

# Youth: Homeless task force will meet again

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Clatsop County has an estimated 161 homeless and unsheltered youth ages 18 to 24, according to the 2017 point-in-time count — an increase over prior years, said Astoria Mayor Arline LaMear, who brought the letter of support to the City Council for approval at a meeting Monday night.

“Establishing a coordinated approach for these youth is a community issue, requiring a multifaceted approach which includes stakeholders, service providers, resource managers and other levels of local and state government,” the letter stated.

The letter of support suggested a variety of services the grant money could fund, including youth shelters, drop-in centers, independent-living training, job training and educational services.

“No one specific service has yet been identified — this will be the role of our community partners who deal with

youth,” the letter stated. LaMear and the other city councilors have struggled to find concrete ways for the city to address homelessness. Some councilors have noted that one of the best things the city can do is support other organizations’ efforts to provide housing and outreach programs.

In January, LaMear signed a letter that supported Helping Hand’s purchase of a building in Uniontown. The Seaside nonprofit wants to expand into Astoria, establishing re-entry programs and a temporary housing facility for homeless people struggling to get back on their feet.

A task force led by LaMear and Police Chief Geoff Spald-

ing has explored policies and solutions. A previous iteration of the task force linked a lack of public bathrooms to increased instances in people using downtown areas and parks to relieve themselves. That task force’s recommendation resulted in the installation of several portable bathrooms along the Astoria Riverwalk.

Public urination and defecation issues came up again this winter, however.

The task force will meet again April 16. The meetings so far have focused around education and discussion about the many facets of homelessness and the challenges of addressing it across communities in Clatsop County.



The Astoria City Council has backed a federal grant to help homeless youth. Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

## Police looking at ‘red flags’ in cliff crash

By GENE JOHNSON and PHUONG LE Associated Press

SEATTLE — Investigators said Monday they were examining “red flags” in a Washington state family’s past in hopes of explaining why their SUV went off a 100-foot cliff in an apparent suicide plunge.

The wreckage was discovered last week on rocks along the coast near Mendocino, California, a few days after child welfare authorities in Washington began investigating whether the children were being abused or neglected.

The Hart family’s two moms and three of the six adopted children were found dead; the three others are missing and presumed dead, possibly washed out to sea.

Police said Monday that social service authorities in Oregon contacted the West Linn Police Department about the family in 2013 while they were living in the area.

The questions were referred to the Oregon Department of Human Services, which cited privacy laws in refusing to confirm or deny the agency was involved.

Long before the crash, Sarah Hart pleaded guilty in 2011 to a domestic assault charge in Minnesota over what she said was a spanking given to one of her children. And last month, concerned neighbors in Woodland, Washington, contacted child welfare authorities, saying the children may have been going hungry.

On Sunday, authorities announced that data from the vehicle’s software suggested the crash was deliberate.

The SUV had stopped at a pull-off area then sped straight off the cliff, Capt. Greg Baarts of the California Highway Patrol said. Baarts said that as far as he knew, investigators had not found a suicide note.

Marcus Mazza, an engineer and accident-reconstruction expert with Lancaster, Pennsylvania-based Robson Forensic, said investigators could use data to determine factors such as the speed of the vehicle; the engine speed; how much force the driver was exerting on the gas pedal; and whether the driver had depressed the brake.

In interviews with friends and relatives, “there have been red flags,” Baarts said. He did not elaborate.

Days before the wreck was discovered, neighbors called Washington state child-welfare authorities to say one of the youngsters had been coming to their house almost daily asking for something to eat and complaining that his parents were withholding food as punishment.

Investigators last week obtained a search warrant for the family’s home in Woodland and looked for itineraries, bank and phone records, credit card receipts, journals or other documents that might shed light on the case.



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