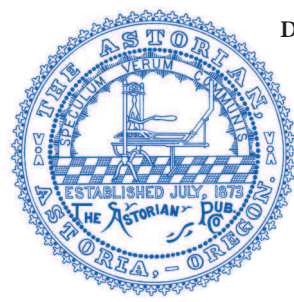


THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



DAVID F. PERO, Publisher & Editor

LAURA SELLERS, Managing Editor

BETTY SMITH, Advertising Manager

JEREMY FELDMAN, Circulation Manager

DEBRA BLOOM, Business Manager

JOHN D. BRUIJN, Production Manager

CARL EARL, Systems Manager



Submitted Photo

Gov. Tom McCall in front of Surfsand Motel at Cannon Beach in 1967.

OUR VIEW

Beach Bill anniversary a reminder for stewardship

Saturday marks a momentous day in state history. It was on that day 50 years ago in 1967 — in a publicity stunt — that then-Gov. Tom McCall landed in a helicopter in Cannon Beach to declare simply that Oregon needed to keep its beaches open.

McCall's stunt led to passage of the Beach Bill, the landmark legislation that established public ownership of the Oregon Coast.

We should all be glad he did, and for the foresight of those who passed it. We should remember that in many other coastal states, portions of beautiful beaches are privately owned with "No Trespassing" signs and no public access.

McCall's actions fueled public support for the bill, which closed a loophole in well-intentioned 1913 legislation that declared Oregon beaches were public highways and guaranteed public access to nearly all of the state's 363 miles of coastline. The 1913 law, though, only protected the "wet sands" between high and low tides of the beach as being publicly owned.

Controversy arose in 1966 when Bill Hay, the owner of the Surfside Motel in Cannon Beach, roped off a section of the beach on dry sand exclusively for motel guests. Since the 1913 legislation only protected wet sands, the Beach Bill was introduced to guarantee dry-sand areas would always be publicly accessible as well.

The Beach Bill nearly died in legislative committee, but passed in June 1967. McCall signed it into law a month later, ensuring "free and uninterrupted use of the beaches" between the low-water mark and the vegetation line.

To mark the milestone Saturday the Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce is hosting a celebration with a host of activities. "This is a celebration about saving the beach," Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Court Carrier said. "What if the beach would have been privatized? Can you imagine not being able to walk along the beach? This bill is probably the reason why this visitor economy exists on the coast."

Carrier said he doesn't think Cannon Beach could be what it is today without the Beach Bill. "People established homes and businesses because of beach access," he said. "We've all been the beneficiaries."

Carrier is right, and the Saturday celebration and others that will be tied to the upcoming anniversary serve as reminders that we need to continue to be dedicated stewards of our coastline and to continue to protect it in the years to come.

Property Watch program targets unlawful conduct

Astoria Police and local businesses are partnering in an innovative program that may help curb downtown loitering, aggressive panhandling and other unruly behavior.

The program is called Property Watch and allows police to more closely supervise specific businesses on the owners' behalf during their patrols after business hours. Astoria building owners can sign a one-year contract that allows police to act as if they are the property owner after hours to remove people who engage in unlawful activity. Their presence also acts as a deterrent. Building owners are also encouraged to post signs in their windows warning against disorderly activity.

A similar program was initiated in 2015 and attracted four rental properties. More recently, however, aggressive panhandling and loitering have increased, drawing complaints from downtown business owners. In looking for solutions, police decided in March to reboot the program. The program is modeled after similar ones in Pendleton and Beaverton that have been successful.

Nine business and rental properties are now participating. While under Oregon law police don't have the authority to stop people from panhandling, loitering or sitting or lying in public places, police do have the authority to address unruly and unlawful behavior.

The idea for the program has drawn support from Astoria Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Skip Hauke and Elaine Bruce, Clatsop Community Action's executive director. Both said it's a step in the right direction in addressing and preventing disorderly activity.

Astoria Police Sgt. Andrew Randall says the program will be reviewed annually.

The program deserves a chance and bears watching. Panhandling and loitering aren't unlawful, but the Property Watch program gives businesses and police a tool for addressing those who go beyond the law.



GUEST COLUMN

Champion our parks resources

By CINDY PRICE

Special to The Daily Astorian

A recent article in The Daily Astorian described discussion at a City Council work session over a "possible solution for a \$100,000 short-fall" for the Parks and Recreation Department.



In fact, we were considering a "Life Raft Scenario" budget to add an additional \$350,000 to retain valued skilled staff and existing core programs.

Ten years ago, parks staff was cut to 14 full-time people. Later, staff was cut again by 50 percent to only seven full-time people. Meanwhile, parks facilities grew by 60 percent and recreational programming quadrupled. Parks staff are rock stars at management and efficiency, and have done all they can with current resources. Increased user fees have helped somewhat, but there are no user fees for maintaining the Astoria Riverwalk or the Garden of Surging Waves or our other parks, or for the popular free programs like Summer Movies in the Park and Monster Bash.

For many years budgeting for the department was done on an "aspirational" basis. The department's budget was balanced at the end of the year, when overestimated revenue and underestimated expenditures became clear, often to the tune of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Two years ago, the City Council, staff and the Budget Committee pledged to end that.

How can we now maintain a robust Parks and Recreation Department that serves all ages, incomes and abilities, and that is realistically budgeted from the beginning of the fiscal year?

City councilors have agreed to consider an increase in the hotel tax to 12 percent from 9 percent. That will raise about \$600,000, 70 percent of which must by state law go to tourist-related facilities and programs. Portions of our parks facilities and programs fit within this criterion. We will be close, but the Life Raft will be incomplete, and the tax will take several months to implement.

To close the gap, City Councilor Tom Brownson and I propose a parks fee of \$3 per month per residential meter on our bimonthly water and sewer bill. Lower-income residents in the Utility Assistance Program would be exempt. Commercial properties would be exempt, too, as so many are sole proprietorships owned by Astoria residents. So, the new fee would be \$6 every two months, or \$36 a year. The fee is estimated to generate about \$100,000 annually, dedicated to



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Dozens gathered at McClure Park to watch "Back to the Future" in 2015 as part of the "Parks after Dark" event series hosted by the Astoria Parks and Recreation Department.

Parks staff are rock stars at management and efficiency, and have done all they can with current resources.

Parks and Recreation.

Supported by the community and approved by City Council, the parks fee could be put into immediate effect, allowing additional resources for the busy summer-fall seasons. Parks Director Angela Cosby's first priority is to retain the skilled full time, salaried folks, all of whom have worked many additional hours each week for the past couple of years to keep their programs and facilities going. Cosby would hire an administrative services person, who would provide relief departmentwide to all staff, and also provide better customer service. Cosby would also increase seasonal maintenance wages to ensure enough can be hired to keep our parks, cemetery and Aquatic Center well-staffed throughout the year.

The City Council would like to implement the recommendations in the yearlong parks master plan, an award-winning model of public engagement that very clearly demonstrated how much Astorians treasure our parks and recreational facilities. The plan revealed some ways of maximizing revenue and also some ways in which recreational activities have changed over the years. For example, adults favor an improved trail system over more organized sports. Respondents indicated they might use more programs if the Recreation Center was combined with an expanded Aquatic

Center. Implementation of these and other recommendations in the plan requires staff time which currently doesn't exist, along with dollars.

Additional resources will be needed. The City Council is considering the sale of some very low-use parks: Birch Field in Alderbrook, the Customs House and grounds, Tidal Rock Park and Post Office Park. All but Birch Field are designated historic, and will be very difficult if not impossible to sell. A public hearing will be held before any sale.

There is also the possibility of using some of the tax dollars that will come from the recently-approved 3 percent local marijuana tax. We should have first-quarter figures on this in June. I've proposed that, depending on the numbers, 15 to 25 percent be dedicated to Parks and Recreation, 65 to 75 percent to Astoria Police, and 10 percent to the general fund.

If you agree that our parks and recreation facilities, along with police, fire and public works are among the most important of city functions, please let the City Council know that you would support a \$3 per month parks fee. Email city-council@astoria.or.us. Or take the poll on my website: www.cindypriceastoria.com/poll.

Cindy Price represents the downtown region on the Astoria City Council.

LETTERS WELCOME

Letters should be exclusive to The Daily Astorian. We do not publish open letters or third-party letters.

Letters should be fewer than 350 words and must include the writer's name, address and phone numbers. You will be contacted to confirm authorship.

All letters are subject to editing for space, grammar and, on occasion, factual accuracy and verbal verification of authorship. Only two letters per writer are printed each month.

Letters written in response to

other letter writers should address the issue at hand and, rather than mentioning the writer by name, should refer to the headline and date the letter was published. Disclosure should be civil and people should be referred to in a respectful manner. Letters referring to news stories should also mention the headline and date of publication.

The Daily Astorian welcomes short "in gratitude" notes from readers for publication. They should keep to a 200-word maximum and writers are asked to avoid simply listing event sponsors. They

must be signed, include the writer's address, phone number and are subject to condensation and editing for style, grammar, etc.

Submissions may be sent in any of these ways:

E-mail to editor@dailyastorian.com;

Online form at www.dailyastorian.com;

Delivered to the Astorian offices at 949 Exchange St. and 1555 N. Roosevelt in Seaside.

Or by mail to Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103