

## Astoria struggles with homeless camps

City could close a gap in camping restrictions

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ  
The Daily Astorian

Homeless camps discovered in the woods around Astoria this summer are more numerous and sophisticated than city leaders expected.

They want to dismantle the camps and clean up trash before fall rains and winter storms hit, but worry about displacing people who are already struggling.

The Astoria City Council agreed Tuesday that Mayor Arline LaMear's homelessness solutions task force, a group that includes representatives from Clatsop County's social service organizations, should brainstorm ways to address the camps and link people with services and housing.

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Cities can't prosecute people for sleeping on streets

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representatives from Clatsop County's social service organizations, should brainstorm ways to address the camps and link people with services and housing.

## State rejects funding for Waldorf project

Affordable apartments on hold downtown

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ  
The Daily Astorian

Oregon rejected a request for funding to create affordable housing in the former Waldorf Hotel, in part because the state found there was "not a need" for such housing in Astoria.

Innovative Housing Inc., a Portland-based nonprofit, plans to resubmit the application, but the rejection will delay plans to turn the dilapidated hotel next door to City Hall into a 40-unit apartment building. The project was expected to cost up to \$6 million, with much of the money coming from grants and tax credits.

City Manager Brett Estes' announcement of the state's rejection elicited gasps from the audience at a City Council meeting Tuesday. The lack of affordable housing in the city and across Clatsop County has been the most dominant public-policy issue for the past few years.

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Photos by Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

Warrenton Grade School opened to a crush of students and parents on the first day of school Tuesday.

### BACK TO SCHOOL

## Warrenton school overflows, a sign of the city's growth



ABOVE: Middle schoolers at Warrenton Grade School get acquainted with their lockers Tuesday. BELOW: Sean O'Malley, vice principal at Warrenton Grade School, reminds students about proper lunchroom etiquette Tuesday.



## Overcrowding one of the issues behind bond

By EDWARD STRATTON  
The Daily Astorian

**WARRENTON** — Students at Warrenton Grade School, many with parents in tow, socialized outside the front door and inside at tables in the cafeteria, waiting to start their first day back to class on Tuesday.

By 7:50 a.m., the parking lot shut down to all cars as it filled in with buses dropping more students off. By 8 a.m., students and parents were packed like sardines in the school's academic wing, getting acquainted with schedules, lockers and teachers.

The grade school welcomed nearly 720 preschoolers-through-eighth graders back for the new school year, less than the estimated 800 the enrollment will balloon to when kindergartners start later in the week, but still far beyond the 540 students the building was designed to serve.

Last year, the grade school was the fifth-most populous in Oregon serving kindergarten-through-eighth grade. The only schools larger were in the Portland metro area and Eugene.

The grade school has added five portable classrooms outside the main building to accommodate growth, while turning closets into offices, libraries into multipurpose rooms and courtyards into classes.

The overcrowding, along with the danger of being in the tsunami inundation zone, is why the school district is asking voters for a \$38.5 million bond in November. The bond would fund the purchase of

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## Astoria Co-op Grocery revises layout for new store

A response to neighbor concerns

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ  
The Daily Astorian

The Astoria Co-op Grocery has changed the layout of a new store in Mill Pond to satisfy neighbor concerns.

The natural and organic food store plans to move from downtown Astoria to a site near Columbia Memorial Hospital, but has faced pushback from neighbors concerned about the new building's configuration and possible traffic impacts.

At Tuesday's meeting, Astoria city councilors had expected to uphold their decision affirming the co-op's original plans. Three property owners had

appealed the Design Review Committee's decision to the City Council in July.

Instead, the council heard a joint request from the co-op and the property owners, who asked to reopen the public hearing and allow developer Don Vallaster to submit an alternative layout for the new store.

Under the new design, cars would access the store using 23rd Street, directly off of Marine Drive, instead of Steam Whistle Way, a narrow street on the north side of the lot that runs along the back of the Mill Pond residents' lots.

In their appeal, residents had worried about the impact of grocery store traffic on the neighborhood if Steam Whistle Way was the primary access road. They argued that the street was intended as a neighborhood alley. During the hearings process, they asked Vallaster and co-op

representatives to consider a layout that used 23rd Street instead of Steam Whistle Way.

The City Council voted unanimously Tuesday to allow the co-op to submit the alternative layout. City Manager Brett Estes said staff will review the design. The city will hold a public hearing at 6 p.m. Sept. 24 to consider the changes.

"The two parties have obviously had some fruitful discussion that will help ease the tension between the two of them," City Councilor Tom Brownson said. "I'm all for taking a look at it."

After the city councilors voted, Matt Stanley, the co-op's general manager, swiveled in his seat to give Cheryl Storey a thumbs-up and a smile. Storey, president of the Mill Pond Village Owners Association, was one of the people

who appealed the city's approval of the co-op's original plans. She says she is thrilled with the direction the grocery store is taking now.

"We're all relieved that we've reached a resolution," she said.

Even when the property owners appealed the decision to City Council, they emphasized that they were not against the co-op's plans to build a new store and expand. They were against the building's configuration and traffic impacts on the neighborhood.

Stanley said the decision to use 23rd Street instead of Steam Whistle Way was counterintuitive to developers, but he believes the two groups have come up with a solution that will work.

"We're really hopeful now at this point that we'll be able to move forward," he said.

