

Commissioners weigh rental regulations

New taxes, quiet hours and inspections are possible

By JACK HEFFERNAN
The Daily Astorian

As vacation rental policies continue to shape much of the housing discussion on the North Coast, Clatsop County may set a precedent for unincorporated communities.

County commissioners will hold a second reading tonight of a proposed vacation rental ordinance.

All but one of the five commissioners — Scott Lee, the board’s chairman — have expressed concerns. The vote, the result of a 1 1/2-year effort by county staff, will take place a few months after Gearhart residents overwhelmingly rejected a repeal of the city’s regulations.

The ordinance would impose a lodging tax on vacation rentals, set quiet hours between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m., establish rules for owners’ transparency with neighbors, require safety installations such as fire extinguishers, smoke detectors and adequate septic systems and limit occupancy to three people per sleeping area plus two more guests.

Vacation rental owners could lose their permit permanently if three violations are found or temporarily if a serious safety risk is discovered.

Unlike hotels, motels and bed-and-breakfasts, the state does not regulate vacation rentals to ensure health and safety.

“This is a growing industry and it needs to be kind of reined in,” Lee said. “I’m satisfied with the way the ordinance stands right now.”

Others are not as convinced.

The ordinance would require yearly permit renewals and inspections every five years. But Commissioner Kathleen Sullivan, with support from Commissioner Lianne Thompson, has proposed cutting the time frame down for inspections to three years. Sullivan ideally would like to have inspections by a building official once a year, but factors such as staff time and cost — more than \$600 to \$900 per inspection — would make that unfeasible, she said.

“I think a lot can happen in five years,” Sullivan said. “I’ve had constituents reach out to me about their concerns and I think we need to get a handle on it.”

Commissioner Sarah Nebeker, with support from Commissioner Lisa Clement, has opposed a portion of the ordinance that requires one off-street parking space per sleeping area plus one more at



Airbnb

County commissioners may vote on new vacation rental regulations.

each residence.

“I’m just so confused about this,” Nebeker said at a meeting earlier this month. “Why is it a safety issue if someone is renting short term but it’s not a safety issue if you have five cars and live there full time?”

Deliberations about the county ordinance come against the backdrop of a larger divide about how to handle a growing vacation rental industry. The county estimates that the number of vacation rentals in unincorporated areas has nearly doubled since 2010.

Gearhart residents engaged in an intense debate in the weeks before the Novem-

ber election. Supporters of the repeal, such as Nebeker, hoped to loosen regulations she described as “draconian.” Others, like Gearhart Mayor Matt Brown, argued that the regulations are necessary to protect residential neighborhoods.

Lee said before the election that he would monitor the results, though it did not shape his thinking on the county ordinance.

“I didn’t want to go as extreme as the rules are in Gearhart,” Lee said. “I wanted to build a foundation that we could build on in the future.” Stephen Malkowski, owner

of Arch Cape Inn and Retreat in Cannon Beach and a former county planning commissioner, recently called for more stringent regulations in the county in a column for The Daily Astorian.

“Vacation rentals are disrupting neighborhoods, making it harder for individuals and working families to find affordable housing and forcing an increase in our homeless population,” he wrote.

If it passes, the ordinance would go into effect in July. Vacation rental owners would need to apply for a permit within 90 days after the ordinance takes effect.

VACATION RENTALS

The Clatsop County Board of Commissioners will decide tonight whether to approve a vacation rental ordinance. Here is what the ordinance would include:

- Safety requirements: fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, electric wiring protections, secured garbage containers, off-street parking, maximum occupancy, adequate septic systems, properly installed heat sources, railings on stairways, covered hot tubs and emergency escape exits
- Annual permit renewals and safety inspections every five years
- Quiet hours from 10 p.m. to 7 a.m.
- Lodging taxes

The Harbor hires a new director

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

The Harbor, the region’s domestic and sexual violence advocacy group, has hired a new executive director.

Molly Pringle comes from Portland, where she was director of operations for the last several years at Call to Safety, a women’s crisis line. Trained as a midwife, Pringle went back to school and earned a master’s of public health with a focus on health management and policy from Portland State University.

She has been a steering committee member for Oregon Women’s Health Network and helped track behavioral data for a healthcare network’s wellness coalition in Alaska.

Pringle found out about the position with The Harbor through the Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence.

“When I looked into The Harbor specifically, I was really impressed by their val-



Courtesy Molly Pringle
Molly Pringle has been hired as the new executive director of The Harbor.

ues,” she said. “They’re really a survivors’ first organization.”

The Harbor, formerly the Women’s Resource Center, offers a 24-hour crisis line, interventions, shelters, support groups and other services for victims of sexual and domestic violence. The organization recently relocated administrative offices from the Norblad Building to the former Snow & Snow law offices at Eighth and Commercial streets. The group is still looking to move the

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Molly Pringle,
executive director
of The Harbor

Deja Vu Thrift Store, which helps support The Harbor’s operations.

Pringle is the fourth director since Pat Burness retired in 2012 after 20 years with The Harbor. Her successor, Julie Soderberg, left in 2015 without explanation, shortly after attempting to suspend the The Harbor’s services amid a squabble with the board. Melissa Van Horn started in early 2016 but only lasted several months before leaving,

also without explanation.

Sue Farmer, a former board member for The Harbor, served as an interim executive director while the board searched for a permanent replacement. She is no longer with the organization, according to Mindy Stokes, the new chairwoman of The Harbor’s board of directors.

While community interest and belief in The Harbor’s mission is still strong, the group needs more stability, Pringle said. She hopes to hear from the community and build staff knowledge and retention to help ensure the reliability of services.

Pringle was chosen unanimously by a five-member search committee that included three board members, a staffer and a community partner.

“She’s a great advocate for staff,” Stokes said of Pringle, lauding her combination of education and experience.

The Harbor is planning a public introduction of Pringle for February or March.

Cannon Beach directors announce retirement

By BRENNA VISSER
The Daily Astorian

CANNON BEACH – Cannon Beach Planning Director Mark Barnes and Public Works Director Jim Arndt announced their retirement at a City Council work session on Tuesday.

Arndt was hired less than a year ago to fill the vacancy left by former Public Works Director Dan Grassick. He cited personal reasons unrelated to City Hall, but said he still plans to remain in the community. His last day is March 2.

“There are just some personal things I have to take care of. I didn’t think I would have to go so soon,” Arndt said. “(City Hall) is a wonderful group of folks. I wish I could have seen a few things through, but I don’t think the city will miss a beat.”



Mark Barnes



Jim Arndt

Arndt is leaving in the midst of an ongoing debate about water rate increases to finance failing water and sewer infrastructure — a project that has dominated the majority of his tenure since getting hired in May.

“It’s been a tortuously long process, but I think we moved the ball down the road. We got out the message these infrastructure needs need to be addressed, and the public is understanding that,” he said. “That’s the first step.”

Barnes, who has been with the city for five years, plans

to leave his post by the end of October.

“Everyone has to retire someday,” Barnes said.

After more than 30 years serving as a planning director and consultant around the North Coast, he said he was ready to take some time for himself. He looks forward to spending more time with his family and traveling. As for any reminiscing about his time at City Hall?

“Let’s talk in October,” he said.

City Manager Bruce St. Denis said while the city looks for Arndt’s replacement, Assistant Public Works Director Karen La Bonte will serve as the interim. St. Denis hopes to contract with Jensen Strategies — the same firm who helped recruit St. Denis for the city manager position — to help hire for both positions.

“Luckily, we’ve got someone totally qualified to step in (for Arndt),” St. Denis said.

As for Barnes, St. Denis hopes to hire a new planning director by July so there is time for Barnes to train the new hire before he leaves.

With St. Denis only two months on the job as city manager, he said losing two department heads so early in his tenure could bring “some potential challenges” as he transitions into his own role.

Overall, St. Denis feels confident in the city’s ability to move forward.

“Both have been excellent. Mark is amazing at answering my questions. He has such a wealth of institutional knowledge we have to pass on,” St. Denis said. “And Jim is so knowledgeable in his field. He’s done a great job for us. I’d keep both of them if I could.”

Warrenton finalizes new subdivision standards

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — New subdivisions in Warrenton have 20 lots or more will now have to include parks for residents.

The City Commission conducted a final reading of an

ordinance Tuesday night that adds new standards for subdivisions as well as new requirements for street width to the development code.

The changes will not affect projects in the works now, but will be required of future projects, according to city staff.

Developers looking to

build subdivisions will need to devote at least 5 percent of a project area to parkland. Subdivision residents will be responsible for maintaining the parks.

The new street width requirements will apply to any new street construction, whether by private develop-

ers or the city. New local roads will now be required to have a curb-to-curb pavement width of 36 feet, an attempt, in part, to gradually widen the city’s narrow roads. Wider roads will allow cars to park on both sides of the street and ensure access for fire engines and other emergency vehicles.

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On the docks of the West Mooring Basin, by the Riverwalk Inn

Q: Is steelhead a trout or a salmon?

A: It is a trout, but it belongs to the same family (Salmonidae) as the salmon. Their flavor, appearance and behavior are very similar. Both species are born in fresh water, move out to the ocean to mature and then return to the fresh water to spawn. The difference is the steelhead don’t usually die after spawning and are able to spawn more than once. We offer steelhead, caught by the Native American tribes in the Quinalt and Hoh rivers.