Port, FEMA far apart on 2015 storm damage

Agency seeks more federal reimbursement

By EDWARD STRATTON The Daily Astorian

Since the storms of December 2015 battered the region's waterfront, the Port of Astoria has been trying to document how much damage occurred to its property. At stake is up to 75 percent reimbursement for the repairs of proven storm damage from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

And with a \$13.7 million difference between FEMA's initial damage estimates and those created by the Port's engineers, much more work is needed.

Port Commission

on Tuesday approved a new \$65,000 contract to have KPFF Consulting Engineers, the firm contracted last year to assess storm damage, continue work to prove the need for more funding.

Late last month, Port Operations Manager Matt McGrath revealed that while FEMA initially estimated \$860,000 worth of repairs needed from the storms, KPFF estimated \$2.7 million for the same work and an additional \$11.5 million in repairs needed beyond what FEMA estimated, mostly related to damage on the Port's seawalls, embankments, docks and pilings.

"In order to gain the difference between ... less than \$1 million to over \$13 million is the evidence that KPFF would submit to FEMA," Port Executive Director Jim Knight said at a Tuesday workshop.

Knight said KPFF will investigate storm reports, photos and other historical information to try and prove the pre-existing condition of the Port's damaged infrastructure.

KPFF's work will identify portions of the Port's infrastructure that need repair to prestorm conditions, and areas of damage applicable for FEMA hazard mitigation grants, which can help fund the repairs to above pre-existing conditions if proven the investment would prevent future damage from storms. Knight said the additional work will take about two

Knight said the Port can either accept the \$860,000 from FEMA, knowing it won't make a dent in infrastructure issues, or "continue wrestling with this, utilizing our engineers to demonstrate conclusively to FEMA that it's in FEMA's best interest to actually give the number closer to \$13 million so that we can do these repairs."

The state Department of Transportation awarded the Port \$1.5 million in ConnectOregon infrastructure grant funding. The Port plans to use the grant as the 25 percent match on the FEMA funds. McGrath said last month that if the Port can get about \$6 million in reimbursements from FEMA, it can use the ConnectOregon grant and pay nothing out of pocket.

Paula Negele is a spokeswoman for the state Office of Emergency Management, which distributes the FEMA funds to local agencies. She said the Port has so far received about \$63,000 in reimbursement through FEMA.

Weed rule: 'Character of Cannon Beach' is subjective

Continued from Page 1A

'Unintended consequences'

If the Oregon Liquor Control Commission and business licenses are approved, Five Zero Trees would be one of three marijuana dispensaries that have applied to operate in Cannon Beach since the community narrowly defeated a retail cannabis prohibition at the polls in November.

City Planner Mark Barnes said the mixed-use ordinance was based on one crafted by the League of Oregon Cities last year. Barnes said when he approved the land use compatibility statement in November he wasn't aware the owner of the property, Max Ritchie, also had tenants.

When I found out a resident was living there, I notified the owner and said I couldn't approve the marijuana shop business license with residents," Barnes said. Ritchie asked if evicting his tenants would make his property compliant, and Barnes said it would.

Ritchie declined to comment on the ordinance or the

Jason Cain, co-partner of Five Zero Trees, said the company also had no comment because they have not been involved in communications between Ritchie and the city.

The idea to change the ordi-

landlords with mixed-use properties would continue to evict tenants to allow marijuana retailers to rent their commercial spaces for a higher price than tenants can pay.

Losing apartment space would contribute to a growing affordable housing crisis, City Councilor George Vetter said.

"If we had considered this when we were passing the ordinance, we wouldn't have put this rule in there because it would exclude so many housing options," said Vetter, who voted for changing the ordinance.

But Benefield and Councilor Nancy McCarthy, who voted to keep it, disagree with

"If you deny applications from dispensaries in the first place for mixed-use facilities, then you can't have a dispensary," McCarthy said. "If we changed the ordinance, it would open up a huge can of worms for marijuana stores to open everywhere."

Benefield said changing the ordinance would be contradictory to keeping residential areas marijuana-free, which was a priority to voters when councilors passed the ordinance.

"It's always a fight between free enterprise and regulation," Benefield said. "But I'm not sure how amending this ordinance would keep with the character of Cannon Beach.

ever is subjective.

"I've talked to business owners from other communities, and I still haven't spoken with anyone who said these stores bring a negative impact," Vetter said. "This is fear of the unknown as much as anything."

Community backlash

For Cannon Beach resident David Frei, it is not about challenging the introduction of marijuana into town.

"That's already been voted in. The only thing we can challenge now is where it is located," Frei said.

Frei is spearheading an effort on behalf of 12 condo owners and four businesses that are a part of the Ecola Square Homeowners Association to challenge the location of Five Zero Trees.

Ecola Square is directly across the street from the planned Five Zero Trees store. Frei and other residents came out against the ordinance change Tuesday, arguing the best way to keep tenants in their apartments is by denying cannabis applications in the first place.

While the vote ended in the homeowner association's favor, Frei said they will fight having Five Zero Trees there at all — mixed use or not. He argues that even though the building is zoned for commer-

compared to eight businesses.

Having a business permitted to stay open until 10 p.m. when most close around 5 p.m., the effect on property values and the increase in parking issues are other factors Frei argues would disrupt an otherwise quiet neighborhood.

But the main point of contention, Frei said, is the feeling that homeowners in the area never got a chance for public comment to communicate these issues in the first place.

"Overall, locations for these businesses need to be sensitive to the area around them, and this block really is a residential area," Frei said.

Because issuing land use compatibility statements and building permits are administrative decisions, legally there is nothing requiring the city to seek public comment. But Frei argues that even if it isn't required, it is in the city's comprehensive plan to include citizens on decisions like these.

"Hopefully from us challenging this we can help develop reasonable limits and have our voices heard earlier in the process," Frei said.

If Five Zero Trees passes city building inspections and obtains its licenses, the dispensary still plans on opening this

"We are very excited to come into the community. We are really looking forward to What "the character of Cancial, the area around it is resigetting involved and bringing nance came from the fear that non Beach" looks like, how-dential, containing 37 homes, jobs to the area," Cain said.

WORLD IN BRIEF

Associated Press

Lawsuit: Investigator claims Fox News made up quotes

NEW YORK — A new lawsuit lays out an explosive tale of Trump allies, the White House and Fox News Channel conspiring to push a false story about Democratic leaks and an unsolved killing in order to distract attention from the Russia investigation that has been swirling around the president

The lawsuit was filed Tuesday against Fox by an investigator who had been looking into the killing of Seth Rich, a former Democratic National Committee staff member who died in 2016 in what police say was a botched robbery. The investigator alleges that Fox quoted him as saying things he never said and was willing to show President Donald Trump its story before it

It's the second time in two days that Trump has been accused of being actively involved in pushing a public narrative to lower the heat of the Russia story. The Washington Post reported that the president had written a misleading statement for his son to give to The New York Times about Donald Trump Jr.'s meeting last summer with a Russian who promised dirt on Democrat Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign.

Rich's death has become fodder for conspiracy theorists, deeply angering the 27-year-old's family. In May, the story was thrust into the headlines again when Fox posted a story on its website in which investigator Rod Wheeler said there had been contact between Rich and WikiLeaks, the organization that posted a trove of DNC emails last year. The story was heavily promoted by Fox News host Sean Hannity, who has informally advised the president.

In the lawsuit, Wheeler now says that he never made that statement. He also contends he was told his false comments were put in the story because Trump wanted it that way.

Oregon governor appears unlikely to veto any bills

PORTLAND — Oregon Gov. Kate Brown has no plans to veto any of the bills passed in the recently completed legisla-

The Oregonian reports that Brown has already signed more than 600 bills into law. She has until Aug. 11 to notify legislative leaders if she plans to veto any of the 145 bills still under review for policy concerns and any conflict with Oregon's Constitution.

Press secretary Bryan Hockaday says there are no vetoes on

Brown earlier this year said she might consider vetoing two bills that would create exemptions to the state's land use planning laws. The Legislature amended one of the laws, which makes it easier to mine on land zoned for farm use in several eastern Oregon counties.

Prince Philip, 96, to bid adieu to solo charity appearances

LONDON — For over 65 years, he has been the unwavering presence alongside Britain's longest-serving monarch, the consummate consort and royal representative.

Today, Prince Philip, 96, made his 22,219th — and final solo public engagement, braving heavy rain to meet Royal Marines at Buckingham Palace.

The royal appeared in good spirits, waving to cheering crowds and joking with the soldiers, who have completed a

1,664-mile trek to raise money for charity. "You all should be locked up," he quipped, making the soldiers laugh.

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THE DAILY **ASTORIAN**



Evening listings **WEDNESDAY**

WEDNESDAY EVENING				A - Charter Astoria/ Seaside - L - Cha				arter Long Beach				AUGUST 2		
Α	L	6 РМ	6:30	7 РМ	7:30	8 PM	8:30	9 рм	9:30	10 PM	10:30	11 PM	11:30	
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