



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

The Astoria budget includes money for a new police officer.

Budget: Chief Spalding says his biggest priority is to fully staff the patrol force

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Still, the city was able to increase its lodging tax rate at the beginning of the year and funnel some of the extra money to the Parks and Recreation Department in an effort to stabilize the department's funding. Meanwhile, marijuana tax revenue will fund the new police officer position — a use of the money city councilors had pushed for in past discussions.

But even with this additional money, city departments will operate on tight budgets, Estes said at budget committee meetings. The parks department will need to

be especially cautious. This year is the first attempt to capture the real costs of running the department without substantial transfers from the city's general fund to fill in the gaps.

Loran Mathews, the chairman of the budget committee, asked during budget hearings in April if the increase in police staff meant an officer would be assigned to Clatsop County's drug task force, an interagency team that investigates drug activity in the county.

Police Chief Geoff Spalding said that while the task force does need assistance and there are major drug problems

in the county, his biggest priority is to fully staff the department's patrol force. There is not much time for proactive enforcement, he said. But he does hope to build the department back up to a place where it can be involved in teams like the drug task force, or add back a school resource officer.

In addition to a new officer, the police department will combine two part-time positions to create a full-time records specialist position this fiscal year.

The budget also contains 3 percent increases in sewer and water rates. The city estimates this will add approximately \$4.20 each month to

a residential bill based on the use of 7,500 gallons of water. The City Council is expected to vote on the increases later this month.

There will be no increase to the combined sewer overflow surcharge, which stands at 97 percent of the basic charge and consumption charge water users pay. The city is in the middle of completing sewer improvements to meet federal Clean Water Act requirements and reduce the flow of wastewater into the Columbia River after heavy rains. The surcharge goes to help pay for the project and has increased slowly over the years.

Methane: The Nautilus will start its journey next week in San Francisco

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But only around 100 seep sites had been identified until a couple of years ago, when scientists began surveying with new multibeam sonar technology aboard the research vessel Nautilus, owned and operated by the Ocean Exploration Trust.

The new sonar allows researchers to rapidly locate and map the methane seeps. Researchers have mapped nearly 40 percent of the ocean floor along the Cascadia Subduction Zone with the Nautilus' sonar, Merle said, and hope to cover more on this expedition. An onboard remotely operated submersible — Hercules — is deployed to collect samples of gas, methane hydrate, water, fauna and rocks near the seeps, which often support a diverse array of life.

In their survey, researchers found that much of the methane below an ocean depth of 1,600 feet was solidified hydrates, while higher up it usually appears as a gas in bubble streams. One theory is that warming seas turn the hydrates into carbon dioxide gases and contribute to ocean acidification, Merle said.

Leading the upcoming expedition is Tamara Baumberger, a researcher with the Cooperative Institute for Marine Resources Studies operated by Oregon State and NOAA at the Hatfield Marine Science Center. On the previous expedition, Baumberger sampled some of the bubbles and found chemical signatures pointing to the source of the methane.

"When methane is in sea-

water, it often is oxidized into carbon dioxide by microbial activity, which can keep much of it from reaching the atmosphere," Baumberger said in a news release about the previous expedition. "The downside, of course, is that the newly formed carbon dioxide is also a problem and it can both reach the atmosphere and increase ocean acidification."

Methane released into shallow water reaches the atmosphere quicker because bacteria in the water has less time to oxidize the gas, Baumberger said. Part of the new expedition is trying to map and study more shallow-water methane seeps.

Whether methane could be economically extracted from the ocean floor remains a question. Several countries have explored mining the hydrates as an alternative energy source. But the deposits are widely distributed, said Robert Embley, an Oregon State geophysicist and lead scientist on the previous expedition.

"One concern is what would happen during a major Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake," Embley said in a release. "It would add more permeability to the sea floor, add more pathways for the methane to escape, and increase the potential for its release to the atmosphere."

The Nautilus leaves San Francisco next week and will survey all along the Cascadia Subduction Zone through the end of the month, including just south of the Astoria canyon. Video of the dives by Hercules will be made available at nautiluslive.org

Seaside: The ballroom, meeting rooms will be expanded

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for upgrades. Overall, the new project adds about 10,000 square feet to the existing facility, for a total of 55,000 square feet, an increase of nearly 19 percent.

The ballroom and meeting rooms will be expanded; restrooms and staircases relocated. Carpeting and lighting

will be replaced throughout. A two-story addition on the east side of the building will overlook Broadway and the Necanicum River.

Under Monday's cloudless sky, members of the City Council and the key players of the design and construction team — including Keely O'Brien of O'Brien and Co. Construction in Can-

non Beach, project manager Jason Stegner of Kloss Group LLC and Michael Schmidt of Portland's Holst Architecture — marked the official launch of the 15-month project.

A steady thump-thump accompanied the ceremony, as crews were already at work ripping out concrete on the east side of the build-

ing. Barber, city councilors and building officials leaned into their shovels as cameras shutters clicked and dirt flew.

"The city fathers showed great wisdom in coming up with this idea 40 years ago," Barber said. "It has become the engine that has driven the economy through the winter months and year-round."



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

Work is underway in Seaside.

TV SCHEDULE

Table with columns for time slots (6 PM, 6:30, 7 PM, 7:30, 8 PM, 8:30, 9 PM, 9:30, 10 PM, 10:30, 11 PM, 11:30) and rows for various TV channels (KATU, KOMO, KING, KOIN, KIRO, KGW, KRCW, KOPB, KPTV, KPDX, KCPC, KZJO, ESPN, ESPN2, NICK, DISN, FAM, FMC, LIFE, ROOT, FS1, SPIKE, COM, HIST, A&E, TLC, DISC, NGE0, TNT, AMC, USA, FOOD, HGTV, FX, CNN, FNC, CNBC, BRAV, TCM, SYFY, RFD) listing their respective programs.

Advertisement for Nehalem Valley Winery featuring the text: 'Just for the Fun of it! Ride with us to Nehalem Valley Winery for an fun afternoon of wine tasting Thursday June 14th at 1PM Call Heather at 503-738-0307 for more information and to reserve your spot today.'