

Jewell to consider shorter school week

Four-day week might help reduce absences

By **BRENNA VISSER**
The Daily Astorian

JEWELL — Jewell School District is exploring the possibility of a four-day school week.

Superintendent Alice Hunsaker introduced the idea at Monday night's school board meeting on behalf of numerous families and staff who inquired about the option.

Some in the district are advocating for a shorter week as a way to help reduce both student and teacher absences, Hunsaker said.

"After doing the research, I thought it was worth bringing up for your consideration," she said to the board.

It's a move many rural

school districts have made. The benefits of a shortened week mostly revolve around travel. Due to Jewell's relatively remote location, student athletes and musicians often have to miss more class than their centrally-located counterparts when traveling long distances to games and competitions. Staff members struggle to attend professional development courses without racking up sub days. Parents also have mentioned that having a day off to make the hourlong drive into town for things like doctor and dentist appointments could alleviate stress, Hunsaker said.

"We struggle for staff to get the professional development they need," she said. "If staff were all available on a Friday, then we could bring the training here rather than taking the time and expense to send a handful of people out. The bottom line is we can't educate



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The Jewell School District is exploring a four-day school week.

well if our kids aren't here and our teachers aren't here."

In general, shortening the week would unlikely be a cost-saving mechanism.

"Any savings would be minimal. That would not be a reason for me to make that kind of change, personally," she said.

Some board members

were skeptical, however, and requested more data about the number of absences correlated with student travel and personal development. There were also concerns about how a day off in the week could be a burden to working parents with small children.

"The other part of the conversation here is about child

care. What about families with younger kids? They may have to find someone to watch their child another day of the week," board member Ginger Kaczinski said.

Hunsaker said while that has been a sticking point in the past when the idea was proposed, demographics in Jewell have changed. With less than 150 students enrolled in the kindergarten-through-12th-grade school, more than 90 percent of families have a parent or relative who is home full time, or parents who do not work hours that conflict with regular school hours.

But board member Brian Meier saw a shortened school week leading to overall less time in the classroom.

"All I see is your in-class time being less than what we have now, and teachers are already saying they don't have enough time," Meier said. "We

love providing field trips to show kids experiences outside of Jewell. If you're going to shorten educational time, how are you going to fit in things like field trips? What happens to the benefits kids get?"

Hunsaker said there are "creative ways to recapture time" throughout the school day. Days could be longer, and late-start Wednesdays could be restored to a regular school day.

The school district plans to send out a community survey this month to gauge the community's reception to a modified schedule. It will include a basic list of pros and cons, as well as a few mock-up schedules of what a school day would look like. Results of the survey will help determine whether the board continues to pursue the schedule change for next school year.

"I believe this is a community decision," Hunsaker said.

Hotel: It would employ 25 people full time, and up to 35 seasonally

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setbacks, to help protect views. The hotel would include balconies on the middle two floors, with the top floor set back without decks. The building is also slightly smaller than the 30,000-square-foot limit allowed in the zone.

"I'm not going to tell you that at certain points along Marine Drive that this building would not block your views," said Michelle Black, an architect on the project. "Certainly, as you progress down, you will have more and less of a view ... regardless of what building is blocking your view."

The height of the building includes digging down 3 feet into the site, as far as the company could go, said Sam Mullen, an asset and development manager for Hollander Investments.

Some people also took issue with the exterior of the hotel — which would include synthetic wood siding, corrugated metal, rust coloring and other aesthetic nods to nearby buildings — calling it out of character with the surrounding city and the site.

The boiler in front of the proposed hotel, from the former White Star cannery, was designated a historical land-



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Sam Mullen, left, an asset and development manager for Hollander Investments, and architect Michelle Black with Carleton Hart Architecture took questions Monday from the public on a proposed Fairfield Inn and Suites on the Astoria waterfront.

mark in 2015 by the city's Historic Landmarks Commission, along with surrounding pilings and ballast rock. As opposed to historic districts with prescribed looks for homes, The Ship Inn site requires interpreting the look of several disparate elements, Mullen said.

"In some ways, it's kind of like, 'take your best shot,'" he said.

The historic criteria for the area is more broad than prescriptive, and the building design tries to pull colors and elements from the surrounding site, rather than mimicking

an old cannery building, Black said.

"We were really trying to go for a more modern take, using elements and materials — metal railing, rust-colored siding — things that would not detract from the site," she said.

The proposed hotel must

go through the Astoria Design Review Committee and the Historic Landmarks Commission. The hope is those public meetings will come in March or April, Mullen said, adding his company is open to another public vetting of the hotel similar to Monday's meeting.

"We want you to like the building," Mullen said.

The hotel would employ 25 people full time and up to 35 seasonally, Mullen said. Asked about the challenge of housing for employees, he said the hope is that aside from five or six managerial positions, many of the workers would be local youths starting out in their first job.

Hollander Investments, which had originally competed for the operation of the Astoria Riverwalk Inn, has also leased a strip of land from the Port of Astoria near Maritime Memorial Park. Near the end of the meeting, Mullen was asked about a rumor that his company wants to develop five Marriotts in the region. Part of the reason for the outreach to the community was to dispel such misinformation, he said.

"We don't even know how successful we're going to be on this first one, just from a city standpoint," Mullen said. "We truly don't. That's why I told Marriott today, 'I'll tell you when I know stuff.' We want to deliver a good product. We want to do a good job. We would love to develop a second hotel at some point, but we're not even remotely close to planning anything because, we just don't know."

Kujala: 'Dismayed' by the partisanship in recent county commission elections

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Even as a city commissioner and mayor, Kujala imagined potentially serving on the county commission.

"I've been thinking about it for a long time," he said. "I thought it's a natural fit."

Kujala, 47, graduated from Warrenton High School and has a business degree from Oregon State University. In the past, he has served on the boards of Liberty Restoration, the Clatsop County Community College Foundation, Clatsop Economic Development Resources and the Way to Wellville committee. He has also been a Warrenton Rotary Club president and an Astoria Regatta admiral and admiral's aide.

Prior to stepping down as mayor, the Skipanon Brand Seafood owner said he wanted to focus more time on his business. Kujala is now the membership coordinator for the Astoria-Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce.

"I had some issues with our business, so I had to step down, restructure things and get a new job. So that's what I did," he said.

Jobs, economic development, public safety, urban renewal and levee certification were some of the focuses of his time as mayor. He also oversaw tense disputes such as Oregon LNG's attempts to build a pipeline and terminal in the area, as well as a debate between the city and the Skipanon Water Control District over control of the Eighth Street Dam.

Scott Lee, the county board's chairman, holds the District 1 position but

announced last year that he would not seek re-election. Kujala said he would like to see the commission work closer with other local bodies.

"I would've liked to have had more input from him and to have given more input," Kujala said of Lee and the county while he was mayor. "I'd want to have more of that with the commission, and I think I'd be effective at that."

Kujala also said he has been "dismayed" by the partisanship he has seen in recent county commission elections.

"I see political parties

becoming more involved in counties in general," Kujala said, while differentiating from his time as a Warrenton commissioner. "We didn't care about Ds and Rs. We cared about ideas. I just would hate to see a hardening of positions based on what your political party is."

County commissioners have been divided in the past year over the scope of their roles. Commissioners Lianne Thompson and Kathleen Sullivan have called for the board to play a more active role in county operations. Kujala,

meanwhile, said he would work collaboratively with county staff but that daily decisions are not within the commission's purview.

"I think the county charter is where you decide the role," Kujala said. "The charter says the county manager is in charge of day-to-day operations."

George McCartin — a retired attorney and regular presence at public meetings — and Andrew Davis — a medical data analyst — have also filed for the seat. The district covers Warrenton, Hammond and the west end of Astoria.

Two other positions on the board will be up for election in the May 15 primary.

Peter Roscoe — a former Astoria city councilor and Fulio's Pastaria owner — and Pamela Wev — an Astoria land use consultant — have filed for the District 3 seat. That seat is currently held by Lisa Clement, a co-owner of Cle-

mente's Seafood who has not announced whether she will seek re-election.

The District 5 position is held by Thompson, who will campaign for a second term. Susana Gladwin, a Jewell farmer, has also filed for the seat.

The filing deadline for the primary is today.

Thank you!

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