



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Cannon Beach Fire Chief Matt Benedict makes the rounds of the garage doing routine maintenance and checking gear.

## ‘What price do you put on a life?’

### Levy would fund two full-time paramedics

By **BRENNA VISSER**  
*The Daily Astorian*

**C**ANNON BEACH — Every five years, Cannon Beach voters are given the choice on a levy that pays the salary, benefits, training and other expenses for a full-time fire chief.

For this year’s ballot, Fire Chief Matt Benedict wants the rural fire district’s board to consider modifying the levy to cover funding for two full-time firefighter paramedics.

The change would more than double the rate to \$0.35 per thousand of assessed property, up from \$0.1488. It’s a difference between paying roughly \$14 a year on a \$100,000 home versus paying \$35.

The fire district would bring in about \$385,000 a year, compared to the \$141,469 since voters last approved the levy in 2013.

Last year, the fire district applied for two Federal Emergency Management Agency grants to fill the two firefighter paramedic positions, but did not receive the award due to reporting errors made by previous administrations. While the district plans to apply for the two grants again, funding the positions through a levy would be more reliable, Benedict said.

“With the grant process we cannot rely on the funding in the future,” he said. “The levy would be more permanent as it would be for five years and hopefully supported by the voters to continue in the future.”

If the board approves, one firefighter position would also be in charge of recruitment and retention, while the other would take on fire inspections.

“We can survive right now, but with more and more tourists coming in, we need more extra personnel,” Benedict said.

#### A different kind of call

Part of what is driving the need, Benedict said, is the growing number of medical calls. The fire chief

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ABOVE: Rolling hose is just one of the many jobs personnel with Cannon Beach Fire and Rescue perform after a call. BELOW: Firefighting gear hangs ready for the next emergency at Cannon Beach Fire and Rescue. More photos online at DailyAstorian.com



## Group to assist senior citizens

### Volunteers step up to help seniors in need

By **KATIE FRANKOWICZ**  
*The Daily Astorian*

A new group in Astoria hopes to help senior citizens on fixed incomes stay housed, fed and warm.

When John Day resident Chelsea Johnsen read in December about a woman who was going to lose her apartment due to a major rent increase at the first of the year, she felt she had to do something. She wasn’t the only person.

A handful of people contacted the Astoria Senior Center to see how they could help Marge Glaser, a 74-year-old Astorian living on a fixed income. Their donations ensured Glaser will be able to stay in her apartment for the time being.

But they didn’t want to stop there. The week before Christmas, Johnsen, Senior Center director Larry Miller and many of the people who had reached out to Miller asking how they could help held a meeting. They want to do more for people in similar circumstances.

“Marge is like the perfect person (for this kind of aid),” Johnsen said.

Glaser is a senior on a fixed income, she lives alone, she has lived in the area for decades, she had friends offering temporary places to stay, and she just needed a bit more help to make ends meet.



Colin Murphey/  
The Daily Astorian

Marge Glaser with her dog, Dorothy.

The group plans to open a bank account under the umbrella of the Senior Center’s nonprofit status and are looking for seniors to help. The center will administer any payment of funds, Miller said, and the bank account will solely exist to assist seniors in need.

For now, the group is keeping the criteria for aid loose. Miller hopes they will reach out to local and regional organizations and coordinate their efforts with existing programs and services. Johnsen is considering contacting the Meals on Wheels program to find out which seniors owe money on their accounts. Maybe the group could pay off what’s owed, she said. For now, people interested in getting involved or donating should contact the Senior Center, she said.

Organizations that serve senior populations say the lack of affordable housing options and transportation are the biggest obstacles facing the region’s elderly and lower-income population. Buildings like the Owens-Adair Apartments in Astoria, set aside for low-income seniors, function with wait lists that are several years long.

A former volunteer with the Astoria Warming Center, Johnsen has seen many elderly women end up homeless due to a variety of factors from rent increases to sudden illness and bills piling up.

“I always thought if we could have caught them before they got here,” she said.

## Tillamook power line draws controversy

### Link between Tillamook and Oceanside

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**  
*EO Media Group*

Controversy over an electrical transmission line in Tillamook County is expected to come to a head this year as the developer pursues three key permits.

The 8.6-mile line would cross farmland and forestland, drawing opposition from landowners in its path who worry about imped-

iments to agriculture and logging.

Opponents argue that a new transmission line between Tillamook and Oceanside isn’t justified by actual electricity demand, but may instead be intended as a connection to future wave power or offshore wind energy projects.

The Tillamook Public Utility District, the project’s developer, claims the transmission line is necessary of the electrical grid and denies it’s motivated by renewable energy speculation.

Adding to the tension is the utility’s planned use of

eminent domain to obtain easements along the transmission line’s route.

“It’s really angering people in the Tillamook area, as it should,” said Cameron La Follette, executive director of the Oregon Coast Alliance conservation group.

To begin construction, the utility district would need to obtain a conditional use permit from Tillamook County, a fill-removal permit from the Department of State Lands and eminent domain authority from the Oregon Public Utility Commission.

Those three permits are pending and are expected to undergo public comment in

the coming year.

The Oregon Farm Bureau and Oregon Dairy Farmers Association have both objected to the project.

For dairy farmers affected by the line, it’s problematic for multiple reasons, said Kurt Mizze, whose family owns Tilla-Bay Farms.

“Stray voltage,” which occurs when electricity essentially leaks into the ground, is one concern, he said.

The phenomenon is known to reduce milk production among dairy cows and harm their health.



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Capital Press graphic

