

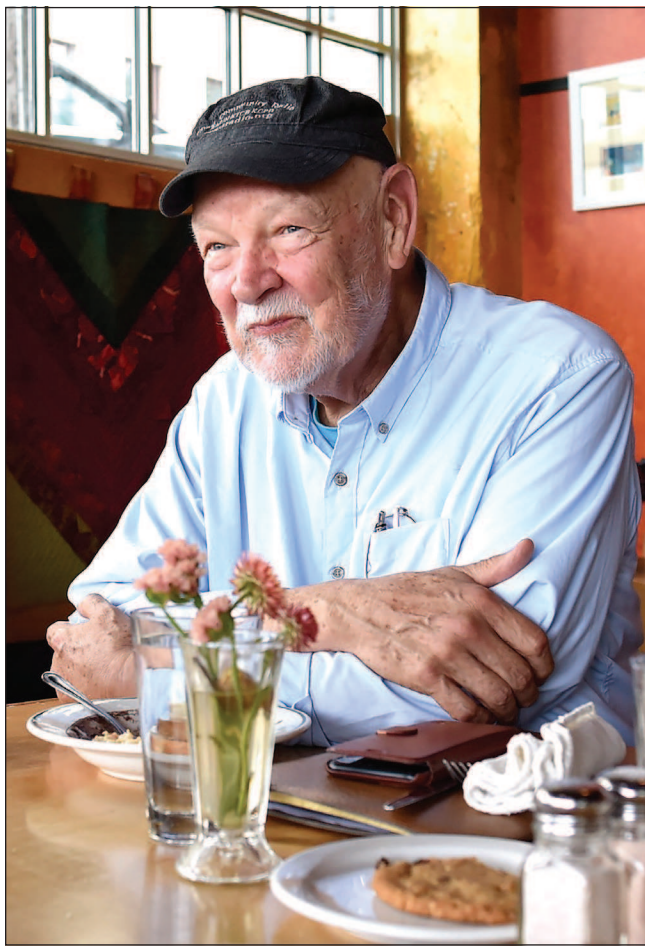
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ONE DOLLAR

Waterfront development major issue for City Council race



Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

LEFT: David Drafall, a hairdresser and community volunteer, is running for the west side seat on the Astoria City Council. **RIGHT:** Roger Rocka, a former director of the Astoria-Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce, is campaigning for the west side City Council seat.

Drafall and Rocka campaign in Ward 1

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

The candidates for Astoria's Ward 1 City Council seat have their eyes on the water.

Recent proposals for large hotels along the Columbia River and Youngs Bay have added to the sense of urgency for David Drafall and Roger Rocka, fueling their desire to run this year. They worry that the waterfront, and other aspects of the city's growth, are slipping out of locals' control.

Whoever wins in the November election will take over City Councilor Zetty Nemlowill's seat on the council and represent a portion of Astoria that includes the western corner of downtown, Uniontown, some Port of Astoria property and a portion of the South Slope neighborhoods overlooking Youngs Bay.

It is a section of Astoria expected to undergo much change in the coming years as the city seeks to enhance Uniontown's businesses and neighborhoods and reopen Bond Street to two-way traffic. It is where at least one waterfront hotel proposal, part of the Marriott chain, is inching forward.

Rocka, 78, and Drafall, 54, share sim-



ilar views on what the city needs and what their role could be in shaping Astoria's future. Both men have worked in jobs that built or have helped maintain the city's tourist economy, but say as a city councilor their job would be to focus on what locals need and want.

Rocka is a 24-year resident of Astoria. He worked as executive director for the Astoria-Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce during a critical decade, 1994 to 2002, when Astoria began to change rapidly, morphing from a place where timber and salmon were the chief industries to a city dominated by tourism.

Drafall has lived in Astoria for 31 years and has worked as a hairdresser at One Six Five West Bond beauty salon for 25 years. He also does work catering and leading cruise ship visitors on tours of the city. The years spent listening to people behind the chair at the beauty salon have taught Drafall what Astorians worry about and what they desire for their city.

Though this will be Drafall's first time running for public office, he has long been active in the community. He has been a member of the Uniontown Association for over a decade, is a member of the Finnish Brotherhood, volunteers for the Astoria Armory, reads for

memorial services at Maritime Memorial Park, serves on the Lower Columbia Q Center board and participates in Astoria Pride events.

The race is Rocka's first bid for election, as well. In addition to his time as chamber director, Rocka owns a dinner theater business in Fresno, California, serves as a board member for Coast Community Radio and was part of a group that successfully battled efforts to build a liquefied natural gas terminal and pipeline in the region. He has also served on the Oregon Travel Information Council and the Clatsop County Budget Committee.

If elected, Rocka says, because of his age, he would serve only one four-year term. Drafall, in turn, has noted that because of his age he will be able to run again and pursue long-term city goals and projects.

Rocka points to his many years of experience working in the city on complex policy issues. And, he added, "During those four years, I don't need to worry about not offending anybody or walking on eggshells. I can just be honest."

'Turning point'

Drafall has lived openly as a gay man since he was honorably discharged from the Army when the military found out about his sexual orientation, he said. But this identity is not a central issue in his campaign. Representation of an often-marginalized group is important to him, but he says he is running to represent Astoria generally, and Uniontown in particular.

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Three bridges to close downtown

Vehicle traffic limited on the waterfront

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

Three waterfront bridges in downtown Astoria will close to vehicle traffic on Friday.

City engineers, who have met with business owners, announced the closures at the bases of Sixth, Seventh and 11th streets at a City Council work session on Wednesday morning. People will still be allowed to walk along the bridges and the Astoria Riverfront Trolley will continue to run until work to replace two of the bridges begins this fall.

The city had hoped to hold off on any closures until it was time to fully replace the structures. Replacement of the waterfront bridges at the bases of the Seventh, Ninth and 11th streets is set to begin on Oct. 1, followed by the next set of bridges — at the bases of Sixth, Eighth and 10th streets — next fall. The six bridges provide access to downtown piers.

But inspectors for the Oregon Department of Transportation witnessed load-limit violations and noted structural issues with several of the bridges in July. They told city staff the bridges would need to be repaired or else closed to everything but pedestrian traffic.

See BRIDGES, Page 7A

Astoria considers ban on plastic bags

City debates whether to take policy lead

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

Astoria city councilors are contemplating a citywide ban on plastic grocery bags, but have asked business associations and advocates to talk to merchants about what the policy might mean for them.

More than a dozen cities in Oregon have adopted bans, including Manzanita last year, but efforts to push forward a statewide ban have stalled.

City and county leaders have talked about the possibility of bans, but at this time only Astoria and Gearhart are pushing forward. Warrenton Mayor Henry Balensifer has said he is not necessarily in favor of a ban, though he is interested in discussing the issue of plastic in the environment.

See BAN, Page 5A

County moves to take over foreclosed property

Decision made in unique hearing

By JACK HEFFERNAN
The Daily Astorian

Clatsop County commissioners directed staff Wednesday to work on taking possession of a foreclosed property in Jeffers Garden about a year ahead of schedule. The decision came during a first-of-its-kind hearing for the county.

Under state law, the owners were allowed to keep the property for two years after it was foreclosed in October. But county officials say the tenants have decreased the proper-

ty's value, prompting Wednesday's decision. The county has never conducted such a hearing, which was allowed under a 2003 ordinance, according to County Counsel Heather Reynolds. Witnesses testified after being sworn in and were subject to questioning from commissioners as well as cross-examination.

"The county has not had a property in foreclosure that presented both the serious condition and the health dangers that this property presents," Reynolds said.

The commissioners' unanimous decision was based on their finding that the property was "wasted," meaning those

who own or are allowed to use the property have diminished its value through deterioration of the land or creation of a nuisance.

The value of the property has dropped \$8,000 since October, and refurbishing the property will cost \$80,000, according to Johnson's estimates. In addition to other fees, owners could be subject to a fine of at least \$16,000 for the waste.

The property foreclosed after its owners — Steven and Scott Wood — hadn't paid property taxes for five years. Steven Wood died in 2007, but his name remains on the title.

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Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Clatsop County will take possession of a foreclosed property in Jeffers Garden.

