

Warrenton balances wetlands with development

Some residents critical of a housing project

By **KATIE FRANKOWICZ**
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — City Commissioners tried to hit a balance Tuesday between allowing a developer to build in a wetland area and addressing neighborhood fears that any new buildings will exacerbate flooding and drainage issues on their street.

The debate highlights a common problem when it comes to building in the wetland-rich city where major development has occurred in the past, continues today and

is expected to unfold in the future. Despite all the flat land, there's also water everywhere. It swells with the tides and during heavy rains. It never truly goes away.

"Hey, you can walk out here, poke a hole in the asphalt and dig down a foot and you're going to find water," City Commissioner Mark Baldwin said.

On Tuesday, residents of Cedar Avenue continued their appeal of a Planning Commission decision to allow developer Adam Crites to build on a small portion of his property designated as wetland. Crites hopes to build duplexes on the street.

Residents Terry and Nancy Ager argued that Cedar Avenue and Cedar Court are routinely impacted during tidal

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City Commissioner Mark Baldwin

and heavy rain events, and flooding damage occurred in the 1980s and 1990s.

They did not oppose new development on the street but they asked that Crites not be allowed to fill in the wetlands. Nancy Ager also asked for city protection if Crites was allowed to fill in the wetland and then something went wrong.

Crites disputed the neighbors' claims. There are drainage issues on the street, he

said, but there is no analysis to back up claims that his development plans would impact neighboring properties. But, he added, he wanted to work with the city.

City staff originally recommended denial of Crites' request for a wetland hardship variance when he went before the Planning Commission in April, contending that he could build around the small wetland area. Staff generally agreed with Crites,

though, that his project would "not be detrimental to public improvements or adjacent private property."

"I've heard you guys loud and clear," Crites told the city commissioners Tuesday. "My intention (was) to accommodate the city from the get-go of this project almost three years ago. I continue to intend to do so."

When new construction surrounds or encroaches on wetlands in some locations in Warrenton and Hammond, the new houses set on man-made elevations higher than their neighbors risk displacing water and sending it next door. In April, a family in Hammond told city commissioners about flooding around their house that began when the owner of the neighboring property sub-

divided his lot and raised the elevation.

On Tuesday, city commissioners asked what needed to change to get the project to "yes."

"I want housing in Warrenton, but I do not want quality of life to go down," Commissioner Rick Newton said. "And if it floods these other houses, I can't say that makes the quality of life any better."

The commission voted to deny the Agers' appeal and approve Crites' application, which comes with some conditions from the Planning Commission. City commissioners also added one condition of their own: That Crites stick to the neighborhood's "common elevation." Whatever he builds will be on the same level as everyone else.



State Rep. Knute Buehler, the Republican candidate for governor, will vote to repeal Oregon's sanctuary law.

Buehler says he'll vote to repeal sanctuary law

A contrast with Gov. Brown

By **JEFF MAPES**
Oregon Public Broadcasting

Republican gubernatorial candidate Knute Buehler is endorsing a ballot measure to repeal Oregon's so-called sanctuary law, putting him at odds with Gov. Kate Brown on a hot-button immigration issue.

Buehler told conservative talk show host Lars Larson this week that he supports overturning the 31-year-old law that largely bars state and local police from enforcing federal immigration law.

"We need to have coordination and collaboration between local law enforcement and federal law enforcement," Buehler said. "People who are here and committing crimes, there needs to be that kind of coordination and communication. It is common sense."

Brown, a Democrat, has made it clear that she'll fight to keep the law.

"I see Oregon as a welcoming and inclusive place for all who want to call Oregon home," she said at a press conference last week. She said the law has helped curb racial profiling and assure crime victims they can talk to the police without fearing deportation.

Brown last year signed a bill to strengthen the sanctuary law by, among other things, limiting the amount of information the state collects on someone's immigra-

tion status. Buehler opposed that change.

The governor also argued that the law "doesn't impact" the ability of law enforcement to deal with anyone committing a crime.

Critics of the sanctuary law have argued otherwise. They point to the case of Sergio Martinez, who had been released from Multnomah County jail a year ago despite being sought by immigration authorities. Seven days later, he assaulted two women, police said.

Martinez became a major talking point for Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who has been the Trump administration's lead voice in attacking sanctuary laws in cities and states around the country.

Supporters of the sanctuary law point to studies showing that crime rates are lower among immigrant populations, and they charge that backers of the measure are driven by racial animus.

Buehler told Larson that if the law is repealed, the state can take steps to curb racial profiling by police and to assure crime victims that they don't have to worry about going to the police.

Shift in range brings more reported cougar encounters to the Northwest

By **JACK FISHER**
Oregon Public Broadcasting

Northwesterners are hearing a lot about mountain lions lately.

Since May, an extremely rare fatal attack in the Washington Cascades, a Willamette Valley pool party interrupted by a wandering cat and a viral Facebook video of a mountain lion lounging in a southern Oregon woman's living room have made headlines across the region.

Are the Northwest's mountain lions acting out of character this summer?

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Derek Broman says "no." But they are adapting to a gradual shift in their range.

"They've exceeded the maximum number of animals that the habitat can support. Younger animals are dispersing to lower quality habitats. They're exploiting urban areas and doing quite well," said Broman, the state carnivore biologist. "Carrying capacity has been reached."

And when mountain lions move into areas where people aren't as accustomed to seeing them, it can lead to more sighting reports, news stories and interest on social media. "They get more attention because they are unusual," Broman said.

In May, the Seattle area saw a fatal cougar attack. Two cyclists in North Bend, Washington, were attacked — one fatally — by a mountain lion, in an incident that a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife official called "incredibly abnormal." A necropsy performed by Washington State University released last week indicated that the male cat was lean but not emaciated.



A cougar in the wild.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

'There's a mountain lion in our living room. This is wild.'

Lauren Taylor

Ashland woman posting on Facebook

"The cause of aggressive behavior reported in this cat was not evident," the necropsy found.

Just this week, Springfield residents had their own cougar encounter. Upon spotting a mountain lion in their backyard in the middle of the afternoon, a group of teenagers called the police. With the help of a local game tracker, the animal was located and euthanized. Officials expressed concern about the cat's uncharacteristic daytime activity and the normally skittish animal's apparent disregard for human presence in the area.

And in early July, an Ashland woman posted on Facebook about a strangely amicable mountain lion encounter in

her home.

"There's a mountain lion in our living room," Lauren Taylor wrote earlier this month. "This is wild."

Taylor did not respond to interview requests Wednesday. In her July 7 Facebook post, she wrote that she believes the cat entered through an open door into a room that "has huge plants & stairs built around real tree branches ... she likely didn't even realize she was indoors until she was inside."

After discovering the animal in her home, Taylor wrote, she calmly "meditated on" how to safely coax the animal back outside. Taylor says she "communicated using feline-speak eye blinking to calm her" and "sent telepathic pictures of routes out of the house."

Ultimately, after poking around her living room and taking a cat nap, Taylor said the lion exited through an open door and disappeared into the night.

Michelle Dennehey, a wildlife communications coordinator at the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, noted that despite a viral photo and video album on social media, this incident has not been confirmed by the department.

Dennehey pointed out just how rare cougar attacks are, saying, "We've never had a confirmed attack by a wild cougar in Oregon." That's a complete lack of any attacks, not just a lack of fatal attacks.

As for the Springfield incident, Dennehey said her agency deals with similar situations regularly.

"When a cougar exhibits certain behavior, like being seen repeatedly in daylight or killing pets," Dennehey said, "ODFW advises that they're euthanized."

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has published a set of guidelines for living and recreating in cougar country. If you see a cougar in the wild, stay calm. They will often retreat if presented with the opportunity. Stand your ground, maintain eye contact, and speak in a loud, firm voice.

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