said House Majority Leader Jennifer Williamson, D-Portland. "It'd be penny-wise and pound foolish to cut funding for the program."

Salisbury, a former faculty member of Portland State University, has trained employees at the Oregon Department of Corrections in "gender-responsive strategies." Similar strategies are becoming international policy in the treatment and supervision of female offenders, Salisbury said.

"Women are far less likely to engage in violence, less likely to use a gun, or a weapon in commission of an offense, far less likely to be the kingpin or ringmaster in criminal enterprises," Salisbury said. "This, of course, doesn't mean that women shouldn't be punished or held accountable. ... But it should be recognized that they are far less dangerous, pose less of a risk to public safety and that the social and fiscal costs of their incarceration have wider implications and effects on families and their children."

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

Rural job growth expected to trail behind state through 2024

By CLAIRE WITCOMBE
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Job growth in Oregon's rural areas — particularly southeastern Oregon — is projected to trail behind the rest of the fast-growing state until 2024, according to the Oregon Employment Department.

Oregon's jobs are expected

to grow 14 percent between 2014 and 2024, more than double the national expected rate for that period.

But in Harney and Malheur counties, the number of jobs is expected to increase merely 3 percent until 2024. That's compared to 6 and 7 percent in neighboring counties to the north and west, which is a rate on par with expected job growth nationally.

Counties near the central Columbia River Gorge, meanwhile, are expected to see 11 percent job growth until 2024.

The outlook comes in the broader context of the slow post-recession jobs recovery in rural areas of the state.

While Oregon as a whole has made up the jobs it lost during the Great Recession, that's not the case for many of the state's rural areas — such as

Gilliam and Wheeler counties. But the future may be brighter for them: Both are projected to exceed the country's job growth rate until 2024.

Construction, health care and professional and business services jobs are expected to grow the fastest, according to a presentation employment department officials made to lawmakers on the state's workforce committee Thursday.

Pop-up lunch on tap for next week

The Daily Astorian

Baked Alaska, and Tongue Point Job Corps Culinary Arts program present a "Pay What You Can POP-UP Lunch" next week.

This Chef Outta Water event takes place Monday to Friday between the hours of 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. at the Baked Alaska "Annex." The Baked Alaska "Annex" is located just east of Baked Alaska at the foot of 12th St.

The purpose of this lunch is two-fold, event organizers said, is to offer students

an opportunity to learn, gain experience and be part of a diverse community, while also offering a dining experience to guests from all walks of life, regardless of their income level.

The Clatsop Community Action Regional Food Bank will be in attendance Wednesday and Thursday to distribute supplemental produce for low-income visitors to the pop-up lunch.

Chef Outta Water is a global membership program of events that celebrate food and travel through chef exchanges. This event will

take students from throughout the Northwest out of their comfort zones and give them an opportunity to learn from professional chefs on the front line. Diners will have

the opportunity to interact with the chefs, students and other diners in a family-style setting while offering a limited, made-to-order lunch menu.

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