

## After new state law, felony drug convictions plummet

Possession a misdemeanor for first-time offenders

By **DERRICK DePLEDGE**  
*The Daily Astorian*

Felony drug convictions in Clatsop County dropped by more than 40 percent in the year since a new state

law reduced the penalty for drug possession to a misdemeanor for first-time offenders.

The stark decline was part of a trend across Oregon, as prosecutors adjusted to a law meant to soften the consequences of being caught with small amounts of heroin, methamphetamine and other illegal drugs.

Drug offenders often face jail, probation and treatment, but a felony conviction can also make it harder to

find a job or housing, eroding the stability that can help people overcome drug abuse.

The Oregon Criminal Justice Commission, in a report to the state Legislature in September, said the law has already had a profound impact on the criminal justice system. Statewide, the number of felony drug convictions fell from 5,145 in the fiscal year before the law to 2,889 over the past year, or 44 percent. In Clat-

### BY THE NUMBERS

A new Oregon law reduced the penalty for drug possession from a felony to a misdemeanor for first-time offenders.

**63**

the number of felony drug convictions in Clatsop County in the fiscal year before the law took effect.

**37**

felony drug convictions in the county in the year since the law.

**41%**

the difference in felony convictions.

*\*Source: Oregon Criminal Justice Commission*

sop County, felony drug convictions tumbled from 63 to 37, or 41 percent.

The report also found that racial disparities in felony drug convictions, a significant issue in Portland and other urban areas, have narrowed.

State Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum told state lawmakers the law reflects the belief that “addiction cannot be addressed

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## Ship-repair company set to close in 2019

Astoria Marine negotiated with state

By **EDWARD STRATTON**  
*The Daily Astorian*

Astoria Marine Construction Co. will likely close sometime next year as the state Department of Environmental Quality finalizes a proposed \$3 million cleanup scheduled to begin next summer.

The Lewis and Clark River shipyard, which repairs and refits much of the region’s fishing fleet, has been negotiating with the state and its insurers on a final plan to clean up historical contamination from when the company built wooden minesweepers for the Navy during World War II and the Korean War.

The proposed cleanup would excavate and remove the most contaminated soil and sediment in the river. Remaining contaminated soil will be capped in place to

prevent movement and exposure, while contaminated sediment would be covered with a layer of clean sand. Laura Gleim, a spokeswoman for the state, said the cleanup should take two to three months.

Tim Fastabend, owner of Astoria Marine Construction Co., referred comments to his attorney, Carson Bowler.

Astoria Marine’s “going to go out of business, which is disappointing,” Bowler said. “But ... the DEQ followed the cleanup laws, and AMCCO will comply with them.”

The company has provided a \$3.8 million escrow account via its insurer to fund the cleanup, with the remainder going to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Gleim said. The company will also pay \$100,000 to the state for oversight costs, while the state will wave \$40,000 worth of past and future oversight. After the cleanup, the company will be released from further liability.

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Photos by Colin Murphey  
*The Daily Astorian*  
Diana Gulley examines part of the basement underneath her Astoria butcher shop.

## ‘Kind of creepy’ ‘Ghost Adventures’ TV show features Astoria

By **ERICK BENDEL**  
*The Daily Astorian*

Astoria, a port town where the history feels haunted and spooky sites abound, gets a starring role in the Travel Channel series “Ghost Adventures.”

Four episodes airing Saturday titled “Graveyard of the Pacific” investigate the landmarks and hidden corners that locals know well — the rusted bones of the Peter Iredale at Fort Stevens State Park, Cape Disappointment’s North Head Lighthouse, and Astoria’s Norblad Hotel and cavernous underground tunnels.

When *The Daily Astorian* spoke with the crew last spring, they said the research team had homed in on the Columbia-Pacific as a place practically vibrating with paranormal possibilities — a ghostly, fog-enshrouded region with a dangerous river bar, a long catalogue of shipwrecks, unidentified bodies washing ashore, well-preserved old structures and maritime mysteries.

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Diana Gulley sees something on a wall in the basement she said was not there during a previous tour.

### WHEN TO WATCH

“Graveyard of the Pacific,” four episodes of “Ghost Adventures,” debuts at 6 p.m. Saturday on the Travel Channel.

## Neighbors consider Goonies house parking options



Jack Heffernan/*The Daily Astorian*

Astoria Police Chief Geoff Spalding appeared at a town hall on issues related to the Goonies house.

### Discussion at a lively town hall

By **JACK HEFFERNAN**  
*The Daily Astorian*

Between creating a neighborhood watch association and suing Steven Spielberg, ideas about how to curb parking near the Goonies house ranged from serious to lighthearted Thursday.

Astoria officials hosted a discussion at Alderbrook Hall about the nagging issues for residents who live near the famous — or infamous — house in Uppertown. About 20 people attended what largely

became an informal brainstorming session.

Astoria Public Works Director Jeff Harrington explained the city code and zoning laws that apply in the neighborhood. That spurred a conversation about the driveway leading up to the 38th Street home perched atop a hill.

While the shared dirt driveway is a public right of way, it is privately maintained. The public can legally go up that hill even though unofficial signs discourage it. Walkers sometimes trespass on nearby properties, and drivers damage the road, forcing property owners to constantly maintain it.

“They do whatever they

want once they get up there,” said Catherine Fuller, who lives next to the house. “They are brazen.”

The driveway is a candidate to be vacated as a public right of way, Harrington said. If that happens, some suggested placing a gate or fence to prevent people from entering.

“If we did that, there wouldn’t be any reason to be up there at all, and all these problems would go away,” Fuller said.

But that would require each of the surrounding neighbors, who may prefer the driveway to access their property, to sign on.

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