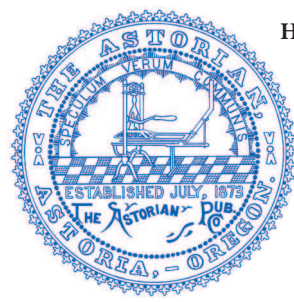


# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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## OUR VIEW



Port of Astoria

The industrial facilities at north Tongue Point have long been regarded as having great economic potential for Astoria. Exactly what that potential consists of has been a subject of intense debate.

## Tongue Point vote ends quest for bulk and container cargo

Reality prevails over wishful thinking. This is the lesson from decades of on-again, off-again plans for the former Naval base at Tongue Point.

Tongue Point's unsuitability as a maritime transportation hub really comes down to one thing: The cost of moving goods by water versus by rail or truck. By allowing freight to be efficiently moved between ports far inland and the ocean, the Columbia River navigation system makes Astoria nearly irrelevant from the standpoint of direct participation in marine shipping.

The Port of Astoria Commission voted 4-1 last week to hand north Tongue Point back to the company that owns it, so that it can in turn be sold to Delaware-based tug- and barge-builder Hyak Maritime.

Unless Astoria evolves into a major metropolis in some distant future, this vote effectively ends any official aspiration to compete for bulk and container cargo — even though there is certain to be ongoing second-guessing by understandably disappointed longshoremen and some others.

It's worth briefly reexamining the facts. Most pivotal is that the Columbia is virtually an industrial canal between the Pacific Ocean and the Pacific Northwest's industrial heartland along the I-5 corridor. Deepening the channel — hard fought a dozen years ago — was only the latest in many regional political decisions that institutionalized the Lower Columbia's canal-like features. Even though the channel is little more than a stone's throw from Astoria's shoreline, when it comes to cargo handling we are like a market town located 10 miles off a new interstate.

The huge investment in the Columbia's channel was locally irritating, but it wasn't irrational. Especially after factoring in the large cost of drastically upgrading the rail corridor and highways between here and Portland, there is a stark advantage for waterborne shipping. On the simple level of average energy costs, a gallon of fuel can move a ton of cargo 514 miles by ship, 202 miles by train and 59 miles by truck. It's sensible to carry cargo as far as practicable by water.

Although we are victims of geography and economics as far as becoming a major cargo hub, there's no reason to feel victimized. We can greatly benefit from supporting Columbia River transportation. By picking our goals more strategically, we can reasonably aspire for Tongue Point as a whole to become an increasingly important source of new jobs. Clatsop Community College's expanding maritime-science program, the Tongue Point Job Corps Center, existing business WCT Marine, and ongoing efforts to restore the Tourist No. 2 ferry and the Salvage King all point to Tongue Point's overall potential as collaborative educational and business campus.

The Port of Astoria faces a daunting challenge in the form of more assets than it can afford to repair. Major grant provider Business Oregon is right to push for carefully honed planning for a sensible and sustainable future for the Port.

Shedding its Tongue Point liability is a good first step, among several that may be required. The wishful thinking of past decades will require careful pruning. Thankfully, we appear to have intersected with a time when regional growth is driving private industry's interest in locating here.

It is becoming possible to discern a "right-sized" port that is a central contributor to Astoria's well-being by letting private industry do what it does best: assessing risks and rewards to determine an appropriate level of investment. The Port commission should play the role of midwife in this process, while looking out after the public's interest in enhancing a beautiful, active waterfront.

**The Port of Astoria faces a daunting challenge in the form of more assets than it can afford to repair.**



## SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

# A bus ticket to Seaside

By R.J. MARX

The Daily Astorian

I stumbled on this article from 1930 that shows the scope of Seaside's homeless problem over time.



An itinerant cook with three children, ages 7, 8 and 11, got off the noon train from Portland on a charity ticket on the impression she was going to be given a job here. But when met by police, she was unable to explain who was expected to employ her.

"She was given food by the Seaside police force, allowed to occupy one of the cells at the police station and was sent to Astoria the next day," the Signal reported.

Today of course there are no trains — the last passenger train came through in 1952 — but visitors of varying means continue to make their way to the Coast.

Portland's "Ticket Home" bus program, modeled after a similar program in San Francisco, gives bus, plane or train tickets to people who have places to live in other cities.

A pilot program in May and June 2016 got \$30,000 and gave 53 homeless people tickets out of Portland. According to the Portland Housing Bureau, clients in 40 households were assisted with transportation costs to return home, provided with six airplane tickets, 42 bus tickets, and five train tickets.

I'm not suggesting that we ship our homeless problem elsewhere. But there is a problem. The transient population has grown an estimated 19 percent in the past year. There has been a 6 percent increase in housing assistance for children, 18 percent for senior citizens. Helping Hands now sees 190 people a month seeking housing options.

With increased numbers comes some more aggressive visitors, especially around the holidays.

"We see the wave everywhere around the state," Alan Evans of Helping Hands Re-Entry said at a breakfast meeting of the Seaside Downtown Development Association.

Clatsop County is ranked in the top three of homelessness per capita in the state, he said, and the problem is going to get worse before it gets better.

"We are dealing with much deeper issues," Evans said. "The steady increase over the last four years is scary."

As housing becomes scarcer, the problem is going to get worse every gets better, he added. "I think every community struggling with the same thing we are. It's a very tense conversation."

### City struggles to cope

In Seaside, the problem spills over into our everyday lives. Participants at the downtown association breakfast spoke of aggressive and rude panhandlers who camp out on city streets, block sidewalks and harass passersby.

City Manager Mark Winstanley commented that the public library has been a place where homeless issues are growing, especially as homeless seek a refuge from the area's wicked winter weather. "This is something they don't teach you about in library school," he said.

Ordinances, while in line with those of other cities, are limited. "We do have an ordinance on the books that talks about begging,"



Jeff Ter Har

This van parked in Seaside for several nights, with passengers seeking handouts, merchants said.



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian  
At the Nov. 13 City Council meeting, Wahanna Road resident Tim Mancill sought action to curb a homeless encampment near his home.

**'The steady increase over the last four years is scary.'**

Alan Evans

Helping Hands Re-Entry, speaking about homelessness

Police Chief Dave Ham said. "But court rulings tell us that we are very limited how we can interact with these folks."

Anything that is open is city-owned and open to the public provides a "pretty wide berth" for inter-penetration, Ham said.

Darren Gooch of the Bob Chisholm Community Center said people — not just the homeless — come into the center looking for a place to sit or talk on their cell phones or use the center's courtesy phones.

"We are dealing with issues now that we never dealt with in the past," Gooch said. "For some people, 'community center' is a buzz word for something for free."

While the homeless may find temporary shelter at the center or through other charitable groups, there are few options for managing the activities of aggressive panhandlers.

Loitering around an ATM machine is enforceable, Ham said. But laws are more difficult for those holding signs saying "God bless."

"You can't say someone 'looks like a doper,'" Ham said. "You're not going to be able to pick and

choose which one is going to be OK."

When incidents are reported, complainants are asked to serve as witnesses.

"And the answer often is, 'I'm not going to get involved in this,'" Winstanley said. "And that's very frustrating for police officers. They want to be able to do something."

Police don't have the resources or justification to jail offenders, Ham said, and citations are often ignored. "If they do appear the judge will say you are fined \$150, which they do not have the ability to pay. So the cycle continues."

A designated area for transients — a pocket park was suggested — could be a possibility, Ham said. But rules for the area would be problematic as well.

"Some of these people come with a lot of gear," Ham said. "You could say you can have an acoustic guitar you can't get real loud, but if you're coming in with five different duffel bags and leaning against the wall and people trip over them that's not really great."

The communities successful in this issue right now are those where everyone works collaboratively, Evans said.

### Town hall discussion?

Winstanley said the solution could be simple — don't give handouts.

"If panhandlers see an opportunity to make money, they will stay," Winstanley said. "One of the reasons they are there is because they are making, and in their business, they are making good money."

Another proposed solution is a free permit for those coming to Seaside, to be administered at city hall, enabling officials to track transients.

But the permit process would have "some challenges," not least of which, constitutionality and the right to assemble. "You have the right to be in public places," Ham said.

A downtown association committee will seek a solution, possibly in a town hall discussion.

"This is a community discussion, not just a downtown discussion," said the association's director, Sarah Dailey. "We want to work with the Seaside Police Department, the city and the businesses to find a solution that works for everybody."

R.J. Marx is The Daily Astorian's South County reporter and editor of the Seaside Signal and Cannon Beach Gazette.