

# Building: 2015 lawsuit hangs over Trabucco and Orr's operation

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utilities, a broken elevator, previous roof damage and several thousand square feet of unfinished space upstairs.

"The collateral for the loan consisted only of the personal property of Marina Village," the Port staff report said. "This was deemed too small in value to secure the size of the loan being contemplated. What was needed was a lien on the building itself."

Should the Marina Village seek a loan, staff said, the Port Commission would have to decide whether to allow the lender to take out a lien providing the lender interest in the Chinook Building. The Port has used a similar strategy with Bornstein Seafoods, whose former processing space in downtown Astoria was used as collateral on a loan to build a new plant on the central waterfront.

Trabucco said Marina Village has not used financing on the hotel but would like to have such an option available for the Chinook Building.

## Proven operators

While the Port faced numerous issues with former Riverwalk Inn operator Brad Smithart and sued him several times over nonpayment of rent, Port staff and



Developer Chester Trabucco stands on the balcony of one of the remodeled rooms at the Astoria Riverwalk Inn, which overlooks the West Mooring Basin at the Port of Astoria.

commissioners have largely lauded the job done by Orr and Trabucco. Last summer, the Port Commission granted the pair's company — Astoria Hospitality Ventures — a two-year extension on its lease of the hotel, which goes through October 2018.

Orr, an Astoria native, is an attorney and seafood process-

ing executive in Seattle. Trabucco, a developer, previously renovated Astoria's Hotel Elliott and other buildings and owned the No. 10 Sixth Street building, a commercial waterfront complex that burned down in 2010.

Since taking over the Riverwalk Inn, the duo have brought 25 additional rooms

into use, remodeled 15 others, added amenities such as fire pits and made other upgrades throughout the hotel. Trabucco credited Smithart with handing them a well-functioning hotel two years ago.

"Brad put the new carburetor and transmission in the car," he said. "When we got it, all we had to do was paint it."

As part of the recent pitch to lease the Chinook Building, Trabucco, Orr and their interior architect Karen Niemi presented the company's plan to expand the hotel's dining area, currently a thin corridor behind the lobby where hundreds of guests can vie for fewer than 30 seats. Niemi said the plan is turn two exist-

ing rooms into additional seating, install a bar and extend a deck facing the mooring basin, adding about 50 seats.

## Legal uncertainty

Hanging over Trabucco and Orr's operation of the hotel is a lawsuit filed in 2015 against the Port by Param Hotel Corp., which had competed to take over Smithart's lease. Param claims the Port violated a previous agreement and showed favoritism toward Orr, whose brother-in-law, Stephen Fulton, was a Port commissioner when Astoria Hospitality Ventures took over.

Orr and Trabucco were removed as co-defendants in the lawsuit, which is scheduled for trial in October. But if Param prevails, the Port could be forced to give the Portland company operation of the hotel.

In a perfect world, Trabucco said, the issue would be settled, although the Port seems confident in its case. Marina Village could be interested in leasing the Chinook Building regardless of how the lawsuit on the hotel goes.

The intent is for Astoria Hospitality Ventures to finish the dining room expansion in the near future, but that "we've pretty much done what we intend to do before the lawsuit is over," he said.

# Warming center: 'I think we're very close to what it needs to be'

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Mediator Anne Odom, who also works for Astoria Library, helped guide a discussion of the center's draft agreement Wednesday and will be present again tonight.

"I think we're very close to what it needs to be," said Dulcye Taylor, president of the Astoria Downtown Historic District Association, about the draft agreement.

She expects many of the issues raised Wednesday night could be covered in a second, more detailed draft.

While few who testified at a Planning Commission hearing in July were against the existence of a warming center, some neighbors and business owners are concerned about its location in a residential area. The warming center board sought to address these concerns in a draft good-neighbor agreement provided Wednesday night.

The volunteer-run, low-barrier center operates out of the basement of the First United Methodist Church on the corner of 11th Street and Franklin Avenue and provides a meal and beds for up to 30 homeless people a night during severe winter weather.

Dan Parkison, the president of the warming center's board, said the center outlined nine major changes to its operation this coming winter in application materials submitted to the Planning Commission. After discussions with neighbors and the downtown association, that number increased to 15 in the draft good-neighbor agreement. These changes include the addition of regular litter patrols, enforcement of a no-camping policy in the church's parking lot after a bed and breakfast owner said this had been a major issue last year,

and regular neighborhood meetings.

Some requests are impossible for the warming center to address or fall beyond its authority, Parkison said. The center can only be responsible for what happens on the church's property during the time the center is operating. Of the estimated 1,000 homeless people living in Clatsop County at any given time, the warming center caps at 30 a night during its 90-day-operation period.

However, "The closer people live to the warming center, the more impacted they are by our operation and the more we have a responsibility to listen to their concerns," he said after the meeting ended.

The discussion Wednesday also delved into ongoing concerns with how warming center staff will deal with disruptive and dangerous behavior and address trash, noise and security issues. Taylor and downtown association director Sarah Lu Heath wanted to know how and when warming center volunteers and board members decide someone is kicked out of the center for breaking rules or for criminal actions in town, and when that exclusion is permanent.

Sean Fitzpatrick, a member of the Planning Commission and owner of the Illahee Apartments across the street from the First United Methodist Church, is not opposed to the warming center itself, but says the Franklin Avenue neighborhood is not the right location. He continues to have concerns about some of the center's policies but believes the groups could reach a good-neighbor agreement.

"I think it's going to take more than just this evening," he said, "but the input was hopefully helpful for both sides."



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Volunteers hand out soup and coffee at the Astoria Warming Center at First United Methodist Church in 2015.

# Spalding: Plans to get involved in the community

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Spalding will work for a monthly salary of \$8,639, or \$103,668 annually, along with a housing stipend. Spalding likely will lead the police department for at least six months. His arrival marks the first step in a leadership transition process for the department.

Former Chief Brad Johnston retired suddenly earlier this month after an independent assessment documented leadership failures, staff shortages, politics and conflict. The strife drained employee morale and left the department nearing a crisis.

Deputy Chief Eric Halverson, singled out in the report as a well-respected leader, assumed Johnston's duties the past few weeks. During that time, Akin Blitz, the Portland labor attorney who directed the assessment, called Spalding to gauge his interest.

Spalding had applied for the police chief position in Astoria a decade ago, but he pulled out of the running before accepting the Beaverton job. This time, he and his wife decided to give the North Coast a shot.

"We knew logistically it might be a little difficult, but we figured we'd figure it all out," Spalding said. "Things come around full circle sometimes."

## Experienced hand

Spalding earned a criminal justice degree from California State University, Fullerton, as well as a master's degree in emergency management from CSU Long Beach.

After a 32-year career with the Fullerton Police Department, Spalding moved to Beaverton in 2009. In his seven years there, he supervised 177 officers in the state's sixth-largest city. He guided the force through up to half a dozen officer-involved shoot-



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Astoria Interim Police Chief Geoff Spalding comes to the position with nearly 40 years of law enforcement experience.

ings and created its first bilingual outreach coordinator position.

Spalding is familiar with some area law enforcement officials and city employees after applying for the Astoria job. He also has made connections through the Oregon Association Chiefs of Police, where he serves on the executive board and was the president for a year.

"I'm very impressed with the quality of people here," Spalding said. "They've somehow been able to keep that positive face in the community. That I really respect."

He has read the assessment that preceded Johnston's retirement, but still wants to meet with all employees to assess their concerns and the department's overall culture. From those conversations, he hopes to initiate a strategy to avoid the burnout and morale issues employees have expressed.

"This really isn't a department that's broken by any stretch," he said. "It's just, hopefully, maybe, stabilizing things a little bit — if that's

the right word — and setting things up so that the next person that replaces me will be successful and they're not going to have to deal with a lot of issues."

He also pointed to a lack of available funding — a common complaint from his predecessor — and the time it takes to hire new officers — at least a year once the process begins — as limitations in terms of the major improvements the department may need.

"I would like to believe we are a priority department, but, again, there are lots of important things the city needs to do, too," Spalding said.

Spalding's impression so far is that the city manager and city councilors will not attempt to micromanage the police department.

"That, to me, would be a challenge I don't know that I'd really want to work with," he said.

## Call volume

One of the more immediate issues Spalding will look to tackle is an increased number

of dispatch calls. Factors such as increased tourism and an uptick in the homeless population have worn out police and dispatch staffs that are already short-handed.

"It's just busier. It's not just anecdotal," he said. "People know that we're going to more calls."

The police department may look into an online reporting system, rather than requiring that dispatchers handle all calls. The system could allow more reports to be resolved without officer response, or at least prioritize which ones need immediate attention. The department also may seek to sign a contract with Clatsop County Animal Control to handle dog and animal complaints.

The key is balancing staff safety and fatigue levels with the obligation to protect the public, Spalding said.

"I'm not going to act like an interim chief," he said. "I'm going to be the chief until I'm no longer here, and I plan to get involved in the community."

# Police: 'There wasn't this kind of fear before'

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President Donald Trump has made immigration enforcement a priority. The U.S. Department of Justice has been critical of states and cities that have not fully cooperated with federal agents on immigration, but Sheriff Johnson insists federal agents also ought to let local law enforcement know about their activities.

Stephanie Serrano, of South Bend, said she wanted to speak up for those being targeted by ICE's "cloak-and-dagger" operations after seeing families of friends and neighbors torn apart by immigration

arrests and deportations.

"They're being watched, stalked is the right word," she said. "Several oyster pickers have been followed. ... Most (of those who've been arrested) are hardworking people."

Erin Glenn, a Spanish teacher at Ilwaco High School, said a father with five young children was arrested Wednesday morning. Sheriff Johnson said he wasn't made aware of any arrests, but ICE did notify the sheriff's office that it was in the area.

"We aren't required to, but out of consideration for officer and operational safety, we generally alert the primary

local law enforcement agency in a jurisdiction immediately beforehand if we're going to be conducting an enforcement action in their area," ICE spokeswoman Virginia Kice said in an email.

The Immigration and Customs Enforcement office in Seattle handles Washington state, Oregon and Alaska but does not have arrest and deportation numbers by county readily available, Kice said.

Earlier this month, Serrano spoke out against the immigrant arrests and deportations at a rally outside the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma. She helped organize a trip to

the private immigration prison for about 20 protesters from Pacific County. They came to the Aug. 12 demonstration with granola, dried fruits, coloring books and crayons to give to those traveling to visit loved ones in lockup.

The volunteers continue to work with advocacy groups, such as Willapa Bay Resistance, Long Beach Indivisible and Living Liberally to support immigrant rights, Serrano said.

"ICE is a real threat," she said. "It's changed the atmosphere in our community. There wasn't this kind of fear before."