

# House: The building divided historic preservationists

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desperately needs, she said. Nor is it clear that the city would approve other possible plans such as moving all or a portion of the building out of the slide area and into an adjacent city right-of-way.

"The most likely outcome of denying this appeal is going to be a boarded up vacant building that sits for years and, ironically, probably the city will start assessing penalties to the current owner for not fixing it up," Price said.

It is clear the building needs to come down, Mayor Arline LaMear said.

The council tentatively approved Osborn's appeal. City staff will present findings of fact to reflect the decision at a future meeting.

## 'It's not fun, it's not easy'

City staff had recommended denying Osborn's request because it didn't meet the city's criteria and the building divided historic preservationists. The Historic Landmarks Commission saw both sides of the argument: Why Osborn wanted to tear the building down and why others wanted to save it.

Doug Thompson, a volunteer with the Lower Columbia Preservation Society, told the City Council about other historic structures he has been involved in saving. One house was in just as bad a shape as Osborn's Alameda prop-



The basement of the house on Alameda Street shows signs of structural issues.

erty. But, built in 1877, it was among one of the oldest dwellings in Uppertown on the east side.

"I know how difficult these projects are," he said. "I've been through it myself. It's not fun, it's not easy, but it's worthwhile."

Ed Overbay, a woodworker, homebuilder and a participant in Clatsop Community College's historic preservation program, argued that not every building that is old is worth the massive effort to save it.

"The deadline to save this particular building, in my professional opinion, was a good 30, 40 years ago," he said.

Rachel Jensen, president of the Lower Columbia Preservation Society, argued in January that the structure was important to preserve the types of working-class housing tied to the history of the Alameda neighborhood. She acknowledged the building has major structural issues, but she questioned Osborn's assessment that it was "too far gone to be saved."

Others questioned Osborn's assertion that he had originally hoped to save the building and only discovered how far gone it was after he purchased it. Sarah Bardy, owner of Eleventh Street Barber, who is restoring an old home in Astoria, said she could understand a first-time homebuyer being fooled and not realizing what kind of a project they were getting into.

She pointed to Osborn's career as an architect and his long experience in construction and historic preservation. She asked how someone with his expertise could make such a grave error.



The interior of the property shows signs of damage and decay.

"I believe this building was purchased with the intent to be demolished," she said.

## Build something else

City Councilor Bruce Jones believed that as well, but said he could see why the Historic Landmarks Commission ended in a split decision.

"I think he was pretty well aware of the terrible condition of the building so I have a hard time thinking you had a serious intent to rehabilitate it and put six housing units back in service after you ejected your tenants," he said.

But without any engineering report from the city to rebut

the dire report from an engineer Osborn hired to examine the property, Jones agreed it was not economically feasible to restore the house.

Osborn was pleased to have the City Council's full support. He plans to proceed with his plan to demolish the building and salvage what he can.

"I think my intent is what I always said," Osborn said after the meeting. "I want to take it apart myself. I'm going to make a pile of big wood over there and little wood over there and windows here. ... I'll still probably build something because that's what I do."

# Trump: District Attorney Marquis said he thinks 'it's a publicity stunt'

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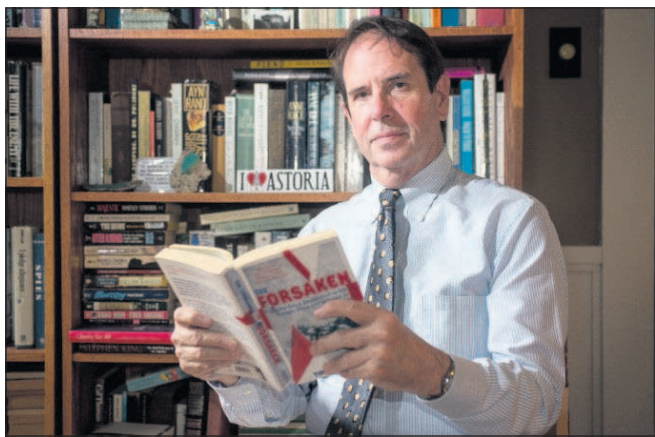
Opioids have killed tens of thousands of people across the country in recent years and are a significant problem in Clatsop County and across Oregon. But local attorneys pointed to legal and strategic flaws with the president's idea.

Clatsop County District Attorney Josh Marquis has prosecuted four death penalty cases, testified in its favor before Congress and written extensively about the subject. But he said the scope of the death penalty nationally — applied in about 1 out of every 500 murder cases — is clear and fair.

"That's appropriate. It should be that way," he said.

Marquis said seeking the death penalty for drug traffickers would "cheapen" the punishment, and he doubts its constitutionality.

"If we could directly prove that a drug dealer actually killed people, maybe it could fly. It's going to be very, very hard to prove that," Marquis



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

District Attorney Josh Marquis opposes President Donald Trump's plan to impose the death penalty on drug pushers.

said. "You have to be able to say with a straight face that this is a penalty that is rarely sought."

Mason Benoit, an Astoria criminal defense attorney, also opposes Trump's idea. He agrees with Marquis that the legal basis will be difficult to prove.

"I personally think it's a stupid, stupid idea," Benoit said.

Oregon has the death penalty but has not executed a

convict since 1997. Gov. Kate Brown agreed to continue a state moratorium on capital punishment announced by Gov. John Kitzhaber in 2011.

"It might get some traction given our current political climate," Benoit said of Trump's idea, "but I don't see it ever becoming an issue here."

The idea was likely not properly thought through before Trump's speech, Marquis said. "To be blunt, I think it's a publicity stunt."



# ELECTION FORUM

WHEN: 7 p.m. Tuesday, April 3

WHERE: Astoria High School auditorium, 1001 W. Marine Drive

Presented by the Astoria Branch of the American Association of University Women and The Daily Astorian

Come listen to and ask questions of primary candidates for Clatsop County Commission, state House of Representatives and U.S. Congress

Questions? Bartell.Liz@gmail.com or 503-200-8605

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