



THE **DAILY ASTORIAN**

READ ABOUT THIS YEAR'S **READERS' CHOICE AWARD WINNERS** IN COAST WEEKEND • **INSIDE**

145TH YEAR, NO. 163

DailyAstorian.com // THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2018

ONE DOLLAR



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

The Clatsop County jail in Astoria is overcrowded.

County could put jail bond on November ballot

Commissioners likely to decide in March

By **JACK HEFFERNAN**
The Daily Astorian

Clatsop County commissioners will likely decide next month if a \$23.8 million proposal to relocate the county jail in Astoria to a larger facility in Warrenton

will be referred to voters in November.

The design includes 148 beds with space to expand in the future at the site of the closed North Coast Youth Correctional Facility. The county jail on Duane Street — roughly 40 years old — holds about 60 inmates. The Oregon Youth Authority has offered to hand the Warrenton facility over to the county at no cost.

County Manager Cameron Moore said the county could use cash reserves to pay

\$2 million to \$3 million for the new jail. The county may also request that the state, which operated the youth facility until it closed in October, pay up to \$3.2 million for deferred maintenance costs.

The relocation plan will depend on political will, however, and local officials previewed their case at a meeting Wednesday night.

See **JAIL**, Page 7A

Elk concerns on the rise in Warrenton



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

A herd of elk grazes in Hammond.

Residents worry about damage to property and safety on the road

By **KATIE FRANKOWICZ**
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — While residents sat at City Hall in early February and asked their mayor what could be done about elk roaming downtown, five young bull elk nibbled grass in front of a house several blocks away.

Warrenton isn't Gearhart, where elk are the bane of a golf course, a protective mother elk once menaced beachgoers and people have reported being stuck in their homes or threatened in the streets.

But some locals believe the Warrenton herd is turning into a similar problem,

growing in size and becoming too comfortable in town. They worry about damage to property and safety on the road.

"We're just keeping a sharp eye and staying in contact with Gearhart to see what they're doing," Mayor Henry Balensifer assured people who brought the issue to his attention at two of his informal weekly coffee meetings this month.

Rangers at Lewis and Clark National Historical Park hope to provide more data that could inform management decisions going forward. They plan to attach GPS collars to six elk this year if the money

See **ELK**, Page 7A

'THERE'S CAUSE FOR CONCERN AND THERE ARE ISSUES — GARDENS BEING EATEN AND YARDS BEING TRAMPLED.'

Carla Cole | natural resources project manager at Lewis and Clark National Historical Park

Astoria narrows list of parks up for sale

Birch Field is most likely to go

By **KATIE FRANKOWICZ**
The Daily Astorian

Of the four park sites the Astoria City Council discussed selling at a meeting Wednesday, one could have its park designation removed and be put up for sale, one is off the table entirely and the remaining two are in limbo for now.

City councilors will consider removing Birch Field, a ballpark in Alderbrook, from the city's list of parks with the hopes that it will be sold and developed to address housing needs. Questions remain about how feasible it would be for someone to develop the marshy field. Public Works staff said the site could also be a location for a stormwater treatment facility.

Of the four properties, Birch Field is considered the easiest to sell and the most feasible to develop.

City councilors asked staff to talk to surrounding property owners about any interest in the historic Tidal Rock site off Marine Drive near Fort George Brewery and the Astor Hotel, but will not take any other steps toward selling the property for now. The city has a one-year agreement with local artists to maintain the sunken, overgrown site and create an art installation there.

City Councilor Zetty Nemlowill, who is married to one of Fort George's owners, said the brewery might be interested in Tidal Rock if it were put on the market.

"But I don't know for what," she said.

Staff will also gather more information about what it would mean to move a historic customs house replica from a park site that is complicated by city sewer lines and access issues near Safeway off Lief Erikson Drive. It is possible the site could be divided and one small section of the lot could be sold. There

See **PARKS**, Page 7A

Warrenton schools to call public about bond for new campus

Enrollment has grown during building boom

By **EDWARD STRATTON**
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — If you live in the Warrenton-Hammond School District, prepare for a phone call.

The school board on Wednesday signed off on gauging public opinion for a bond plan to move middle school grades and eventually the entire school district to higher ground.

A facilities planning

committee last month recommended a series of three bond measures over the next 14 years to relocate the quickly growing school district out of the tsunami inundation zone. The effort would start with a \$32.4 million bond measure in the November election to buy a new 70- to 80-acre master campus and build a middle school.

Superintendent Mark Jeffery said the committee looked at demographic data for the school district on how many voters there are, how often they vote and who's more likely to back a bond. The district's boundaries include around 4,500 voters spread over more

than 2,800 households. Residents 60 years and older voted at by far the highest rates over the past four elections.

"Ours is a tough sell, I'll tell you," Jeffery said of the bond plan. "Not only looking at our demographics, but looking at what we're really trying to do, it's going to take us 18 years to finish what we're wanting to start, and that's not always an easy sell."

The school district will reach out to the community through a phone poll to establish a baseline of support before bringing a recommendation to the board in April

See **WARRENTON**, Page 7A



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

The Warrenton school district will ask voters about a potential bond plan.

