

Astoria delays ban on camping

Mayor's task force will discuss policy

By **KATIE FRANKOWICZ**
The Daily Astorian

Plans to amend a city rule and make it illegal to camp in Astoria's forests are on hold for now.

The City Council, at Mayor Arline LaMear's request, decided to delay amending the rule to give the mayor's homelessness solutions task force time to talk about the issue. The group meets next Monday and includes representatives from a variety of social service organizations, as well as leaders in city government and the business community.

City councilors had planned to finalize the amendment at a meeting Monday night to begin addressing homeless camps in city-owned forestland on the east side and near Columbia Memorial Hospital. The city's "no camping" ordinance already prohibits camping on other types of public land, including city parks.

'OUR DESIRE IS FOR ASTORIA TO SUPPORT ALL THE PEOPLE INVOLVED WHILE FINDING LONGER-TERM SOLUTIONS.'

Nelle Moffett | advocate for the homeless

Police Chief Geoff Spalding planned to take the ordinance to the homelessness solutions task force and brainstorm ways to work with people camping in the woods before asking anyone to move. Police are not anxious to start kicking people out, he said. They are looking for humane solutions.

But there are concerns about health and safety in the forest. Police have received multiple complaints about suspicious and criminal activity tied to some of the camps and have uncovered stolen property. The fire department said there is fire danger as people use all types of techniques and gear to cook food or stay warm.

Emergency responders also worry about the time it would take for them to respond to an emergency in the woods. Many of the camps are located off steep and narrow dirt trails, away from city access roads. Some of the camps contain large amounts of trash, including human waste and needles.

"It's become an untenable situation," LaMear agreed.

But the mayor also wanted to move carefully. The City Council will not discuss the code amendment again until its next meeting on Oct. 15.

"I appreciate slowing down," said Richard Bowers. He and his wife, Nelle Moffett, are advocates for the homeless and wrote a

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Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Bob Vinatieri, far right, directs cruise ship passengers to a tour bus.

Tour operators call foul on Port cruise ship policies

A new policy could emerge

By **EDWARD STRATTON**
The Daily Astorian

A trickle of cruise ship passengers, many in their 70s and using canes and other walking aids, disembarked Wednesday from Holland America's Amsterdam ready to take a tour of Astoria.

But to reach their buses, they had to trek about one-fifth of a mile around Pier 1, ironically passing an empty bus-loading area in front of the Port of Astoria's offices before making their way down Portway Street. Next to the Astoria Riverwalk Inn, they boarded buses for an excursion led by Bob Vinatieri, owner of Astoria Tours.

Because the tour was not vetted and sold through the cruise line, the buses for Vinatieri's tours were not allowed to pick up passengers up Pier 1.

As Astoria has become a bigger cruise ship destination, hosting on average more than 40,000 passengers a year, newer tour providers like Vinatieri and Lori Beth Kulp of Lor's Tours have called foul over the Port's access policies. The agency's has an agreement with its cruise ship marketer, Bruce Conner, who also offers shore-side excursions through his company, Sundial Travel.

Vinatieri claims he has been threatened with arrest multiple times for operating on Port property without a permit. Kulp recently sent a tort claim notifying the Port she is contemplating a lawsuit over what she has claimed is an unethical relationship between the agency and Conner.

Jim Knight, the Port's executive director, said the agency's policy regarding tour operators is driven by the cruise lines.

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Bob Vinatieri helps a client board the tour bus near the Port of Astoria.



Cruise ship passengers make their way to a waiting tour bus near the Port of Astoria.

Gearhart council candidates take on key issues

Zimmerman, Smith vie for council seat

By **R.J. MARX**
The Daily Astorian

GEARHART — Position 1 City Council candidates Kerry Smith and Jack Zimmerman offer different perspectives while sharing the goal of maintaining Gearhart's character and being a vigilant watchdog for the taxpayer.

Smith, who was elected to the City Council in 2014, describes himself as a 33-year



Kerry Smith



Jack Zimmerman



ELECTION 2018

Gearhart resident. With a background in construction, after working on the Alaska pipeline, he became a contractor.

"I have tried to be a voice for the residents of Gearhart that I know, as well as tried to use some of my communication skills to ask tough questions and help facilitate the conversations," he said in a candidate

statement for The Daily Astorian's voters guide.

Zimmerman, a former oil and gas executive, moved to Gearhart after traveling and visiting for over 28 years.

"I wish to serve to protect Gearhart from unnecessary taxation and concentrate all my efforts on improving our city's existing assets before taking on

new service obligations which can cause the city to lose its primary focus on our current residents," he said. "I desperately want to frame this election in the overriding concept of creating beauty and goodness for our special oasis by the sea."

In interviews last week, they discussed key issues — the location of the proposed firehouse, the growing elk herd, the budget process and growth.

Fire station

Smith called a new fire station the city's most important concern.

The existing station, built in 1958 and liable to collapse and

flood during a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake and tsunami, is the topic of years of conversation.

Smith anticipated using feedback from the community to help determine a new site, he said. A town hall meeting is planned for November.

"With the town hall meeting, they'll find the pros and cons as the committee sees it for each location," he said.

Zimmerman opposed locating the fire station at one of the three proposed locations — the city park at Pacific Way and North Marion Avenue, he said.

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