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ONE DOLLAR

Business owners balk at tax for new jail

Money would help with personnel costs

By JACK HEFFERNAN
The Daily Astorian

Business owners expressed opposition Wednesday to a lodging tax that would help pay for personnel costs at a new jail in Warrenton.

Clatsop County commissioners held the first public hearing on the 1 percent tax that would help cover costs such as additional deputies, a nurse and mental health experts. A \$20 million bond to remodel the former North Coast Youth Correctional Facility into an expanded jail will be on the November ballot.

The tax would create \$1.4 million annually in revenue for the county and cities, according to county estimates. State law requires that 70 percent of the revenue — \$980,000 a year — from the new tax be spent on tourism promotion, leaving 30 percent — \$420,000 — for jail operations.

The portion of revenue collected from businesses within city limits would be returned to cities. How those cities would choose to use that money to promote tourism would be up to each city, County Manager Cameron Moore said.

The tax would be in addition to a 9.5 percent lodging tax the county already imposes in unincorporated areas, as well as other lodging taxes set by the state and cities.

Due to overcrowding, several inmates at the county jail in Astoria are released each week without posting bail while awaiting trial. If the November bond is approved by voters, the county jail would be relocated from Duane Street, with a capacity of 60 inmates, to the Warrenton facility, which would hold 148 inmates with room for expansion. Annual jail operating costs — \$3.4 million this year — are estimated to rise by more than \$1.2 million if the jail is relocated.

The rationale for the tax is that people who live outside the county comprise an unusually large number of inmates at the jail — an estimated 27 percent — and should help alleviate expenses.

Local lodging operators on Wednesday suggested the 27 percent figure may be skewed since not everyone arrested from outside the county stays in hotels. Sheriff Tom Bergin, however, said a number of people who are arrested for drunken driving and drug-related activity rent hotel rooms during visits.

In written testimony, Jason Brandt, the CEO of the Oregon Restaurant &

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A visitor to Hug Point films a sunset using a drone.
Edward Stratton
The Daily Astorian



CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

Drones can pose conflicts with wildlife

BY HANNAH SIEVERT
The Daily Astorian

GANNON BEACH — When Melissa Keyser started working at the Haystack Rock Awareness Program in 2014, managing drones around the famous sea stack wasn't in her job description.

Over the past few years, though, the number of drones buzzing around the rock has jumped from around one a week to one or two flights a day.

Scientists are using drones more and more for research, tracking all kinds of wildlife. But as drones become more popular with people as playthings and high-flying cameras, they can cause nesting birds to fly away and leave chicks and eggs susceptible to predators. Sometimes, birds mistake drones for rivals and attack. On crowded days, drones can be a hazard when flown too close to people enjoying the beach.

"I've seen a drone 5, 10 feet above my head, which to me is too low when you're at the beach," Keyser said.

The Haystack Rock Awareness Program and the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department are looking at new strategies to balance the technology with wildlife protection.

The emphasis is on education.

Drones are prohibited near Haystack Rock because it is part of a national wildlife refuge, and drone operators can face fines for disturbing wildlife.

Keyser said most drone operators are unaware of the restrictions, so the awareness program typically does not report them immediately.

In some instances, staff can't even find a drone operator causing a disturbance because drones can be controlled from remote locations. One time, a drone that flushed birds from the rock was being flown from a nearby hotel room.

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'OFTENTIMES THERE'S A MISCONCEPTION THAT THE GOVERNMENT LOOKS TO LIMIT OR HINDER. I LOOK TO ALLOW UNLESS I CAN'T.'

Ben Cox | park manager for the Nehalem Bay Management Unit

Library renovation receives a green light

Groundbreaking could be pushed back

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

Renovation plans for the Astoria Library received a green light Wednesday.

After seeing two design scenarios at a work session, some Astoria city councilors said they would support a shift in priorities that would advance the project but could push back groundbreaking.

The scenarios include one that falls within the established \$5 million budget and another that carves out more public space in the basement but could come with about a \$6.6 million price tag.

When the City Council opted last year to renovate the existing 50-year-old library rather than build a new building, they determined renovation work would begin in 2019 and wrap in 2020.

But on Wednesday, City Councilor Bruce Jones encouraged the Astoria Oregon Public Library Foundation tasked with raising money for the project to go beyond their \$3.5 million goal and try to raise \$5 million — even if it means extending the groundbreaking deadline. That much money, in addition to money the city has already set aside, would allow the city to tackle the larger renovation.

The city has given deadline extensions "for a lot lesser things," agreed City Councilor Cindy Price. She believes the foundation will have a better sense of funding possibilities and options by next summer. And, Jones added, if the extra money doesn't materialize, the first, lower-cost scenario will still be an option.

Either way, said Mayor Arline LaMear, who is also president of the foundation, the design scenarios will be a powerful tool as the group begins to solicit money through donations and grants.

The first library renovation scenario proposed by David Wark of Hennebery Eddy Architects would cost the city around \$5 million. He and city leaders refer to it as a "medium" scenario.

It would add large windows to the sides of the building facing Duane Street and 10th Street, allowing more natural light inside. It also includes the addition of meeting rooms and reading rooms; a shift of staff work areas and offices to the southeast side of the building near the parking lot; enhanced areas for children and teens; increased accessibility for people in wheelchairs or with other mobility issues; and a shift in where and how book collections are displayed and browsed. A number of books would likely move to a closed stack area in the basement, available to library customers by request but not necessarily to browse.

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Newfoundlands on display at Fort Clatsop

By HANNAH SIEVERT
The Daily Astorian

Taking his dog, Deacon, for a walk can often take Bob Zimmerling a long time because so many people stop him to marvel at the Newfoundland's size.

"We walk slow," Zimmerling, of Gearhart, said. "That's fine with me. We're not going anywhere in a hurry."

Deacon was one of the big, furry, drooling stars on Wednesday afternoon at the 25th annual Seaman's Day at Lewis and Clark National Historical Park. The dogs and their owners are invited to the park in honor of Meriwether Lewis' Newfoundland, Seaman, who was recorded in

journals as a companion, watchdog and protector on the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

The Newfoundland breed is known for size — adult dogs can weigh from 100 to 150 pounds — thick fur, calm personality and constant slobber.

Many of the owners who attend Seaman's Day are loyal to the event and the breed. Donna Azevedo, from Happy Valley, brought her first Newfoundland to the festival 11 years ago. Now, she's on her fifth Newfoundland and tries to attend every year.

"They are just so loving and such sweethearts," she said.

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Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Newfoundlands gather at Fort Clatsop for the annual Seaman's Day celebration.



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