



DAILY ASTORIAN

146TH YEAR, NO. 94

DailyAstorian.com // THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2018

ONE DOLLAR

Port strives for new revenue

Federal storm money less than expected

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

The Port of Astoria will likely receive a fraction of the money it tried to get from the Federal Emergency Management Agency for storm damage in 2015, throwing into jeopardy the agency's plan for repairing a decaying central waterfront and leaving it to look for other sources of revenue.

FEMA has offered nearly \$1.5 million to repair Port docks pummeled by high winds and rough waters in the storms. The Port at one point estimated more than \$13 million in damage.

Other city and county agencies affected by the storms have completed repairs and received reimbursements, albeit in much smaller amounts.

The Port had hoped to leverage a \$1.5 million state infrastructure grant it received to repair parts of Pier 2 as a local match for at least \$6 million in federal funds, and vice versa, stretching the grants to pay for more repairs.

But FEMA has so far offered just under \$1.5 million, including the nearly \$368,000 in reimbursements the Port has received so far, said Matt McGrath, the Port's director of operations.

The biggest hit has come on Pier 2, where the Port had sought \$2.7 million for repairs but has so far been offered \$8,000 for engineering by FEMA, McGrath said. Because much of the damage was to the pier's rock and sheet pile walls under the cover of docks, the Port has not been able to show aerial photographs of the condition of the pier before and after the storms, he said.

Port staff has estimated about \$20 million is needed to bring the docks up to proper working condition, including nearly \$7 million for the seafood landing and processing dock on Pier 2 and \$4 million to replace an ailing causeway at the East Mooring Basin, which is in danger of being shut down. The Port estimates at least \$2.5 million annually for upkeep to the infrastructure, while the agency's budget allows for about \$1 million in maintenance, McGrath said.

Jim Knight, the Port's executive director, said FEMA's decision was one of the last blows in the Port's efforts to find the money to fix its infrastructure.

"I'm publicly begging for help," Knight told the audience at a Port Commission meeting Tuesday. "Our infrastructure is failing. If we don't do something, it will be lost."

Raising revenue

The Port on Tuesday opened the possibility of charging new fees on passing ships and seafood offloaded at its docks to raise more revenue. The idea is that seafood processors would be charged the fees and pass part of the cost on to fishermen.

See PORT, Page 7A



PROBLEM PROPERTIES

Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Vehicles and trailers in states of disrepair and piles of refuse can be seen on Youngs River Road.

County searches for better ways to enforce around 200 code violations

By JACK HEFFERNAN
The Daily Astorian

A scenic 20-acre property on Youngs River Road that Leslee and John Thompson moved to in 2016 was perfect. At 61 years old and retired, they are now closer to their grandchildren, and their three horses have room to roam.

"This is the dream that I worked 38 years for," said Leslee Thompson, a retired nurse.

The only problem: the grandchildren don't visit, and the horses can barely roam.

Soon after they moved in, a host of people in recreational vehicles started gathering at a property near the entry to their 200-foot-long, sloped driveway. The Thompsons say they've dealt with daily problems, including threats of violence, possible drug odors, loud noise, piles of trash, human waste and burning of large items like a trailer and mattress.

They listed a range of health and safety concerns.

"I feel pretty much like I'm living in a war zone," Leslee Thompson said. "That's not what I moved here for. That's not why I pay my taxes."

At least 20 similar problem properties are known to exist in rural areas of Clatsop County. The county is managing about 200 unresolved code violations and, until recently, did not have a full-time code compliance specialist.

When a property does rack up violations, the consequences can take years, if



A property off Youngs River Road south of Miles Crossing has been deemed a problem by neighbors.

ever, to take hold. "Why are they being allowed to continue to get away with this without consequences?" Leslee Thompson said of the squatters next door. "Nothing that (the county has) done so far has been effective."

While more active code enforcement is needed, even the most egregious violators deserve due process, county Community Development Director Gail Henrikson said.

"We have a process established in the code, and it's slow," she said. "Just as we wouldn't want anybody coming in and taking action against us for a real or per-

ceived violation, we'd want to, you know, have our day in court, so to speak."

Warning

After visiting a property to verify a complaint, the county sends a letter of warning to the owner, offering 15 days to remedy the situation or present a plan. If no response is received, a formal notice of violation is sent, allowing 30 days to answer. Then the county places an order on the property allowing it to collect up to \$20,000 in fines in a 10-year period if issues remain unresolved.

See CODE VIOLATIONS, Page 7A

'I FEEL PRETTY MUCH LIKE I'M LIVING IN A WAR ZONE. THAT'S NOT WHAT I MOVED HERE FOR. THAT'S NOT WHY I PAY MY TAXES.'

Leslee Thompson | retired nurse who moved to a scenic 20-acre property on Youngs River Road

For Uniontown, a 'land use first' process



Alex Pajunas/The Daily Astorian

Astoria hopes to revitalize Uniontown on the city's west side.

City wants to improve west side

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

Astoria took its first stab at planning Uniontown's future Wednesday night.

A crowd representing diverse interests and backgrounds peered at maps and wrote questions, concerns and observations on yellow sticky notes as they considered the historic neighborhood's trans-

portation needs and debated what they would like to see in terms of businesses, buildings, housing and recreation.

"It's really about balance," said Michael Duncan, senior regional planner and grant manager with the Oregon Department of Transportation.

The Uniontown Reborn study is funded by state grant money and intended to lay the groundwork for a number of different improvements to the city's western gateway.

Duncan described the study as a "land use first" process.

"We're looking at how Uniontown wants to grow up and matching that with a trans-

portation plan they'll want to use," he explained.

Consultants and project managers identified a slew of existing constraints and possible opportunities in Uniontown and presented these to the audience on Wednesday, asking for feedback.

Property ownership is fragmented and divided into small parcels, they noted, while Bridge Vista, established under the city's Riverfront Vision Plan and designed to preserve views of the river and bridge, affects new development and requires a lengthy public process.

See UNIONTOWN, Page 7A

