

# Port: 'It's kind of a tempest in a teapot'

Continued from Page 1A

near where I live and that there is a lot of illegal activities — like drug running." Knight said the commissioner told him he needed to be careful and should "get a gun and a concealed weapons permit because you never know, bad things can happen and you need to protect yourself."

Knight wrote, "This is the third time that I've had to register complaints about your unprofessional, threatening and bullying tactics." He added, "Suggesting that I need to carry weapons to protect myself is the epitome of creating a hostile work place. The stress that you have imposed on myself and my family is unconscionable."

Knight wrote that he will

only meet with Hunsinger publicly, or with witnesses and at a location of his choice.

"If I see you or your vehicle near my property, I will call 911 immediately," Knight wrote. "My wife knows you and your vehicles, and if she sees you near her, she also will call 911."

"Please do not threaten or imply a threat to me or my fam-

ily again. The stress and worry that you have caused is significant. Once again, I must ask the commission to take appropriate action regarding your threatening behavior."

## Next steps

Hunsinger was not immediately available for comment. No complaints have been filed against him with the

Oregon Government Ethics Commission.

Declining to speak further about his memo or prior complaints against Hunsinger, Knight said he will meet Monday with the Port's attorney and insurers about any next steps.

Sheriff Tom Bergin said he has seen Knight's memo. "I said it was concerning, but there was nothing criminal,"

he said.

Port Commission President Robert Mushen said Knight is correct in being suspicious, but that he doesn't plan to pursue any action in response to the letter.

"It's kind of a tempest in a teapot," Mushen said. "We have bigger fish to fry than that, and we really don't need to get into those things."

# Cat hoarder: St. Clare will likely be extradited to Snohomish County

Continued from Page 1A

Snohomish County Superior Court Judge George Bowden raised questions about why St. Clare ended up in front of a jury instead of in a county-funded program billed as a way to divert some mentally ill people out of the courts.

The defense had argued that St. Clare, a homeless woman, wasn't allowed into the program because she couldn't pay back the more than \$18,000 the auditor's office claimed the investigation cost.

"None of that makes sense," Bowden said at a February 2016 hearing. He presided over St. Clare's trial.

The prosecutor's office maintained there were other reasons St. Clare wasn't eligible for its Therapeutic Alternatives to Prosecution program. There was no certainty she was going to admit her guilt, Boska had told Bowden. It also was important that she be ordered to stay away from cats.

The TAP program is supported by a sales tax earmarked for mental health and addiction programs. Clients sign a three-year contract and agree to seek appropriate treatment to address their mental disorders or substance abuse. Three counselors manage the cases and meet with clients to monitor progress. Participants must follow through with treatment and abide by other conditions. If they complete the program, the criminal charges are dropped.

Bowden pointed out at the 2016 hearing that St. Clare obtained a mental health evaluation despite her reservations. The \$18,000 bill from the auditor's office "made the



The surviving cats were given water and food at the Clatsop County Animal Shelter.

issue a nonstarter," he said.

The county claimed it couldn't waive those costs. It was billed more than \$13,000 by Everett's animal shelter for impounding the animals, euthanizing them and disposing of their remains. The county had to pay a veterinarian to examine the cats and a tow truck driver to haul off the travel trailer. The auditor's office also tried to recover about \$3,300 for the time officers spent on the case.

In the end, St. Clare was ordered to pay \$14,457.22 at 12 percent interest.

## Cats as family

St. Clare was a software tester for 20 years before being laid off in 2009. She couldn't find another job in the industry and became homeless. Those changes and other traumatic life events likely led her to collect cats, a psychologist concluded.

Because of her disorder, the judge was told, she lacked insight into the reality of her situation. She went so far as to live in unsafe conditions so as not to be separated from her animals.

The cats became her family. "They are not some disposable item you dump at a shelter," she told the psychologist.

St. Clare didn't believe her cats were as sick as described by animal control officers, the psychologist wrote.

Snohomish County animal control officers worked for months in 2014, trying to persuade St. Clare to relinquish dozens of cats she was keeping in an Airstream travel trailer. Officers received numerous complaints from people who saw sickly cats locked up in the trailer without proper ventilation. St. Clare declined to turn over her cats and moved the trailer multiple times without notifying animal

control officers.

"I hope you can see it through her eyes. She felt like she was being asked to march her family to the gallows," her attorney, Robert O'Neal, said in 2016. "She didn't mean to do the wrong thing."

## Dehydrated, malnourished

Eventually animal control officers raided St. Clare's trailer and removed 111 cats. The animals were in various stages of dehydration and malnutrition. All of the animals were euthanized because of their untreatable and infectious conditions.



Warrenton Police Department

This is the vehicle the 42 cats were found in by the Warrenton Police Department.

St. Clare was charged with three felony counts of animal cruelty. Prosecutors tacked on seven additional counts when St. Clare opted to go to trial. A jury found her guilty and that conviction was recently upheld on appeal.

Bowden granted St. Clare a first-time offender waiver, sparing her jail time. He said warehousing her didn't make sense. He ordered her to do community service and obtain mental health treatment, and banned her from owning cats.

The psychologist who evaluated St. Clare noted that treatment for animal hoarding is in the early stages of research.

"What is known is that this behavior, absent any mental health intervention, has nearly a 100 percent recidivism rate," she wrote.

It was unclear if St. Clare has been living in Warrenton. Police there reported that

they'd been looking for St. Clare earlier this year. They knew she had warrants from Washington.

A Warrenton police officer found St. Clare on Monday in a Fred Meyer parking lot. St. Clare allegedly told police about 30 cats were in her vehicle. She also admitted there was the body of a cat that died a couple of days ago.

St. Clare was arrested and booked into the Clatsop County Jail. She has been charged with more than two dozen counts of animal neglect.

The cats were given water and food at the Clatsop County Animal Shelter.

St. Clare likely will be extradited to Snohomish County once the Oregon case is resolved.

Jack Heffernan of The Daily Astorian added to this report.

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