

Jail: 'We did our due diligence the past two years'

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firm presented plans that ranged from a \$12 million option with capacity for 140 inmates to \$28 million with 200 inmates.

Citing relatively inexpensive operating costs, the county commission settled on a design that calls for 148 beds with room for future expansion.

The 38-year-old jail on Duane Street can hold 60 inmates. Several inmates each week are released from the jail while their court cases are ongoing because of overcrowding.

Local law enforcement leaders cited several studies that reveal the need for a new jail. The 2017 Oregon Uniform Crime Report, for example, ranked the county first in behavioral crimes and crimes against people and fifth in property crimes.

Some, though, questioned how the jail bond would fare, considering that school bonds in Astoria and Warrenton and another measure to expand the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District's fitness and

aquatic centers were also on the ballot.

"I was cautiously optimistic, to put it lightly," Bergin said.

Warrenton Mayor Henry Balensifer and the City Commission took no position on the jail bond. The mayor said that while he saw the need for a new jail, he was hesitant to ask residents for more money with the Warrenton-Hammond School District's \$38.5 million bond also on the ballot.

"This bond takes unique advantage of the still 'fresh' bones of the (Oregon Youth Authority) facility, without which the project could have cost the taxpayers double," District Attorney Josh Marquis said in an email. "Yet some, like Warrenton Mayor Henry Balensifer, refused to take a position, like many I guess, hoping that we could just whistle through stats showing the highest violent crime rates reported by the Oregon Criminal Justice System."

Bergin said the difference in this year's bond measure was that officials had a more estab-

lished plan that was meant to keep costs down.

"I know we did our due diligence the past two years," he said.

Bergin has said a new jail would offer better mental health treatment options. While Amy Baker, the executive director of Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare, decried the tendency to fund incarceration over mental health services, she supported the bond. Baker said the current jail is "inhumane" and that a new one could offer more opportunities to provide treatment.

To pay for increased jail operating costs, the county passed a 1 percent lodging tax. Bergin said the tax was fair since a large share of people arrested in the county come from other areas. Local hoteliers, however, vehemently opposed the tax.

Bergin said the next step is for architects and county officials to discuss a timeline for construction in Warrenton.

"I'm sure it'll take a few months to get that all sorted out and move forward," he said.



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

A \$20 million bond will support a new jail at the former North Coast Youth Correctional Facility in Warrenton.

Mayor: Jones will lead the council at a time of major turnover

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Jones will step into the role at a time when the city is grappling with how to provide more affordable and workforce housing, how to address riverfront and economic development and what to do about a growing homeless population.

Jones will lead the City Council at a time of major turnover. Three of the five sitting councilors will wrap up their terms this December. It will be important to establish council goals in January, and, as a team, prioritize the goals, Jones said.

"I'm pretty comfortable that we all agree that housing, jobs and earthquake preparedness are among the top five things," he said.

Jones' move to mayor will leave the east side's Ward 4 council seat vacant. The incoming City Council will need to decide in January if they want to appoint a new councilor or hold an election.

"I have learned so much in this whole process," Taylor said. "Actually I'm very excited about (the) next steps. There are many opportunities to do good."

Her term as president of the downtown association ends in December and she plans to let it expire. But she will remain involved in city issues. She



Dulcye Taylor



Michael Miller

said she has started to set up meetings with people to talk about homelessness and housing and how people can work together to solve these issues.

Miller said he plans to continue to be engaged in city issues in some way, too.

"But I'm trying to figure out the most effective manner of doing that," he said. "I'm just a little guy, so to speak, but I'm very angry about where our nation's going and I want to have a voice in that."

He thanked LaMear for her service as mayor and wished Jones luck.

The three candidates all identified similar issues during the campaign that they believe the city faces, from a lack of affordable and workforce housing to rapid development and a rise in homelessness.

The city is in the middle

of several large-scale planning processes to craft code that will guide future development. Planners are working on land use guidelines for the Urban Core downtown — the last portion of the Riverfront Vision Plan — as well as in Uniontown, a historic neighborhood that forms the city's western gateway.

The city also recently amended a controversial "no camping" ordinance to include forestland where dozens of homeless people have been living.

Jones said he will continue the work of a homelessness solutions task force formed by LaMear. The group includes representatives from social service organizations, downtown businesses and the larger community.

The candidates differed

slightly in how they planned to address all these issues. Taylor and Miller advocated for "crazy ideas" and "outside of the box" thinking, while Jones was more apt to point to strides the city and city councilors were already making to map out issues and develop strategies.

Both Jones and Taylor voiced a desire to look at how properties are zoned. Some lots could be changed to accommodate higher-density housing, Jones suggested, while Taylor was interested in the idea of going through the city's inventory of vacant buildings to see what could be redeveloped.

Both pointed to the example of the former Waldorf Hotel, a dilapidated and unused building next to City Hall, which was acquired by a nonprofit affordable housing developer.

Jones pointed to his leadership experience as a Coast Guard commander, in charge of complex operations and familiar with navigating bureaucracy, as well as his familiarity as a city councilor with city discussions and projects.

Taylor noted the skills she gained in her leadership of the downtown association and the work she has done to help revitalize downtown would apply broadly to the rest of Astoria.

Miller believed his lack of political background could be an asset.

LaMear announced in January that she did not intend to run for a second term as mayor. Taylor and City Councilor Cindy Price announced early their intentions to run for mayor, followed by Miller in mid-June.

Price and Taylor had been

allies on city issues and efforts like the restoration of the Tourist No. 2 ferry, but the mayor's race created a divide between them and left some in their shared social circles distressed about who to support.

Price dropped out of the mayor's race in August, withdrawing for family reasons. The next day, Jones publicly announced his intention to run.

Jones, who is one year into his new job as deputy director of the museum, had said earlier in the year that he didn't plan to run for mayor but changed his mind. He gained the support of several prominent Astorians, as well as a campaign contribution and endorsement from Price.

Taylor, meanwhile, received contributions from Van Dusen Family Inc., and a beverage company owned and operated by the former mayor.

Bonds: Districts receive \$4 million each in matching grant money from the state

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the election results are a victory for the entire community. The bond passed with 62.5 percent of the vote.

"My whole professional life ... I've been in community economic development," Oser said. "You are not going to have a strong, healthy community without strong, healthy schools. It's a victory for the community. It's a victory even for the people who voted against the bond. This will keep our community strong and vibrant."

Warrenton-Hammond School District's bond will purchase a master campus, build a new middle school and kick-start a multidecade process of relocating the entire school district out of the tsunami inundation zone. The bond passed with 59.3 percent of the vote.

Mark Jeffery, the schools superintendent in Warrenton, said the results are a testament to the work the district did in identifying its needs and presenting a solid plan to the community.

"I just want to thank the community for putting their trust in us and to let them know we're not going to let them down," Jeffery said.

The school districts receive \$4 million each in matching grant money from the state with the passage of the bonds.

The centerpiece of Astoria's \$75 million school improvement plan is a \$45 million modernization of Astoria Middle School, built in 1968 and largely untouched by previous bonds. The classroom wing at the middle school, filled with triangular, undersized classrooms that often lack natural light and proper ventilation, would be razed and replaced with a three-story tower housing an equal number of identical learning communities.

Astoria High School would receive nearly \$20 million in security improvements and modernization, including the enclosure of the main campus. John Jacob Astor would receive \$9 million, including a modernization of an old gym into a multipurpose cafeteria, kitchen and activity space. Every school would add secured vestibules through which visitors would be approved for entry onto campus.

District voters last approved \$21.4 million worth of bonds in 2000 to build Lewis and Clark Elementary School, along with other improvements. The new bonds would begin after those expire, raising taxes for district voters to \$2.83 per \$1,000 of assessed property value — \$1 over current levels.

Warrenton's bond would buy a master campus on Dolphin Road from local company

Warrenton Fiber and build a new middle school to relieve overcrowding at Warrenton Grade School. The school district hopes to float a 2022 bond to move the high school, and another in 2032 to move the elementary school.

The grade school, serving kindergarten through eighth grade, was meant to house 540 students but has grown to more than 800, said Tom Rogozinski, the school's principal. The district has maxed out classroom and office space on the campus and installed six portable classrooms to house students.

Enrollment in Warrenton, the region's primary location for new housing, has grown by 20 percent over the past decade. The district recently surpassed 1,000 students and is estimated to peak at 1,159 by the 2024-25 school year.

Warrenton's bond is expected to raise property taxes by \$2.03 per \$1,000 of assessed value. The overall property tax burden in the school district is projected at \$2.68 per \$1,000 of assessed value through 2049 if the bond passes.

Yes for Astoria Kids raised more than \$33,700 for its campaign, while Yes for Warrenton Hammond Kids raised nearly \$10,500. The PACs primarily focused on signs, mailers, social media and door-to-door outreach.

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