

Couple: Wilkins' trial is scheduled to begin in November

Continued from Page 1A

"It's just meaning, 'Well, you may have a case, but it's not strong enough to withhold bail,'" Marquis said.

Marquis declined to discuss specific details of cases, but he did say the decision to hold a pretrial release hearing can be strategically benefi-

cial to both the prosecution and defendants.

Without the hearing, a judge presiding over a murder case would be required either to not allow bail or set it at \$50,000 at a minimum. Defendants in Oregon can be released after paying as little as 10 percent of the security amount. The bail the judge may set at the hear-

ing, then, could either benefit the defendant or backfire and make it harder to leave prison.

Benefits for the defendant, meanwhile, extend beyond a possible pretrial release. Because the state harbors the burden of proof and must present evidence of the defendant's guilt throughout the case, it alone will provide evidence at

the hearing this Friday.

The defense, as a result, may be able to see some of the state's evidence as it prepares for trial. Though he has not seen all the evidence in the case, Alexander Hamalian — a Portland lawyer who represents Copell — suspects the judge will set bail in the case. "Based on the evidence

that has been provided to the defense in this case, her participation would not lead the judge to believe she was a participant in the murder," Hamalian said.

David Rich, Wilkins' lawyer, could not be reached for comment.

Wilkins' estimated two-week trial is scheduled to begin in November. While a date has

not been set, Copell's trial will likely take place in December, according to court documents.

While confident about Friday's hearing, Hamalian said it is too soon to speculate as to the trial's outcome.

"It's way too early to think about the ends," he said. "We're still working on the means at this point."



Photos by Luke Whittaker/EO Media Group

"The key is bringing organizations together in a collaborative way to start to break down barriers that have existed and potentially driven up the cost at a lesser quality," Columbia Memorial Hospital CEO Erik Thorsen, left, said.

Awards: Recruiting providers a 'challenge'

Continued from Page 1A

"We see about 28,000 emergency room and urgent care visits a year, that's about 80 people a day," he said.

Sawa said, "I think that's a sign of the need for more primary care physicians in our community." Decreasing reimbursement and rising healthcare and pharmaceutical costs are plaguing Providence Seaside Hospital.

"It's a challenging reimbursement environment right now," he said. While the coast is a desirable destination to visit, enticing and retaining employees at a rural hospital is another hurdle for both hospitals.

"We continue to have challenges with recruiting providers to our coast," Sawa said.

"We're hopeful. It's a great place to live and be." Despite the staff shortages, Sawa doesn't anticipate any changes, but positions in primary care have been particularly needed.

"We'll continue to plug at it and make sure we'll continue access to care for our communities," he said.

Potential changes

Attempts to repeal the Affordable Care Act by the Trump administration have raised concerns about potential changes to healthcare coverage.

"We're concerned — concerned with not really knowing what the future design is going to be, but we're sure watching it very closely," Sawa said.

"I'm confident we'll be



Luke Whittaker/EO Media Group

In April, Providence Seaside Hospital will unveil a new tomosynthesis machine, which will greatly improve their ability to detect breast cancer. "It's the only one on the coast," CEO Kendall Sawa said.

able to manage any decision that's made." Changes in Medicaid are also possible, particularly with coordinated care programs.

Thorsen added, "I'm hoping that the current rhetoric at the federal level does not affect our state's ability to continue the CCO model.

"It is a potential that's out there, but hopefully it won't."

Collaboration and consolidation

A major issue for area hospitals has been an influx of mental health patients ending up in emergency rooms.

"In early 2016, we really started to talk about the behavioral health crises that exists in our community and we partnered together to start a coalition," Thorsen said. In 2016, a collaboration of local health care providers purchased a house in Warrenton and converted it into a crisis respite center.

"They might be waiting for a mental health bed to open up in Portland, and they end up waiting in the emergency room," Thorsen said.

"It's the wrong place — and the most costly place for a person to wait."

Providence Seaside and CMH have consolidated and reshuffled resources to better streamline their services.

"CMH made the difficult decision to close their home health and allow Providence to assume their patient load," Thorsen said. "The decision was made to make the best use of our resources."

Columbia Memorial's Lower Columbia Hospice, meanwhile, provides hospice care for the entire county.

"We worked and collaborated to make sure we have strong programs by each of our organizations and we've seen a lot of success," he said.

The two hospitals have also combined resources by con-

ducting joint community needs assessments rather than doing them individually, which had been costly and duplicative.

Since 2012, hospitals and behavioral health organizations across Tillamook, Clatsop and Columbia County hospitals have been convening to share ideas on how to improve care in the community.

"The first thing was getting us all in a room and getting to talk about how we can improve care," Thorsen said.

"The key point is bringing the organizations together in a collaborative way to start to break down barriers that have existed and potentially driven up the cost at a lesser quality."

Improved imaging

New technology will allow doctors to diagnose breast cancer more successfully in Seaside.

"We recently purchased a tomosynthesis, which is a new way to do breast mammography," Sawa said.

"It prevents the chance of false negatives, so less chance of error." The new advanced imaging technology will be unveiled the first week of April and is "the only one on the coast" according to Sawa. The next closest is in Portland.

Meanwhile, the new, two-story, 18,000-square-foot state-of-the-art cancer treatment center in Astoria is projected to open next fall.

"We currently run medical oncology on our campus, but this will bring radiation and allow us to expand our program," with Oregon Health & Science University, Thorsen said.

Warrenton: Kujala said main competition for funding is Reedsport

Continued from Page 1A

"We do have a really good opportunity this time around, because most of the funding in the last biennium, which was \$5 million, went all to Multnomah County," Kujala said.

Kujala said Multnomah County officials are using the funding to perform core samples and other geotechnical testing along Marine Drive and the dike protecting industrial areas and Portland International Airport from the Columbia River.

Warrenton needs to perform similar work as it seeks federal certification of about 10 miles of levees, Kujala said, taking core samples every 1,000 feet to study the composition and moisture intrusion, at a cost of about \$1 million overall. He said Warrenton has requested \$200,000 through the North Coast Regional Solutions Team to help pay for the study. While there are no guarantees of funding, he

said, Warrenton has a shovel-ready project.

Mark Ellsworth, coordinator of the local solutions team, said there is a need for such funding throughout northwest Oregon, which is mostly behind shore protection.

"I don't know of anyone further along than Warrenton in the legwork," Ellsworth said, adding Warrenton is likely at the front of the line for funding if the legislation passes.

Kujala said Warrenton's main competition for funding is Reedsport, which is trying to improve the levees that surround most of the city. State Sen. Arnie Roblan, D-Coos Bay, and state Rep. Caddy McKeown, D-Coos Bay, have sponsored Senate Bill 283, which asks the state for nearly \$4.2 million to repair the levees.

Senate Bill 5530 was last assigned to the Subcommittee On Capital Construction in January, and has no scheduled hearings.

County: Contract approved for household hazardous-waste facility

Continued from Page 1A

but they decided to approve the feasibility study that the Department of Education has already funded.

"If that data provides something that is more palatable to our policies regarding preschool, then that data is valuable," Commission Chairman Scott Lee said.

• Unanimously approved an agreement with Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare to manage a crisis respite center in Warrenton.

The crisis respite center is designed to prevent out-of-control behavior from those with mental illnesses before they encounter law enforcement or go to hospitals.

Clatsop County, along with Providence Seaside Hospital, Columbia Memorial Hospital and Greater Oregon Behavioral Health Inc., funds the CBH-managed center. The county will

pay \$100,000 in 2017 for its part of the agreement.

The center opened last July. Commissioners approved a memorandum of understanding in February saying the county would reimburse some or all of the startup costs for the facility.

• Approved a design-build contract for a household hazardous-waste facility on Williamsport Road in Astoria.

Helligso Construction will partner with design company Lower Company Engineering to build a roughly \$600,000, 2,500-square-foot facility next to the Astoria Transfer Station. Residents and qualifying small businesses will have multiple opportunities each year to drop off hazardous waste, such as pesticides and paint.

The county hopes construction will be completed by the end of the year, Moore said.



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