

Georgia-Pacific donation will help with playground

Larger project is a year away

By JACK HEFFERNAN
The Daily Astorian

WESTPORT — Plans to revitalize a boat launch and park area near Westport have been stagnant, but they took a step closer Wednesday.

The Georgia-Pacific Wauna Mill, which donated the 27-acre property to Clatsop County in 2015, has given an additional \$20,000 toward a playground at the site. The playground and other upgrades, such as a picnic area, restrooms and a refurbished boat launch, are at least a year away from being completed, Natural Resources Manager Steve Meshke said.

“We’ve got a lot of things lined up,” Meshke said. “It’s just about waiting for the dominoes to fall.”

Georgia-Pacific donated the thin, shaped property along the Westport Slough, valued at more than \$230,000, in 2015. Though much of the project was expected to be finished by 2016, it remains largely in the design phase. It will take at least another year to complete, Meshke said.



Damian Mulinix/EO Media Group

The county plans to revitalize a boat launch and park in Westport. Completion of the project is likely a year away.

Estimated to cost \$900,000 for the entire project, the county parks department is hoping to secure more grants from the state, Meshke said.

“There are a lot of different grant opportunities that could be had there,” Meshke said. Costs not secured by grants

will be funded by the department’s acquisition fund.

An effort by the Lower Columbia River Watershed Council to redirect nearby Plympton Creek with its historic channel has also been stalled due to emergency projects in other areas in the

county, said Selene Keeney, the council’s coordinator. The departure of former coordinator Margaret Magruder, who originally spearheaded the effort, has also been a factor, she said.

Georgia-Pacific attempted to donate the land in 2004,

but the move was stalled when the state Department of Environmental Quality suspected contamination from the mill’s use of the property dating back to the 1950s. A regulatory process that cost the company \$1 million ended in 2013.

Once completed, the playground will be more than half a football field in size, Meshke said. It will include climbing areas and swing sets for children that will have similar colors to the trees and rocks surrounding it.

It will be valuable to more than 60 school-age children in the area who currently must travel more than 10 miles to the nearest playground, Georgia-Pacific spokeswoman Kristi Ward said.

“Our vision when we donated the property was for a great park that all Westport residents could enjoy, so it is fulfilling to know that the kids in the community will have a safe place to be active and play,” she said.

The county now will seek an additional grant that will fully fund the playground design. Public information meetings will be held in Westport this summer to review the plans and for residents to provide input.

Clatsop County Commissioner Kathleen Sullivan said she was thrilled by the designs she saw Wednesday. “We’re going to have to have a big party here when this is finished,” she said.

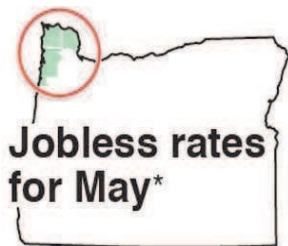
County unemployment rate down to 3.5 percent

The Daily Astorian

Clatsop County’s seasonally adjusted unemployment rate dipped slightly to 3.5 percent in May, according to figures from the Oregon Employment Department.

Clatsop County was tied for the seventh-lowest unemployment rate statewide, along with Deschutes and Wasco counties. The unemployment rate was 1.3 percent lower than the year prior, slightly lower than the state rate (3.6 percent) and nearly 1 percent lower than the U.S. rate (4.3 percent). Some regional economists have argued the region has reached peak employment.

Nonfarm payroll employment decreased by 30 from the year prior, shrinking one-fifth of a percent. The civilian labor force over that time increased by 563. Over the past year, the private sector has added 60 jobs, while the government



*Preliminary, seasonally adjusted rates.
Source: Oregon Employment Department
Daily Astorian graphic

has cut 90. Leisure and hospitality (130) and construction (80) added the most positions. Retail trade was down 140 jobs over the year, while both manufacturing and local government education lost an additional 70 positions.

Miss Scandinavia is a family tradition

Miss Finland takes the crown

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

Astoria’s newest Miss Scandinavia comes from a long line of women who have worn the crown.

Megan Schacher was Miss Finland at this year’s Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival and was crowned Miss Scandinavia at the festival’s opening ceremonies Friday. Her sister, Aimee, was both Miss Finland and Miss Scandinavia in 2013; her mother, Melissa, was Miss Finland and Miss Scandinavia in 1991.

The annual festival, a celebration of Danish, Swedish, Finnish, Norwegian and Icelandic traditions and food, marked its 50th year last weekend.

Schacher, and the other young women representing their different counties of origin, didn’t wear tight spar-

kly dresses or swimsuits; they were dressed in brightly colored traditional garb. They urged involvement in the community, knowing it is up to the next generation to keep these traditions alive.

Schacher’s great-great-grandparents are the reason the family now resides in Oregon. They moved to the United States independently, met in Montana and later settled in Hammond.

Schacher’s great-great-grandmother helped sponsor other Finns to immigrate to America, remembering how hard the journey was herself.

Her Finnish heritage and the traditions of that culture provide Schacher with deep connections to the community, Schacher said. She could not imagine life without them.

Schacher will be a senior at Astoria High School.

Runner-up Kara Dowaliby, Miss Sweden, traces her heritage back to Finnish and Swedish great-great-grandparents who met at a popular dance



Megan Schacher, Miss Finland, was crowned Miss Scandinavia at this year’s Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival last weekend. Georgia Sutton was Junior Miss Finland. Thom E. Dickerson

hall in Astoria now known as Josephson’s Seafoods.

She echoed Schacher’s words, saying the Scandinavian immigrants who settled here came with a “suitcase” and “a dream.” The dream continues for future genera-

tions, she said.

Other young women who represented the festival included retiring Miss Scandinavia 2016 Megan McCall-Devos, Miss Denmark Sophia Hansen and Miss Norway Maya McGill.

State senator suggests changes to tenant protections bill

Monroe has offered revisions

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

SALEM — A stalemate in the state Senate over a tenant protections bill could end with changes proposed by a Democratic senator who has so far opposed the legislation.

State Sen. Rod Monroe of Portland, one of several landlords in the Legislature, has opposed House Bill 2004, despite several concessions already made to landlords.

Monroe on Tuesday proposed amendments that he says would win his vote and those of other holdouts in the Senate, both Democrats and Republicans.

Jonathan Lockwood, a spokesman for Senate Republicans, said he couldn’t comment on whether individual Republicans support the amendments.

“Senate Republicans are optimistic changes can be made that would be palatable,” Lockwood said Wednesday.

The amendments would eliminate a ban on no-cause evictions and drastically narrow the circumstances under which landlords would be obligated to pay tenants relocation costs.

The amendments still would limit rent increases to one time per year and require a

minimum of six-month leases. Landlords would be required to notify tenants 90 days before the end of the lease whether they intend to renew the lease and increase the rent. Tenants would have to respond 45 days before the end of the lease on whether they plan to stay or move out.

The proposed amendments are intended to prevent mass evictions, without penalizing other landlords who may use no-cause evictions in limited circumstances, Monroe said.

However, housing advocates say the proposals are a revival of ideas that were eliminated last year because they were deemed ineffective.

Existing bill

The existing iteration of the bill would ban no-cause evictions and require landlords to pay relocation costs of up to one month’s rent when the landlord wants to move into the property, renovate it or sell it.

Landlords who own fewer than five units would be exempt from having to pay the relocation costs. A section to lift the ban on rent control in the House version of the bill was eliminated during amendments in the Senate Committee on Human Services.

Monroe’s amendments would narrow the requirement to pay relocation costs to the following situation: A landlord

evicts 50 percent or more of tenants in a multifamily complex exceeding five units in the first year after the landlord purchased the property. The landlord would, then, have to pay the evicted tenants the equivalent of one month’s rent.

John DiLorenzo, a real estate attorney and a spokesman for More Housing Now, said the statewide landlord coalition supports Monroe’s amendments.

“I think Sen. Monroe’s amendments reflect the best practices of many landlords throughout the state and are designed to be targeted to the outliers, and we are fine with that,” DiLorenzo said.

John Van Landingham, a housing advocate with Lane County Legal Aid, said the amendment resembles a concept landlords suggested in 2016, when investors were purchasing buildings and evicting all of the tenants.

“Is somebody going to track

when evictions pass 49 percent?” Van Landingham said. “Practically, it doesn’t seem to us to work, and we certainly don’t support it.”

Landingham said he sees no way to target mass evictions specifically, without banning no-cause evictions.

“I am still hopeful Sen. Monroe will support House Bill 2004B,” Van Landingham said.

Alison McIntosh of the Oregon Housing Alliance said the amendments also fail to address discriminatory or retal-

atory behavior by landlords.

The amendments “address a very small slice of what people are experiencing” in the state’s housing crisis, she said.

Limbo

The bill has been in limbo after it became apparent the Senate lacked enough votes to pass the legislation. Sen. Ginny Burdick, D-Portland, who heads the Senate Rules Committee, has been spearheading negotiations to modify and win votes for the bill.

Burdick, who also is a land-

SEASIDE AAUW (American Association of University Women) ANNOUNCES SCHOLARSHIPS TO NORTH COAST FEMALE RECIPIENTS

The Seaside branch of AAUW is proud to announce two scholarships to be used to further the education of two deserving local female students. AAUW’s mission advances equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy and research. Fund raising and offering scholarships is an integral part of the Seaside AAUW Scholarship Foundation.

Through a written application and a personal interview, Maritza Casarrubias exhibits the qualities of perseverance, academic achievement and goal setting that qualifies her as an excellent recipient for the \$2,000 scholarship award. She will attend Clatsop Community College where she will pursue a Bachelor of Arts in dental hygiene. She resides in Astoria with her husband and two children.

Monica Alward is a 2017 graduate of Seaside High School. Her Upward Bound experiences of creating art for the community and working with the environment in community improvement, led Monica to apply and be accepted at Portland State University where she will pursue courses in architecture and environmental studies. She resides in Seaside. The \$1,000 June Stromberg Memorial Scholarship will help defray the cost of her education.



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