



Ken Ramsdell, left, and Mike Olson prepare the Western Skies to be towed to shore.

Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Boat: Marina staff rarely do this kind of work

Continued from Page 1A

Now, Western Skies is — slowly, surely — getting turned into a debris pile. Mike Olson, assistant harbor master, planned to salvage some features like the mast and the porthole windows, but not much else.

On Thursday, Olson said demolition was going smoothly, though they had to adjust a few things as they went along.

“It’s a learning curve, for sure,” he said.

Crews towed Western Skies from its slip to one end of the marina Thursday morning. They had to call in a second excavator after a single machine wasn’t enough to haul the boat out of the water. Battered by time, the elements and years of neglect, it listed to one side and started falling apart as the machines attempted to haul it up farther.

Once Western Skies was mostly out of the water, the work of taking her to pieces



The Western Skies begins to come apart.

proceeded quickly. Demolition continued through Friday.

Marina staff rarely do this kind of work — breaking down a boat the size of Western Skies is just as tricky as it sounds — but Sweet was determined to begin moving derelict and abandoned boats out of the marina. She finalized a seizure and sale process over the summer so the marina

can take over abandoned and derelict boats and get rid of them.

With the demolition of Western Skies and a closed-bid auction for seven other abandoned boats that ended Thursday, Sweet is close to having a marina filled only with working vessels. Fingers crossed.

The marina could face another Western Skies-like sit-

uation soon, though. Master Chris, a much larger but also ownerless former commercial fishing vessel, was up for auction. It attracted little if any interest from bidders.

Though the 72-foot-long vessel is bobbing happily in the marina right now, it is fast approaching the same level of disrepair as Western Skies, Sweet said.



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

Linda Haworth, left, stocks up on some of the donated desserts at Riverfolk Homeless Coalition’s Thanksgiving dinner last year. Vernon Montgomery, right, was one of at least 35 volunteers who helped feed more than 100 people.

Homeless: Group is trying to address ‘human side’ of issues

Continued from Page 1A

Spalding noted that Astoria residents believe homelessness is a growing problem. In recent years, downtown business owners have filed numerous complaints about property damage and disturbances by homeless people outside their shops.

Sarah Lu Heath, director of the Astoria Downtown Historic District Association, said people tell her they are afraid to walk around the city at night now. The city has blocked off alcoves near City Hall where homeless people were camping at night.

Spalding acknowledged these concerns, but reminded attendees that “homelessness is not a crime.”

The task force and its discussions are not an attack on homelessness or homeless people, he said. Instead, the group is trying to address the “human side” of the issues.

LaMear hopes the discussions will be rooted in the positive goal of “trying to make this as much about bringing these folks back into dignity and purpose in

life, because many of them have lost both.”

The group decided to name itself the Homelessness Solutions Task Force and to follow a broad definition of homelessness developed in Beaverton. It defines homeless individuals and families as people who “lack a fixed, regular, and adequate night time residence,” and includes people who may be living in places like motels or campgrounds, shelters or cars, or abandoned buildings or who might be staying with friends, doubling up or sharing housing.

Alan Evans, founder of the Helping Hands Re-entry Outreach Centers, thinks one of the biggest challenges the group will face will be educating the community on the depth and complexity of the issues around homelessness.

“Because that’s where we’re falling short,” he said, adding later, “I think that education is going to be the key here and all of us are being educated.”

LaMear and Spalding plan to hold monthly task force meetings starting in January.

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Preparedness: ‘Get to know your neighbors’

Continued from Page 1A

neighborhoods to get the message out. Each month, Burr and Schermerhorn hold seminars tailored specifically to the needs of the neighborhoods, including the nearest escape routes, go-bag protocol, and a variety of other topics. While there are many countywide efforts for emergency preparations, this specific approach is a first for the region.

“Instead of having them come to the city, the city is coming to them,” Burr said.

Creating community

Rather than being held in a public event space, meetings are held in people’s homes. On Wednesday, about 30 neighbors on the north end of town convened on the tennis courts of Breakers Point.

While the central focus was education about tsunami and seismic awareness, Burr and Schermerhorn addressed questions about public safety and how to prepare for disaster scenarios like windstorms and flooding.

“Tsunami is the buzz word, but there are lots of different types of storms to prepare for,” Schermerhorn said.

Most people had questions about what should be included in a go-bag, where supplies could be found and how the city planned to communicate with them when phone lines went down and roads were blocked with debris. Some asked detailed questions about how to evacuate with pets and whether or not it was safe to return to their homes after an earthquake.

In the preliminary meetings, Burr has already noticed some gaps in the community’s preparedness knowledge.

“Some people have wondered whether or not you wait



Bob Wayne explains at the neighborhood meeting at Breakers Point how the Medical Reserve Corps in Cannon Beach uses ham radio to communicate in a disaster.

Brenna Visser/The Daily Astorian

for the siren before evacuating,” Burr said. “That’s not the warning — it’s when the ground shakes.”

The long run

While small in nature, the detailed meetings play a role in the city’s larger plans to create a mass care site at South Wind, a 55-acre city-owned lot south of town. But part of the success of the site will rely on neighborhoods filled with people who know what to do, said Burr.

Educating neighborhoods one by one funnels into a larger plan to create “hubs” in neighborhoods outside of the inundation zone — which constitutes about 600 people. One of the specific challenges for neighborhoods on the north end of town is the fact they are the farthest from the proposed mass care site.

These hubs would improve resiliency by requiring a central location in those neigh-

borhoods to have medical, food, radios and other supplies, as well as a certain number of trained emergency response team members.

“We really want you to get to know your neighbors and be able to work with them, because that’s what it will take to be resilient,” Burr said.

For Luanne Barrett, the meeting Wednesday was the first time she met some of her neighbors at Breakers Point since moving to Cannon Beach six months ago. While she had a vague idea of what to do in a case of a tsunami, Barrett said she had a better understanding of the geography of the region and where she could get resources than she did before.

“Up to this point, all I knew was the evacuation map and my own preparedness knowledge from working in search and rescue,” Barrett said. “It’s enlightening to know how

much has already been done in this town that I wouldn’t have known otherwise.”

Charges: Sturgell’s arraignment scheduled for early next year

Continued from Page 1A

of first-degree unlawful sexual penetration.

If convicted on all charges, Sturgell faces a minimum of 62 1/2 years in prison, while Cunningham would serve more than 58 years.

Oregon Assistant Attorney General Erin Greenawald, who has expertise in domestic and sexual violence crimes, will prosecute the case, along with the Clatsop County District Attorney’s Office.

Sturgell’s arraignment has

been scheduled for January. Cunningham has not yet been scheduled for arraignment.

While Cunningham’s extensive criminal history includes arrests for violent crime and drugs, Sturgell’s history includes dozens of fish and game misdemeanors and violations. He is known as an often polarizing figure among commercial fishermen, according to a 2008 San Francisco Chronicle story about his experiences. His crabbing career brought him from the Oregon Coast to Alaska and the San Francisco Bay Area.

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