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ONE DOLLAR



Complaint against housing authority dismissed

Deputy director made claims

By JACK HEFFERNAN
The Daily Astorian

The state Bureau of Labor and Industries has dismissed a complaint lodged against the Northwest Oregon Housing Authority by the agency's deputy director.

Teresa Sims, who has been on paid leave since May, filed the complaint in August, detailing a long list of issues with Todd Johnston, the agency's director. Sims is being investigated by the agency for actions she's taken at work.

Issues listed in the complaint included claims that Johnston promoted an employee who wasn't qualified for the position, obscured information and that he and Helping Hands — a nonprofit that works with the homeless — mismanaged public funds and created a fear of retaliation against those who reported problems.

Investigators for the agency refuted the claims in a report released in October. The report stated that many of the claims failed to match up with emails and other records, as well as other people's recollections.

A letter sent to Sims from the state last week said it did not find sufficient evidence to substantiate the claims.

"We're happy, I'm happy that this was dismissed," Johnston said. "We knew that the claims were false, so we were confident that this would be the outcome."

Krista Le Roux, Sims' Portland-based attorney, said she plans to file a defamation lawsuit in Circuit Court this week regarding some of the information provided to investigators. She declined to discuss specifics of the state's findings as she awaits more information.

"They won't state an actual reason why," Le Roux said. "We're left in the dark."

Sims can still file a lawsuit based on the claims in Circuit Court within 90 days of last week's letter from the state. She is considering it but has not made a final decision, Le Roux said.

Meanwhile, an outside firm is finalizing its investigation into Sims on behalf of the housing authority, Johnston said. Investigators plan to speak to Sims one more time and finish the probe by Christmas.



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Complaints against the executive director of the Northwest Oregon Housing Authority have been dismissed.

FEELING BLUE

Cities, Democrats carry more weight in Clatsop County's vote



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

A voter drops off a ballot in Astoria.

By JACK HEFFERNAN
The Daily Astorian

With each congressional election year, Clatsop County's cities are exerting more influence over the vote, and Democrats' already steady grasp is strengthening.

More than 63 percent of people who cast ballots in November live in cities, a more than 2 percent jump from 2010, according to county election data. The slight, but consistent, rise this decade comes as populations continue to grow in the relatively rural county's five cities.

Democrats cast more than 2,500 more ballots than Republicans this year, the widest gap this decade. The schism has expanded — except for 2014 — in each congressional election.

"It's a huge factor," said Jim Hoffman, the former chairman of the county's Republican Central Committee. "It's been something we've watched for years."

Overall, more ballots were cast this year than any other election this decade, save the 2016 presidential election.

"I believe the combination of excitement

and interest building since 2016 created that outcome in 2018," said Bryan Kidder, who was elected last week as chairman of the county's Democratic Central Committee.

In the 2016 election, the difference between cities and unincorporated areas largely mirrored the national trend, where urban voters tend to vote for Democrats and rural voters prefer Republicans.

In Clatsop County, all but two of the 16 city precincts voted for former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the Democrat. Conversely, only three of the 17 unincorporated precincts did not back President Donald Trump, the Republican.

"Where you have large groups of people living together, you tend to have different needs," said John Horvick, the vice president and political director of Portland-based polling firm DHM Research.

The county's historically blue-collar workforce, born from industries like fishing and logging, created a base of centrist Democratic voters decades ago. Recently, liberal retirees and younger voters have also moved to the region.

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'IT'S LONG-TERM HISTORY AND SHORT-TERM HISTORY THAT COME INTO PLAY THERE.'

John Horvick | vice president and political director of Portland-based polling firm DHM Research

Longtime Port tenant was asked to move for log business



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

Bergerson Construction, located on the Port of Astoria's central waterfront for more than 40 years, moved to Hyak Maritime's boat fabrication and repair facility at North Tongue Point.

Reason behind the decision comes to light

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

Bergerson Construction, one of the Port of Astoria's longtime tenants, was asked to move from Pier 3 to make way for more logs from Astoria Forest Products.

The company announced in April that it would move its equipment and office from the central waterfront to North Tongue Point, but the reason behind the decision did not

publicly come to light until this week.

Bergerson has been a tenant of the Port for more than 40 years and involved in many of the region's marine construction projects, from rebuilding the city's 17th Street Dock to repairing much of the Port's infrastructure. In addition to property it had rented from the Port, the company owns an office building on Portway Street just outside the Port in Uniontown.

"There was increasing pressure to get us to move off of Pier 3," said Greg Morrill, the company's co-owner.

The pressure was related to expanding Astoria Forest

Product's area for logs to get more ships in each year, Morrill said. Astoria Forest Products' business of exporting logs has recently been stalled by the trade war between the U.S. and China, with no new ships scheduled for next year.

Bergerson and the Port's boatyard on Pier 3 have faced increasing pressure for space since Astoria Forest Products began processing logs there several years ago. Bergerson wanted to stay, but saw the writing on the wall and had already begun negotiations with boat-builder Hyak Maritime for a new location, Morrill said.

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