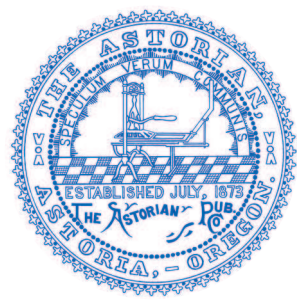


THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



DAVID F. PERO, *Publisher & Editor*
 LAURA SELLERS, *Managing Editor*
 BETTY SMITH, *Advertising Manager*
 CARL EARL, *Systems Manager*
 JOHN D. BRUIJN, *Production Manager*
 DEBRA BLOOM, *Business Manager*

OUR VIEW

Commission should have authority over ODOT's director

Oregon legislators charged with crafting a transportation package worth hundreds of millions of dollars are doing the right thing by seeking more accountability within the state Department of Transportation.

They should take the next step by including language in their transportation bill to give the Oregon Transportation Commission greater management oversight of ODOT's performance.

Several disconnects between ODOT and the Transportation Commission were detailed in a report by our Capital Bureau last week when four past Transportation Commission chairmen spoke with a subgroup of the Legislature's Joint Committee on Transportation Preservation and Modernization, which is charged with creating a passable package. The meeting's focus was to help legislators get additional insights on ODOT accountability.

According to the state's website, the commission establishes Oregon transportation policy and guides the planning, development and management of our transportation network. It meets monthly to oversee and evaluate the Department of Transportation's activities to carry out those policies.

Cry for oversight

A cry for more ODOT oversight arose in January when a \$1 million independent audit portrayed the agency as lacking in dissent and accountability, wasting money and needing greater oversight and guidance.

Two weeks prior to the audit's release current Transportation Commission Chairwoman Tammy Baney had complained to Gov. Kate Brown that the commission, whose all-volunteer members are gubernatorial appointees, needs more oversight authority of ODOT's director, who reports to the governor rather than to the commission.

In Baney's letter to the governor, she asked that Brown include the commission in evaluating ODOT Director Matt Garrett's performance.

However, according to Garrett's office as detailed in our report last week, Garrett has not received a performance evaluation since he began his tenure in 2005.

Until 1999, the ODOT director reported directly to the commission rather than to the governor, former Commission Chairman Stuart Foster told legislators. But the Legislature, after years of pressure from then-Gov. John Kitzhaber, took that authority away from the commission and placed it in the Governor's Office, Foster said. Minutes from the 1999 legislative meetings on the bill don't contain indications of the reasoning for the change.

Like a private board

In the meeting with the legislative subgroup, former Commission Chairman Mike Holleran, who served from 1987 through 1993, compared the commission to a private company's board of directors.

"You're running the place, and you are responsible to the shareholders, and then all of a sudden, someone else is appointing the director," he said.

Foster, who served as the commission's chairman from 2003 to 2007, went even further, calling the removal of the oversight of the director's position a "huge mistake."

Holleran and Foster are right, and legislators need to correct that mistake by altering the leadership structure in the transportation bill they submit.

What well-run, private-sector company doesn't evaluate its chief executive at any point during a 12-year tenure, and how would any CEO know if they were managing and leading successfully without performance reviews?

Embarrassingly, Garrett's tenure also includes the two years of Brown's governorship, so while she has publicly called for more accountability — including ordering the independent audit that was released in January with the negative findings — her leadership actions since haven't fully matched her words.

The commission is much closer to the action than the governor, and its members are qualified and in place to use the expertise they bring to those positions.

They should be allowed to do just that, and legislators should change ODOT's chain of command structure. For additional accountability in state government, they should also demand a list of any other agency heads who report to the governor who haven't been evaluated and should consider changing those leadership structures, too.

The commission is much closer to the action than the governor, and its members are qualified and in place to use the expertise they bring to those positions.



SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

No need to 'wait till next year'

By R.J. MARX
The Daily Astorian

It's a testament to just how long Seaside fans have been waiting that this is the first state basketball championship for the



Gulls' boys. They defeated nemesis Valley Catholic March 11 73-61, providing that small can be better when the right

elements come together.

For the Gulls, those elements included top starters, a marquee player in Jackson Januik, superior coaching, depth on the bench and a fan base that served as the "sixth man" at the Gulls' Nest.

Over the course of this miracle season, we had a chance to celebrate the Gulls' basketball tradition, following an arc of a school that just kept getting better and better in the march toward the hoops.

As far back as we can go in our archives, Seaside took its basketball seriously — even back in 1920 when the game was very different and the Gulls played in what was then called the Columbia League. The long-defunct Seaside Independent Basketball League kept players of all ages on the courts and barnstorming teams put on game demos in the 1930s and '40s, from the "Whiskered Wizards" to the "Redheads Lady Basketeers," surely one of the first regional advances for gender equality on the court.

Foundation for winning In the 1960s, longtime coach Larry Elliott took over Seaside's high school program from Tom House, who built the foundation for a winning tradition after coaching at Knappa. Elliott went on to lead nine tournament teams for the Gulls in 25 years.

In the days before the 3-point shot, size was king, and the Gulls built an offense around big players who could find their way inside the paint.

In a January interview, Elliott shared how the Gulls have adapted to changes in the game. Ball-handling, the run-and-gun offense, the smart percentage shots — all contributed to the team's extraordinary success.

This year's team may be the school's best ever.

"I was on the basketball team when I was in high school, but we didn't do nearly as good," City Councilor Tom Horning said.

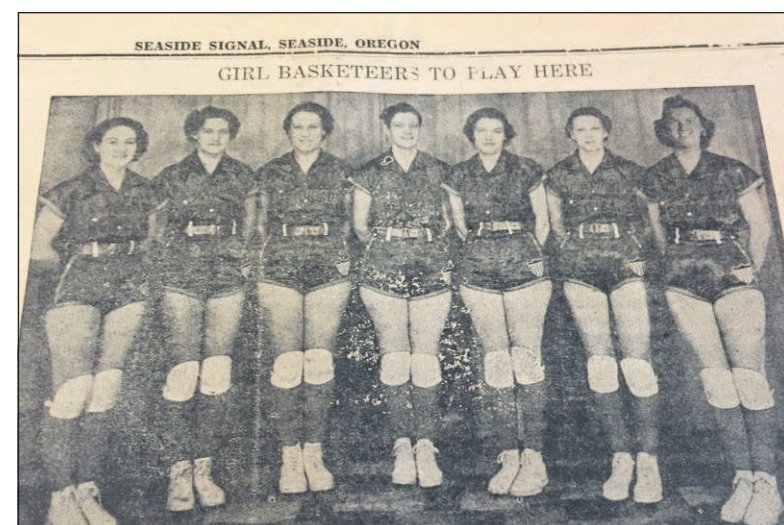
This year's championship team is "definitely" the best lineup former Gulls' star Brian Taylor has seen.

Taylor, now a school board member and basketball coach, remembers the 1993-94 team with standouts Tim Campbell, Byren Thompson and Ben Morris. "They were one of those teams that went to state every year but couldn't close the deal," Taylor said. "Last year's team had the best record. They even had some big guys, but when they went up against Philomath, they were a little bit bigger, they were a little bit faster than us."

Elusive title

Elliott's successor, Coach Bill Westerholm kept the winning tradition alive. But until this year, victory at the state championship tourney proved elusive.

"Everybody can handle the ball, even the big guys," Taylor said. "We are just scrappy, tough. We are in incredible shape. When half your team is on the cross-country and soccer team in the spring and fall, you know that when they show up on the basketball court, they're



File Photo

The Redhead Basketeers were part of the basketball craze in Seaside that stretches back to the 1920s.



Jeff Ter Har/For The Daily Astorian

Boys huddle as Coach Bill Westerholm outlines the play.



Jeff Ter Har/For The Daily Astorian

Gulls' girls and boys shared the stage.

going to be in shape and they're going to fly around. Their defensive intensity was always at the highest level and for me as a coach, that's how you coach kids to play basketball. If you can keep the other team from scoring more points than you, you're going to win every time."

Coaching is key

Coaching is the key word, as both boys' and girls' successes can be directly attributed to coaches and mentors.

To say that Seaside's fans had a role in the achievement is an understatement: turning out for every home game with enthusiasm and game savvy. The support from the Seaside community didn't hurt either — residents followed the progress of the Gulls from early on, as the boys started hot and kept getting hotter. The girls under Mike Hawes played strong, steady ball and compiled a record that carried them to the semifinals.

If they were to suffer defeat at any team's hands, it was fitting they would fall in their finale to Sutherlin, the team to take the crown.

And the city was there for the Gulls every step of the way. City Council student representative Lizzy Barnes kept officials in the loop

with her biweekly updates of school scores and activities, with every Gulls' win getting an official nod of approval.

Is it any surprise that the Gulls were greeted by a late-night motorcade as the team returned from their win in Forest Grove?

For once, there was no talk of bedtime.

What's next?

What's next for these Gulls? A visit to City Council, for one thing. They'll be invited to City Hall for the April 10 meeting. "They deserve a proclamation," Mayor Jay Barber said at the March 13 meeting.

"As I was watching it all roll out, I was thinking, 'Seaside, we're a pretty small town,'" Councilor Tita Montero said. "To have the top placer and the third-placer come from Seaside is a pretty big deal. Congratulations to all the players and coaches."

"I echo those comments," Barber said. "I just think it's a privilege to the community where we have that kind of teen sport energy."

R.J. Marx is *The Daily Astorian's* South County reporter and editor of the *Seaside Signal* and *Cannon Beach Gazette*.