

Neighbors appeal Astoria Co-op expansion plans in Mill Pond

Concerns raised about traffic

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

Three property owners have appealed a city decision to allow the Astoria Co-op Grocery to build a new store in Mill Pond.

The organic and natural food store cleared several city design and permitting hurdles for an expansion planned for the corner of 23rd Street and Marine Drive. But property and homeowners in the neighborhood have objected to aspects of the project, worried about traffic snarls and the impact on quality of life.

The appeal filed by Cheryl Storey, Barbara Bower and John Ryan

will go before the City Council on July 30. Bower has hired a land use attorney to represent her.

City Councilor Zetty Nemlowill, the co-op's marketing director, is expected to recuse herself. For the appeal to prevail, the other city councilors must vote 3-1 in favor of the property owners. If the vote is split 2-2, it will count as a denial and the co-op will be able to proceed.

The Design Review Committee approved the co-op's plans for a new store in a 4-1 vote in June. In their appeal, the property owners cite traffic, concerns over how vehicles would access and leave the store's parking lot, and how the building is situated, among other issues.

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'I miss you, Ronny'

Astoria man gets prison in uncle's death

By JACK HEFFERNAN
The Daily Astorian

An Astoria man convicted in his uncle's beating death said Friday that he loved him. "What can I say? When there's a loss of a loved one, sorry is too common," Christopher Eric Johns, 46, said before he was sentenced to more than 15 years in prison. "Love needs to show action. My emotions are deep-seated. I'm going to take this and walk with this and come out a better person."



Christopher Eric Johns

Johns entered an Alford plea in May to first-degree manslaughter. The plea means he asserts his innocence but recognizes prosecutors have enough evidence for a conviction. He was originally charged with murder and fourth-degree assault before agreeing to a plea deal.

The plea stipulates he may be eligible for a reduced sentence after 10 years. People convicted of first-degree manslaughter are required to serve a minimum of 10 years and a maximum of 20 years in prison under state law.

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Rare insect returns to Saddle Mountain

Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Kim McEuen holds up an Oregon silverspot butterfly in the lab at the Oregon Zoo. The conservation lab raised caterpillars that were released at Saddle Mountain.

Silverspot caterpillars are back

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

Rare butterfly caterpillars are back on the slopes of Saddle Mountain for the first time since they completely disappeared from the area years before.

Government and private partners released 500 Oregon silverspot caterpillars on the mountain's rocky meadow slopes recently as part of an ongoing effort to rebuild the threatened butterfly's population at key sites.

"It was a culmination of so much work and it was almost a celebration," said Trevor Taylor, manager for the reintroduction project at the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department.

Last year, teams reintroduced caterpillars at the Nestucca Bay National Wildlife Refuge in southern Tillamook County with plans to release caterpillars at Saddle Mountain this year — a site Taylor describes as "prime real estate" for the red-orange butterflies marked with distinctive silver spots.

Elsewhere, the small butterfly's decline has been linked to a decline in habitat but its disappearance from Saddle Mountain is more mysterious. There are several theories for the decline: past chemical spraying practices on surrounding timberland may have impacted the butterflies, or perhaps the butterflies were unable to weather especially rough winters. People who searched for silverspots on the mountain in the 1970s saw them; when people went looking again in



Mike Patterson

A team places Oregon silverspot butterfly caterpillars on Saddle Mountain.

the early 2000s, they were gone.

"We don't know when the silverspots disappeared, we don't know why they disappeared," said Mike Patterson, a contractor for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the reintroduction project. "We can only speculate about why they disappeared and that's speculation

— there's no way to prove it."

Saddle Mountain remains one of the few sites where the Oregon silverspot's main source of food — another rare organism, the early blue violet — blooms in abundance. Other wildflowers also flourish there. The variety of blooms make the mountain a popular destination for hikers. For the butterflies, these flowers will provide additional sources of nectar, Taylor said.

Over the summer, many of the silverspots will die. Some will be eaten before they pupate, others will be eaten while they pupate or when they emerge as butterflies.

At the Nestucca site, Patterson could account for only 9 percent of the nearly 1,000 caterpillars released along his survey route. It was a number that concerned others involved, but not Patterson.

"Being able to account for only 9 percent doesn't mean only 9 percent became butterflies," he said.

And he feels confident about the caterpillars' success on Saddle Mountain.

"My guess is we'll see butterflies," he said. "The habitat is certainly ripe for them up there."

Of the 500 caterpillars now chomping away at plants on Saddle Mountain, 280 larvae came from the Oregon Zoo's butterfly conservation program, which raises as many as 10,000 Oregon silverspot and Taylor's checkerspots in its lab at any given time to supplement wild populations. Larvae also come from

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Spring trolley season could be delayed

Bridge construction planned near river

By JESSICA DOUGLAS
The Daily Astorian

The spring opening of the Astoria Riverfront Trolley could be delayed next year by the city's waterfront bridge repairs.

The city is expected to close several small bridges along the waterfront starting in October. Most of the repair work should be completed by Memorial Day weekend.

The trolley, one of Astoria's most popular tourist attractions, usually opens for the spring season in March. The track for Old 300 crosses the waterfront bridges that will be under construction.

"It's like looking at a planned power outage," said David Reid, the executive director of the Astoria-Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce. "Similarly, we know ahead of time, and therefore it's a little bit easier to manage."

The chamber is devising a plan for the disruption. Reid said tourists and cruise ship passengers hoping to ride the trolley will be encouraged to use the bus to tour the city.

There is a chance the trolley could operate in some capacity before Memorial Day weekend.

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A new voice for agriculture

A farming perspective at Astoria schools

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

Tess Hamby grew up on a beef, wheat and hay farm in Eastern Oregon, taking youth agricultural programs like 4-H since she was in the second grade, and the National FFA Organization in high school.

Recently hired by the Astoria School District, Hamby has been tasked with bringing



agricultural education back to Astoria High School starting next year.

Dan Foss, the high school's former shop teacher, retired after more than 30 years with the school district. The district wanted to expand the traditional wood shop into more of a construction trades-based program, while bringing back agricultural education and the local FFA chapter, dormant for

about eight years.

Hamby has been spending her summer in professional development, networking with other agricultural teachers and learning more about curriculum. She spent her last week in Sutherlin taking a workshop on wood shop, her first such class since high school.

In the fall, Hamby will begin teaching animal science, plant science, and introduction to agriculture, industrial arts and wood shop, along with a possible FFA leadership class.

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Tess Hamby will be the new agricultural, wood shop and industrial arts teacher at Astoria High School.

