

Waves crash over the South Jetty at Fort Stevens State Park.
Colin Murphey
The Daily Astorian

STORM WAVES POUND COAST

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TRUMP'S FIRST YEAR

North Coast reflects on Trump

Activists believe they've made a mark

Republicans hopeful about president

County voter registration rose by 7 percent

By JACK HEFFERNAN
The Daily Astorian

Scott Lee, chairman of the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners, stood outside his bike shop on the corner of 11th Street and Marine Drive on a drizzly January afternoon last year.

Lee had been distressed for two months after Donald Trump was elected president. Even his father, a Vietnam War veteran who had voted Republican since 1960 and often disagrees with his son politically, could not bring himself to vote for the billionaire businessman.

But on that January day, hundreds of people strode through downtown Astoria as part of the Women's March to counter Trump's

inauguration. On the first full day of Trump's presidency, Lee wore a smile.

"I was very pleased to see one of the largest marches I had ever seen in Astoria," Lee said. "After such a difficult time, it brought hope back to me. I was really hopeful people could push back against the Trump regime."

The march was like an exorcism for progressive activists disappointed with the election. Many directed the energy from the march into a grassroots call to action.

"My concern is that I didn't want it to stop. I wanted to turn it into action," said Deb Vanasse, one of the march organizers. "We need civic engagement. This is no time for complacency from our perspective."

Vanasse and a handful of others launched Indivisible North Coast Oregon, which is loosely affiliated with a nationwide activist organization started by former congressional staffers. The movement encourages civic engagement and promotes progressive

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For supporters, few cracks after an unsteady first year

By DERRICK DePLEDGE
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — Christine Bridgens likes President Donald Trump on the economy and national security, the way the Republican has lifted regulations on business, the way he has defended the country on the international stage.

"There's nothing I don't support about what he has done to put America first," said Bridgens, who serves on the Warrenton Planning Commission.

Michael Seppa, a retired dairy farmer in Lewis and Clark, likes that Trump was the first president in 26 years to speak at the American Farm Bureau Federation's annual convention, a nod to rural America.

"I think he's actually done way better than the press and everybody gives him credit for," said Seppa, the board chairman of the Clatsop Soil and Water Conservation District. "I think the tax cuts are going to be helpful. I just think he's got us headed in the right direction as far as foreign and national policy."

Clatsop County reliably votes for Democrats in presidential elections. Trump, despite being the most polarizing Republican to win the party's nomination in the modern political era, still captured 41 percent of the vote here in 2016. Trump's footprint in the county was roughly the same as former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney in 2012 — 41 percent — and U.S. Sen. John McCain of Arizona in 2008 — 39 percent.

Like across Oregon and the United States, there is something of an urban and rural chasm. Trump fared better in Warrenton and in rural precincts like Lewis and Clark, Knappa and Olney, while former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the Democrat, won in Astoria, Gearhart, Seaside and Cannon Beach.

For many voters in Trumpville, the billionaire real estate tycoon's first year in the White

TRUMPTVILLE

Map shows where President Trump earned votes in Clatsop County.
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House was an unqualified success.

Trump's low job approval rating — 39 percent, according to Gallup — is shrugged off as inaccurate. The special counsel's investigation into Russia's meddling in the election, which has led to federal charges against several of Trump's former advisers, is dismissed as a politically motivated witch hunt. The warnings from Democrats and some establishment Republicans that Trump is a demagogue who is steering the country in a dangerous direction are mocked as hysteria.

Jim Hoffman, the chairman of the county's Republican Central Committee, who lives in Gearhart, believes most local Republicans are optimistic.

"I talk to people every day that are just so happy with what he's doing," he said, even some he doesn't know. "They see my Jeep running around and they have a tendency to open up and start talking with me."

Why?

"Well, it's got a Trump-Pence sticker for one," Hoffman said. "The wheel cover on the back says, 'Help save America, have your liberal spayed or neutered.'"

'Confidence'

Asked to assess Trump's first year, Trump voters interviewed by The Daily Astorian — including several, like Bridgens and Seppa, who represent precincts on the Republican Central Committee — did not mention Russia or the parade of other controversies that have undermined his administration.

"I had a lot of confidence in his honesty, his business sense, his faithfulness to America," Bridgens said of her view of Trump before the election. "I think he is a sincere man who loves this country and cares a great deal about its success."

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Donald Trump



Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Activists voiced their opinions in front of the Clatsop County Courthouse in September.

Preservationists spar over demolition request

Appeal headed to City Council

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

Ted Osborn realizes it's awkward.

The retired architect and former president of the Lower Columbia Preservation Society — who once presented plans to save the dilapidated Waldorf Hotel downtown and received an award from the city for historic preservation — wants to tear down a historic building.

At a Historic Landmarks Commission meeting Wednes-

day night, he argued that a long-neglected house-turned-apartments he and his wife bought last summer on Alameda Avenue is past the point of saving.

Six of the seven commissioners were present and all of them said they could see both sides of the issue.

Commissioner McAndrew Burns pointed out that everyone in the room, whether they were in favor of demolishing the 110-year-old building or not, was a preservationist, dedicated to Astoria's historic buildings.

"It's difficult when everyone is right," Commissioner

Kevin McHone observed.

Ultimately, half of the commission agreed with Osborn's argument, questioning the historic value of a building that has undergone substantial changes over the decades as well as the feasibility of trying to restore it after so many years of neglect.

The other half did not, agreeing instead with the Lower Columbia Preservation Society and city staff who said Osborn had not exhausted all of his options for restoring an important piece of Astoria's history.

City staff recommended denying Osborn's request, saying it did not meet the

city's criteria.

The vote split down the middle — 3-3 — and Osborn's request failed.

After talking it over, Osborn and his wife, Wendy, have decided to appeal the decision to the City Council. Maybe there was a time when the building could have been saved, he said.

He believes pieces of it — features like windows and old growth timbers — could still be salvaged, but the whole building? "I hate tearing down buildings, but this is no longer a building."



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian
A house on Alameda Street in Astoria is the subject of a preservation debate.

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