

# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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ONE DOLLAR



## GROWING PAINS

Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Construction work continues at the new Pacific Seafood processing facility in Warrenton. The project is just one of a growing number of developments underway in Warrenton.

## Warrenton coping with growth as development booms

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ  
The Daily Astorian

For years, Warrenton has billed itself as “open for business.”

But as development booms this year and the city’s population continues to swell, city departments are discovering growing pains along the way.

Staffing levels have seen little change over the years and the city code, in many ways, applies to a Warrenton of the past. Now city officials and staff plan to review fees and charges that haven’t been increased in years. They are introducing policies and enforcing code they hope will enhance the city’s livability and preserve public safety. They are streamlining their approach to handling and reviewing development proposals large and small, and figuring out exactly what Warrenton should look like 10 or even 20 years from now.

“This isn’t a town of 2,000 anymore,” Mayor Henry Balensifer said. “We’re growing and we’re becoming a larger city and an economic powerhouse of the region. ... We’ve just got to make sure we don’t run on autopilot.”

### ‘Formalize the process’

City Planner Skip Urling is focused almost entirely on development review right now. Drafting legislation for the City Commission, changing code, looking into issues like vacation rental regulations, all of these tasks have taken a back seat.

Warrenton Fire Chief Tim Demers estimates he sometimes spends three to four hours a day just on development — an unusual amount of time for the average fire chief, but necessary in the boom Warrenton is experiencing.



Construction work continues at one of Warrenton’s new housing developments.

Where once someone might have been able to walk into City Hall with a question for the planning or building staff and walk away with an answer or a permit in no time, now it takes longer to get a permit, and the process is becoming more formal.

“People in this town are used to walking in and getting their questions answered,” City Manager Linda Engbretson said. “And sometimes we just can’t do that. Sometimes it’s, ‘OK, I have this report. I have this deadline. I’m the only person who can do this. We have to schedule an appointment.’”

“We have to formalize the process,” she explained. “I think that’s a little frustrating for people to get used to.”

Engbretson and her staff talk often about how to provide “excellent customer service” with current staffing levels given

the high volume of projects and the adjustments the city is trying to make to carry Warrenton into the future. They plan to bring in consultants to help with some design review work, but other, bigger changes are needed. Engbretson said fees associated with development will likely have to be increased, and eventually, the city will need to conduct a comprehensive review of its code, an expensive and time-consuming undertaking.

### ‘Open for business’

When people think about Warrenton being open for business, they usually think big-box development.

Home Depot’s site designs were approved in 2008, then Costco came in

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**‘WE’RE GROWING AND WE’RE BECOMING A LARGER CITY AND AN ECONOMIC POWERHOUSE OF THE REGION. ... WE’VE JUST GOT TO MAKE SURE WE DON’T RUN ON AUTOPILOT.’**

Henry Balensifer | mayor of Warrenton

## Library campaign starts with cookies

Bake sale the first of many fundraisers

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ  
The Daily Astorian

A bake sale this Saturday organized by seniors and staff at Astor Place won’t be the official kickoff for a fundraising campaign to renovate the Astoria Library, but it will be the first formal event focused on bringing in money for the project.

After years of discussion about what should be done about the library, the Astoria City Council voted in May to pursue a \$5 million renovation rather than build a new building. The city has already set aside \$150,000 for design work and maintenance issues, as well as \$1.6 million for future construction. Work on the library is expected to begin in 2019.

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Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Residents and staff members at Astor Place bake cookies, brownies and cupcakes in the assisted living facility’s kitchen on Thursday in preparation for a bake sale on Saturday to raise money for renovations to the Astoria Library.

## Homeowner caps a geyser

Gearhart couple negotiates water bill after a costly leak

By R.J. MARX  
The Daily Astorian

GEARHART — Imagine getting a \$4,600 water bill.

That’s what happened to Kate and David McCarron, homeowners on High Ridge Road in Gearhart. The McCarrons sent a request for a reduction to the City Council after receiving water bills of \$875 and nearly \$3,800.

“I thought the tax assessor had sent me an early tax bill,” David McCarron, a physician practicing in Portland, said. “I was shocked. And I continue to be shocked.”

See WATER BILL, Page 7A

## Totem pole in Astoria no monkey business

Couple turns a dead tree into art

By JACK HEFFERNAN  
The Daily Astorian

After a beloved monkey puzzle tree died in their front yard, an Astoria couple put some brains together to create a work of art.

Bill Griesar and Robert Duchmig — who serves on the Clatsop Community College board — pondered ways to make something good come from the death last year of the century-old tree on the corner of Eighth Street and Grand Avenue.

Griesar, who teaches neuroscience at Portland State Univer-

sity and Oregon Health & Science University, had an usual idea — one that is a few weeks away from coming to fruition.

Since spring, Portland designer and fabricator Matt Cartwright has been carving their vision: a totem pole representing brains of Northwest animals. Since the initial phase of the carving was completed earlier this week, people have stopped by the house to ask questions about what Griesar jokingly calls the other Astoria Column.

“We thought we would create something that people would pay attention to, ask questions and be curious about,” Griesar said. “It makes people swivel their heads around.”

From top to bottom, the carving depicts brains of a salmon, raven, sea lion, bear, human and humpback whale. By the end of October, Cartwright plans to add a stainless steel neuron that synapses with itself around the tree underneath the brains. Finally, he will carve a cortex — the most visible part of the brain.

“Like our own brains, it is still forming,” Griesar said.

The steel neuron will include information about the brains as well as a quote based on the 19th-century words of Nobel Prize-winning Spanish pathologist Santiago Ramón y Cajal: “Everyone, if they so desire, can become sculptor of their own brain.”



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

A dead monkey puzzle tree in the front yard of an Astoria couple’s house has been turned into a work of art by an artist from Portland.

