

## County budget increased for third straight year

### Commissioners back \$70.1M spending plan

By JACK HEFFERNAN  
The Daily Astorian

Clatsop County's budget for the upcoming fiscal year has been set at \$70.1 million.

County commissioners voted unanimously Wednesday to adopt the spending plan for the fiscal year, which begins Sunday. The budget represents a 34 percent increase over the past three years.

A large chunk of that money comes from funds that were saved and have rolled over into the current fiscal year. Contingency funds accounted for \$18.4 million of the budget last year and will total \$21.8 million this year.

"It looks like your budget is increasing, but some of that is just contingencies," Budget and Finance Director Monica Steele said.

For county employees, a rise in the cost of living adjustment, health benefits and the state Public Employees Retirement System have also driven the

increase, Steele said. The budget includes room for nine new full-time employees, bringing the capacity of the county government workforce to 222. The county hopes to hire a land use code compliance officer, building inspector and several Public Works Department employees.

Included in the budget is \$20,000 in additional funds available for the county to give to outside agencies. The allotment for outside agencies — typically nonprofit organizations — was slashed in half during an economic downturn to \$15,000. Commissioners had discussed increasing the amount at previous meetings, and the county Human Services Advisory Council has recommended a bump.

"We certainly do know that we have these problems in our community — higher than a lot of the other rural counties — and I don't know how we would assess all of this," Commissioner Sarah Nebeker said. "But that's why these early intervention programs are so essential, because down the road, it will help alleviate some of those more expensive later problems into adolescence and adulthood."

## County finalizes jail ballot measure

### Will ask taxpayers for \$20 million

By JACK HEFFERNAN  
The Daily Astorian

Taxpayers will be asked in November to approve up to \$20 million in general obligation bonds for the proposed Clatsop County Jail relocation.

County commissioners gave a nod in March to place the plan on the general election ballot at a \$23.8 million price tag. County officials have said some of the money for the project could come from a special project fund and cash reserves. The bonds would cost taxpayers about 21 cents per \$1,000 in assessed property value, or about \$42 per year for \$200,000 in property value, according to the sheriff's office.

If voters approve the bond, the jail will be relocated from Duane Street in Astoria to the former North Coast Youth Correctional Facility in Warrenton. Capacity would rise from 60 inmates to 148 with room for future expansion.

Due to overcrowding, several inmates are released each week before their court cases are resolved without posting bail.

Officials say that without a new jail, the county will have to rent beds from other jails outside of the area. Remodeling the now-defunct youth correctional facility is estimated to cost about half as much as building a new facility.

In other business Wednesday, commissioners:

- Approved a three-year collective bargaining agreement with county employees. The agreement specifies that yearly wage adjustments will range from 2.5 percent to 4.5 percent.

## Federal agents make arrests at Portland ICE building

By JIM RYAN  
The Oregonian

At least nine protesters were arrested as authorities broke up part of the protest camp surrounding southwest Portland's Immigration and Customs Enforcement headquarters early this morning.

Federal authorities issued a brief statement saying, in part, that "federal law enforcement officers initiated a law enforcement action to reopen" the building, which is on Southwest Macadam Avenue.

Shortly after 6 a.m., dozens of officers, some in riot gear, were lined up on the streets and outside the building entrance. Macadam had been blocked by police vehicles.

By 7:30 a.m., the camp immediately surrounding the headquarters had been torn down. But much of the camp on adjacent properties remained.

Dozens of protesters continued to mill around Southwest Bancroft Street and Moody Avenue. They heckled officers a line of officers blocking access to the headquarters, but no clashes were reported.

Also about 7:30 a.m., vehicles were seen entering the driveway to the building, which had been blocked by protesters for more than week. Roughly 20 minutes later, traffic began to flow on Southwest Macadam Avenue and Moody avenues as well as Bancroft Street, though the street directly in front of the head-



Anna Sporre/The Oregonian

A protester is arrested as authorities broke up part of the protest camp surrounding southwest Portland's Immigration and Customs Enforcement headquarters.

quarters remained blocked.

Protesters had torn down at least one wooden wall that had been erected at the camp and were taking down a second wall, parallel to Bancroft.

ICE officials raised the flag above the headquarters about 9:30 p.m., drawing jeers from the crowd.

Protesters have been posted up outside the building in a round-the-clock occupation for well more than a week.

Robert Sperling, Federal Protective Service spokesman, said U.S. Department of Homeland Security agents in riot gear were on scene clearing federal property to facilitate the reopening of the building.

Sperling said about 5:30 p.m. authorities warned protesters it was time to move off of the federal facility. He said officers then moved onto the property and cleared the part of the camp on federal property.

He said officers were holding the line between federal property and private property. He said officers would be there "for a while, and continue to maintain the security of this facility."

He said there were no violent confrontations and that the action was "very calm."

Sperling said he didn't know the specific charges those who were arrested face.

A spokesman for Fed-

eral Protective Services said the goal of today's action was to provide access to the ICE building. Once that was accomplished, he said there were no plans to completely clear the encampment from the surrounding area.

When asked what would happen if protesters move back onto the property, Sperling replied: "We will be here for as long as we need to be."

Roberta Altstadt, spokeswoman for TriMet, which owns and leases out much of the property near the ICE headquarters, said the agency is "checking with property partners" after this morning's action.

## Massive baby boom helping starfish recovery

By CASSANDRA PROFITA  
Oregon Public Broadcasting

Scientists say starfish populations are recovering from a devastating die-off with help from a massive baby boom.

A wasting disease in 2014 took an unprecedented toll on sea stars up and down the West Coast.

It nearly wiped out the populations of starfish ecologist Bruce Menge has studied for decades with Oregon State University.

Then the babies started coming.

"To find one of these tiny sea stars was always sort of an exciting event because it was so rare," Menge said. "But in the spring and summer of 2015, most sites had lots of tiny little sea stars."

At one site, he counted

hundreds of baby starfish in an area no bigger than his handprint. Now, those babies are getting bigger.

"The babies have grown into juveniles and continue to grow at actually a pretty fast rate," he said. "When the animals mature to adulthood, chances are the numbers will actually be higher than they were before the disease."

Menge said he still sees signs of the wasting disease in adult starfish, but it's much less common than before.

New research suggests the new sea star populations may be evolving to promote genetic resistance to the virus causing the wasting disease.

"Most of the babies seem to have survived, so maybe there was selection at the stage of the larvae," Menge said. "The ones that settled and survived were the ones that were resistant."

Researchers still can't explain exactly what caused the massive die-off, though they think it could be linked to climate change.

"These are things we've never seen in multiple

decades of research," Menge said. "This recovery we think we're seeing is very helpful, but you're always a little worried because suddenly the system seems much more variable than it was before."

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## Oregon voters could rein in Legislature on taxes, fees

By LAUREN DAKE  
Oregon Public Broadcasting

Oregon voters will likely have a chance this November to decide whether they want to make it harder for politicians to curtail current tax breaks and raise fees.

Currently the state's constitution requires the Legislature to have a supermajority, or three-fifths vote, to raise taxes. That's been interpreted as applying only to passing new taxes.

But proponents of Initiative 31 believe the supermajority vote should also apply to scaling back current tax breaks and raising fees, both of which also raise revenue for the state.

"Voters in Oregon more than 20 years ago gave a directive to the politicians and bureaucrats that they wanted a supermajority to raise taxes in Salem and ... [politicians] have found loopholes to get around the will of the voters," said Derrick DeGroot, one of the measure's chief petitioners and the chair of the Klamath County Commission.

The coalition of groups backing the measure, including the Oregon Association of Realtors and the Oregon Home Builders Association, have until July 6 to submit 117,578 valid signatures. As of Wednesday, they had

submitted 174,006.

They measure has raised more than \$1 million, with realtors being the measure's biggest financial backer.

Proponents of the measure have been galvanized in recent years by votes they believe should have required a supermajority but instead fell along party lines.

During the 2017 legislative session, the majority of House Democrats voted to curtail a tax break by around \$100 million

a year. Democrats argued that the tax cut primarily benefited well-off professionals and they were eager to trim the break. House Democrats passed it on a simple majority despite cries from Republicans that it warranted a supermajority.

Oregon Republican Sen. Brian Boquist, of Dallas, will be watching the measure carefully.

The state senator is suing the governor and legislative leaders over another mea-

sure he believed warranted a three-fifths vote but passed along party lines. Senate Bill 1528, which disconnected the state from federal tax changes, didn't technically increase taxes but it did result in businesses not receiving tax breaks.

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