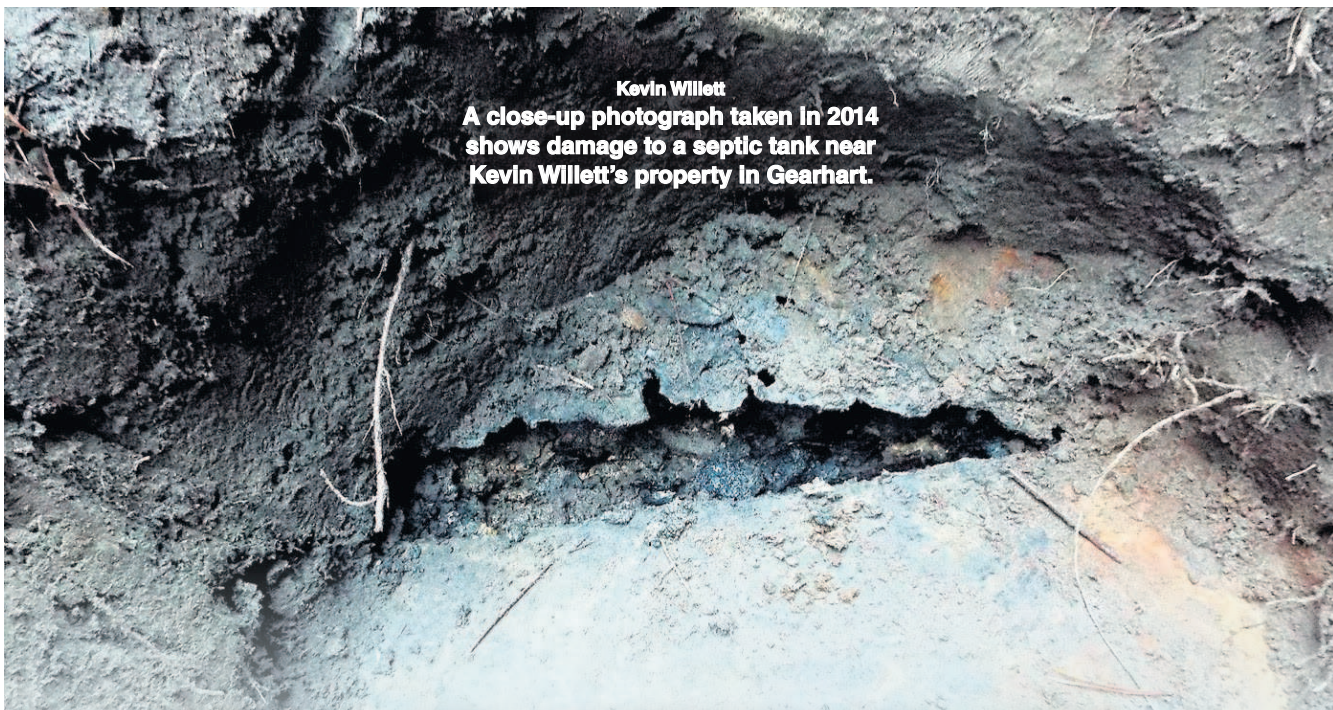


Kevin Willett
A close-up photograph taken in 2014 shows damage to a septic tank near Kevin Willett's property in Gearhart.



DOUBLE TROUBLE

Gearhart neighbors spar over septic system

By R.J. MARX
The Daily Astorian

GEARHART — Duplex owner Kevin Lee Willett says his neighbor Richard Derby's failing septic system is contaminating his property, and the city needs to take immediate action to stop it.

The smell from the leaking system is hurting his property's value and impacting his quality of life.

"When we get a good rain, we'll get a smell," Willett said. "But the biggest concern is raw sewage going into the ground that the city of Gearhart has chosen to turn a blind eye to."

Environmental Health Specialist Nancy Mendoza of the Clatsop County Public Health Department examined the system twice in September and delivered a notice and order to correct the violation to Derby in early October.

"The on-site sewage system is creating a public health and safety hazard for the residents of the home and for the public," Mendoza wrote.

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R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian
Kevin Lee Willett presents a photo he said shows cracking in a neighbor's septic system.



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian
A septic tank at the duplex photographed here on Fifer Heights Road in Gearhart is the source of controversy.



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian
Mayor Arline LaMear will not run for re-election.

LaMear will not seek re-election as Astoria mayor

The former librarian was chosen in 2014

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

Astoria Mayor Arline LaMear, who has guided the city with an understated confidence since her election in 2014, will not seek another term in November.

The mayor cited personal reasons for choosing not to run again.

"I really enjoy knowing how the city works and figuring out ways to make it work better," LaMear said of her role. "I love it."

Her four-year term ends in December, as do the City Council terms of Zetty Nemlowill and Cindy Price. The trio formed the city's first council with a majority of women.

While Nemlowill said she is not yet sure if she will seek re-election, Price is positive she will run again and is contemplating a bid for mayor.

"I certainly plan to be on the ballot in November," Price said. "Whether that's as city councilor or mayor I don't know yet."

LaMear and the two councilors still have an entire year ahead of them regardless, and there remains plenty to keep them busy — from the city budget and vacation rentals to homelessness and affordable housing.

Renewal of the Astoria Library was one of LaMear's priorities and under her watch the council settled on a compromise to renovate the existing 50-year-old building instead of breaking ground on a new library. Plans are also moving forward to turn the historic Waldorf Hotel next door — neglected and empty for years — into affordable housing. On Tuesday, LaMear and Interim Police Chief Geoff Spalding led the second meeting of a new task force intended to address issues surrounding homelessness.

A former librarian, LaMear was elected to the City Council in 2008. When Willis Van Dusen announced his retirement after 24 years as mayor, LaMear felt the council needed someone familiar with the city. She defeated Larry Taylor to win the job, the second woman — after Edith Henningsgaard — to lead the city.

"We will have a new city manager, a new council person, a new finance director," she told The Daily Astorian at the time. "And I think we need someone to be there who can provide continuity. I can provide continuity."

LaMear had also served five years on the Planning Commission. She had served on the Astoria Library Board and the Clatsop County Commission on Children and

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Cindy Price



Zetty Nemlowill

Astoria OKs plans to turn historic Waldorf into apartments

Hope for a long-vacant property near City Hall

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

For the past 30 years, depending on the day and the developer, the historic Waldorf Hotel downtown has been something people want to reopen, rebuild or demolish.

At a meeting Tuesday night, the Astoria Planning Commission unanimously approved a conditional use permit for Innovative Housing, Inc. to turn the Waldorf into 40 workforce housing units with retail space on the bottom floor, putting the vacant and neglected hotel firmly on the path to renovation.

Parking was the one sticking point — though ultimately not a strong one — for some commissioners, given the perceived parking prob-

lems downtown and the Waldorf's location next to City Hall. But they agreed with Commissioner Joan Herman, who said, "We'd be really short-sighted if we were to let parking get in the way of having this building not only restored but also provide more affordable housing."

As a condition of approval, Innovative Housing will work with the owners of downtown leased parking areas to reserve several off-street parking spaces. These spaces will be made available to tenants to lease when the building opens.

"This decision allows us to apply for state funding," said Julie Garver, director of housing development for Innovative Housing, which has a purchase and lease agreement with the building's owners, Groat Brothers, Inc. "This was critical and very much appreciated. ... This was the most critical step of the entire year."

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Jeff Daly
The view in the reception area of the Waldorf Hotel.

