



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

Port of Astoria Executive Director Jim Knight said there are issues with a berm surrounding the retention ponds delaying completion of the agency's new stormwater treatment system on Pier 3.

Fulton launches new criticism of Port's stormwater project

Commissioner objects to cost overruns, delays

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

Port of Astoria Commissioner Stephen Fulton, a critic of the agency's administration and fellow commissioners, started a new line of attack Tuesday over delays and cost overruns on a stormwater treatment system.

"For five months ending March 17, 2017, Port Commissioners James Campbell and Robert Mushen did not properly disclose a \$750,000 cost overrun on construction of the Port of Astoria's stormwater processing system ... which is still unfinished and inoperable," Fulton said in a letter sent around Tuesday afternoon to the Port Commission, staff and regional media outlets.

The widely distributed emails have become a tactic for Fulton, who is running against Campbell in the May special district election. Fulton has also called for the eviction of a private hangar at the Astoria Regional Airport in which an aviator has a bar and clubhouse dubbed the Man Cave.

Rained out

The Port was required by July 2016 to have a stormwater treatment system in place to lower the amount of copper entering the Columbia River.

The copper potentially harms salmon and other marine life. Port financials viewed at a previous meeting showed the project, at more than \$2.24 million as of the end of January, was far above an original budget of \$1.5 million.

Port Executive Director Jim Knight said the overruns are because of the past winter's exceptionally rainy and cold weather, and because of buried pipes and other infrastructure found on Pier 3 during excavation. Financial Manager Will Isom has said the project is being covered by a \$1.75 million loan the Port took out, along with money from a reserve fund for developing Pier 3.

Isom has said the \$1.5 million budget was an initial rough staff estimate before the bidding process. Ridgefield, Washington-based Conway Construction eventually won the contract to build the system with a bid of \$1.83 million.

By the end of January, Conway had gone over its original bid to nearly \$1.97 million. The remainder of the reported \$2.24 million on the project went for pumps, environmental and legal consulting, utilities and land surveys.

Fulton brought a failed motion Tuesday to hire a construction litigation attorney to investigate the overruns. Commissioner Bill Hunsinger, who has allied with Fulton in opposition to Conway's contract in the past, attempted to hold an executive session on

the issue. But he was told by Port counsel Eileen Eakins there was no statutory reason for a closed meeting.

Political?

"Really what I am concerned about is the Port of Astoria is exposed to a significant liability out here," Fulton said of the reasoning behind his letter.

Campbell seemed unconvinced. "Why don't you be honest with the public and tell them you're trying to make a political statement?" Campbell asked Fulton.

"I don't think that's the case, Jim," Fulton said, later reiterating his argument that the Port needs answers about the overages.

"How long did it take your attorney to write this letter?" Campbell asked, in an apparent reference to John Nygaard, an attorney for Fulton's employer Warrenton Fiber.

The heated exchange took place over multiple interruptions of Knight, who eventually said Port staff deserve time to review the accusations against them, which he called inaccurate and out of line.

"There are no accusations here," Fulton said. "I can only react to what I receive (from staff) and what I read in the paper."

"I can't begin to understand how you interpret some of these things, Commissioner Fulton," Knight replied, before further interruption by Fulton.

Seaside man accused of rape gets more charges

By JACK HEFFERNAN
The Daily Astorian

More charges have been filed against a Seaside man accused of raping his wife twice within the immediate vicinity of their child.

Rene Geronimo Verdusco, 39, originally was arrested and charged with two counts of first-degree rape and two counts of fourth-degree assault for incidents that

allegedly took place at their home March 23 and March 24.

A grand jury last week added two counts of first-degree unlawful sexual penetration and one for tampering with a witness.

He pleaded not guilty on all counts at an arraignment Monday.

"I want these dropped," Verdusco said. "The video and evidence is false."

Verdusco is scheduled for an early resolution conference in late April.

Meet the Doc

April 5, 7 to 8PM
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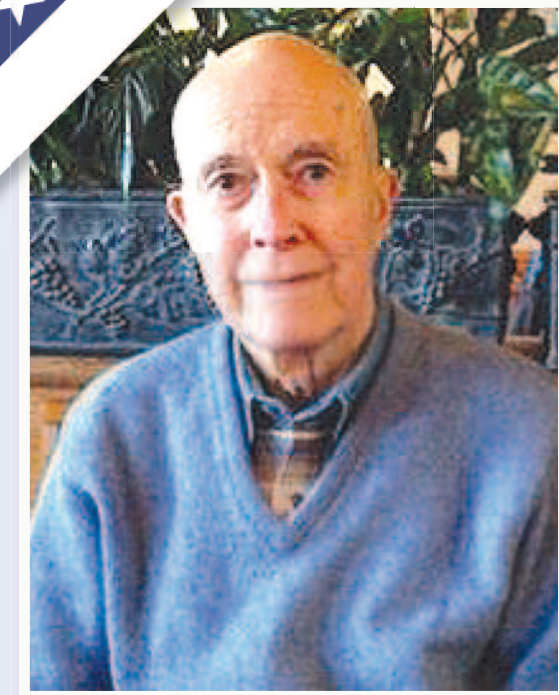
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Thomas E. Brownhill

November 27, 1921 - March 29, 2017

Thomas E. Brownhill of Eugene died March 29, 2017 of pneumonia. He was 95.

He was born November 27, 1921 in Warm Springs, Oregon, to William and Ada Randall Brownhill. He grew up on the family ranch on the Agency Plains near Gateway, Oregon and graduated from Madras High School, where he served as student body president for two years. He entered the University of Oregon in 1939 but withdrew to join the U.S. Army in December of 1941. He graduated from University of Oregon after the war.



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Mr. Brownhill was a Purple Heart veteran of World War II, having served in the South Pacific Theater in the 41st Infantry Division (Oregon National Guard). He entered Hiroshima days after the bomb exploded.

Mr. Brownhill married Jean McKenzie on September 8, 1946, at Umatilla, Oregon. She survives.

Mr. Brownhill graduated from the University of Oregon School of Law in 1950. He went into private practice with family friend Frank Spittle in Astoria, Oregon and was elected District Attorney for Clatsop County in 1952. He served until 1960 when he joined the law firm of Riddlesbarger and Pederson in Eugene. He specialized in business litigation and international trade. He considered trial practice an art, and he carefully prepared for every trial.

In 1969, Mr. Brownhill joined W. H. Gonyea and Associates. He ran the Costa Rica operations and negotiated business deals in the U. S., Japan, and several other countries. After retirement in 1981, he pursued many interests including short story and screenplay writing, acting, and world travel. He studied politics, science, and astronomy, and he read five newspapers a day. He loved his family and taught his children and grandchildren the importance of education, self-discipline, delayed gratification (save money!), and honesty and integrity. He was witty and fun-loving and kind to everyone.

He served as president of the Clatsop County Bar Association, the Lane County Bar Association, and the Oregon District Attorneys' Association. He was past president of Eugene Country Club. He was an avid Duck fan. He served a term on the board of directors of Oregon Club, and he handled legal matters for several UO athletes. He and Jean attended UO football and basketball games at home and away for over 60 years. He also was a Beaver fan -- except when they played the Ducks.

Survivors include his wife Jean; daughters and sons-in-law Ellen Brownhill, Paula Brownhill and Blair Henningsgaard, Betsy and John Bosch, and Ruth and Scott Katter; grandchildren Anna Henningsgaard (Brendan Berg), Vanessa Bosch Kerwood (Casey), Leslie Katter, Kari Henningsgaard, Sallie Katter Bixenman (Cole), and Blakeley Bosch; and a great-grandson Julian Henningsgaard. His sister Ann Austin predeceased him by 30 days.

The family is grateful to Sacred Heart Hospice for their excellent care during Mr. Brownhill's brief illness and to Kathleen Chinn for her attentive and compassionate care.

Burial will be at the Milo Gard Cemetery on the Agency Plains north of Madras. He is going back very near where he started over 95 years ago.

Assisting the family is Virgil T. Golden Funeral Service.