

## 'A CULTURE OF RECOVERY'



Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

The interior of the house on Agate Street has been stripped all the way down to the studs. Rehabilitation work continues on the housing development (below).

### Housing project aimed at mothers recovering from substance abuse

By JACK HEFFERNAN  
The Daily Astorian

At a Clatsop County commission meeting last year, Assessment and Taxation Director Suzanne Johnson reviewed a number of properties that the county was looking to put up for auction.

Many of the blighted properties had gone through foreclosure, and Johnson told personal stories of the people evicted from their homes for not paying property taxes.

Toward the end of her presentation, Johnson's tone changed as she introduced a fourplex on Agate Street near Uniontown. "This is going to be the happier story," she said. "We'll save the best for last."

Months later, a remodel is underway that will transform the fourplex into affordable housing with services for single women who are pregnant or parenting and are in early recovery from substance abuse.

Opioid addiction is a lingering problem in Clatsop County, where 10.6 percent of Oregon Health Plan members have a substance abuse disorder, according to the Oregon Health Authority. A handful of organizations collaborating on the project hope it will help mothers break their own addictions and prevent them from passing it on to their children.

"It's changing that whole generational cycle of substance abuse," said Karen Wheeler, business development director

See RECOVERY, Page 5A

## Waterfront bridge plans still in flux

Extra state money is likely, amount unknown

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ  
The Daily Astorian

City engineers are in uncharted territory as they push to begin replacing Astoria's downtown waterfront bridges this year.

Bids for the work came in over budget in July. The Oregon Department of Transportation, which is overseeing the project, has since secured more money, but city leaders don't yet know details about this funding.

If the project is delayed for another year — a likely scenario, said City Manager Brett Estes — the city will need to shoulder the



Brett Estes

expense of temporary repairs to keep the bridges open. City leaders had hoped to avoid these costs by replacing the bridges this year and next year.

But there are still many unknowns.

"We're not in the standard ODOT process anymore," said Cindy Moore, assistant city engineer. "Typically I can predict what's going to happen next and I don't know what's going to happen next."

The city believes the extra funding from the state for replacement work is enough to cover the lowest bid received in July. But Moore doesn't know the amount yet. The city will have to provide matching funds.

The city planned to replace six waterfront bridges beginning in October. The structures are located at the end of Sixth Street through 11th Street and provide access to the piers. The Astoria Riverfront Trolley tracks cross the bridges.

City Councilor Zetty Nemlowill asked: Why not just adjust the scope of the project to keep it within the established budget?

While state law allows other entities to negotiate with the lowest bidder on a project, the Department of Transportation

See BRIDGE, Page 5A

## Donations save food pantry in Warrenton

Church-run outreach faced closure in July

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ  
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — Donations will keep a church-run food pantry in Warrenton open for another four months.

Pastor Morris Guiendon of Calvary Assembly of God had said the church would have to close the pantry by the end of July unless they found at least \$200 a month to cover electric bills and other expenses. At least one donor has committed to provide monthly donations, he said.

The pantry, which serves around 75 to 100 families each week, was funded for several years by a social service grant from the city through the Clatsop Community Action Regional Food Bank. That money has since run out, and Calvary's small congregation has not been able to continue to subsidize the pantry's operations.

See PANTRY, Page 5A

## Neacoxie barn owner asks Gearhart to drop fines



The owner of the Neacoxie Creek Barn was fined for its use as a party venue without a certificate of occupancy.

### Smith wants preservation, not punishment

By R.J. MARX  
The Daily Astorian

GEARHART — Shannon Smith, the owner of a Gearhart barn that racked up thousands of dollars in fines for illegal rentals, has asked the city to forgive the penalties.

Calling it a "new era" as Gearhart enters its second century, Smith told the City Council on Wednesday that the potential waiver would be a change of approach from "punishment to preservation."

Smith, the co-owner with Martha Strickland of the Neacoxie Creek Barn on Pacific Way, was fined for renting out the property for weddings and other public functions without a valid certificate of

occupancy.

Without the certificate, the city said the former livery stable is uninhabitable and poses an immediate threat to health and safety.

At one time, the fines reached in excess of \$30,000, City Administrator Chad Sweet said.

Smith's first \$5,000 fine, issued in 2012, was reduced by the City Council to \$1 after Smith said she would follow city rules prohibiting commercial events. The second fine, issued in 2014, was contested after Smith and her attorney stated barn functions were all personal or family-related, which would be permitted for a private homeowner.

Subsequent fines followed as Smith continued commercial use of the barn

until a Circuit Court judge issued an injunction in 2016 prohibiting commercial events, including weddings and receptions.

Smith's fines now stand at \$20,000.

Smith said she would like relief to proceed with a reapplication to "adaptive reuse so this structure and site can continue to bring charm, recreation and sustaining financial benefit."

The fines pose a significant barrier, she said at Wednesday's meeting.

Smith said the waiver would provide a "collaborative path forward" for the city's "most iconic wooden structure," the last remaining wooden livery stable west of the Mississippi and the host site for Coast Guard patrol ponies during the blackout days of World War II.

City councilors did not comment on Smith's request.