



Developers propose new South Slope hotel

A Marriott or Hilton is possible

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

Two Midwestern hotel developers are planning a 90-plus room Marriott or Hilton franchise at the former Bay-

side Sentry Market at the foot of the South Slope.

Ruth Birdwell, the widow of regional auto salesman Ray Birdwell, recently sold the former Astoria Ford site to Barry Hess, owner of the Napa Auto Parts store recently opened at the old auto dealership. Hess in turn sold a lot next to the store to Kansas City, Missouri, developers John Fer-

guson and Lew Wiens.

The Birdwells acquired the former grocery store property from E. Hauke & Co. in 1998, along with the auto dealership. The market has long sat vacant.

"We hope to make some major improvements to the area," Ferguson said. "The building's been sitting there decaying for a long time."

The hotel will either be a Marriott or Hilton franchise between 90 and 96 rooms, Ferguson said. The company does not know how many stories the hotel will be or when plans will be brought to the city, he added.

Kevin Cronin, the community development director in Warrenton, has served as the project planner on the proposal but deferred comments

to the developers.

Ferguson runs Ferguson Hotel Development, and Wiens leads a management company called True North Hotel Group. The two have been developing properties around the U.S. since the 1980s and recently formed Astoria Hotel Investors.

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From clearcut trees to habitat for bees



Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Jed Arnold looks over a plot of land owned by Hampton Lumber near Knappa being used as an experimental site for studying pollinators.

Hampton Lumber part of research project

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

KNAPPA — Jed Arnold, a stewardship coordinator with Hampton Lumber, recently walked a 1-year-old timber stand the company owns. The landscape was largely cleared of debris, aside from the burned wooden husks left from a slash pile burn.

Rather than conifers, Arnold was on the lookout for yarrow, lupine, penstemons and other wildflowers the company planted to attract bees in cut stands.

Arnold oversees an 18-acre pilot study by Hampton Lumber providing baseline data to researchers on how forestland owners can help struggling bee populations by creating prime habitat on recent clearcuts.

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Jed Arnold said some plant species planted in the area thrive in places that were recently burned.

Bergin will not seek re-election as sheriff

Sheriff was diagnosed with kidney cancer

By JACK HEFFERNAN
The Daily Astorian

Clatsop County Sheriff Tom Bergin will not seek re-election in 2020.

Bergin, 60, has spent 33 years in law enforcement. He was first elected sheriff in 2004 and is serving his fourth four-year term.

"I've decided. I've told everybody I won't be running for a fifth term," Bergin said. "Sometimes you've just got to step back and take a breath for yourself, which is not in my DNA."



Sheriff Tom Bergin

This year has been particularly challenging on the sheriff's health. Bergin was diagnosed with kidney cancer about four months ago. He underwent surgery in August to remove half of a kidney.

Bergin took 1 1/2 weeks off after the surgery but is beginning to return to his normal routine, he said. The cancer has a high survivability rate, and he will likely be monitored by doctors for another year.

Bergin said the cancer was not the primary factor in his decision to not run again, but it did give him "a whole new outlook on life."

"I'm feeling pretty good," Bergin said. "I've had to walk a little slower, but I'll be good to go in another week or so."

Bergin started as a reserve officer with the Seaside police in 1985 before he was hired full time about a year later. He became a sheriff's deputy in 1992.

Bergin started the office's first K-9 unit and became a sergeant in 1996. During his patrol years, he was heavily involved in narcotics enforcement, spending some time working undercover. He became Sheriff John Raichl's chief deputy in 2003.

"Tom was very active in different departments. I think that really, really helped him," Raichl said. "It has to be a good balance, and that's a plus as an administrator."

In his time as sheriff, the office has undergone extensive modernization. The office used to be located in cramped quarters below the Clatsop County Jail. It relocated to a newer, larger facility in Warrenton in 2016.

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New Warrenton detective thrown 'into the fire'

Johnston chosen for coveted appointment

By JACK HEFFERNAN
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — Detective Tyler Johnston expected a slow first day at his new post, just a few hours of training and some face-to-face meetings. But a fatal police shooting in Seaside forced him to nix those plans.

Seaside Police Cpl. David Davidson had shot and killed Cashus Dean Case at the Sea-



Tyler Johnston

side RV Park, and the Clatsop County Major Crimes Team responded to the scene to

begin a probe of the incident. The investigation is ongoing.

"It was pretty crazy," Johnston said. "It was really an out of the frying pan and into the fire sort of moment. It was exciting, it was exhausting, but I really learned a lot."

Johnston's three-year appointment marks the first time the Warrenton Police Department has had a detective since 2016. The appointment comes after the department was allotted an additional position in this year's city budget.

"We've been looking to do a detective position for the last several years," Warrenton

Police Chief Mathew Workman said. "We're finally now at full staff for the first time in a long time."

Johnston, 26, joined the department in 2015. He is the son of former Astoria Police Chief Brad Johnston.

Two officers applied for the position when it opened earlier this year. Johnston, a department representative on the major crimes team for more than a year, was chosen for his investigative experience, Workman said.

None of the relatively small police departments in the county have their own major crimes team, unlike most

large departments. Johnston's appointment gives Warrenton police a more active seat at the table in major investigations. It allows more leads to be followed up and could help the department resolve some of its own big cases more quickly.

"We can all shoulder some of the workload," Johnston said. "Being part of that team is something we're really excited about."

The investigation in Seaside "opened my eyes to some of the complexities of investigations that I hadn't considered," he said.

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