

# Astoria City Council finalizes approval of waterfront hotel

By **KATIE FRANKOWICZ**  
*The Daily Astorian*

Astoria city councilors finalized their decision Thursday to uphold an appeal and allow developers to build a four-story hotel along the riverfront.

The City Council adopted findings of fact to reflect the approval.

City Councilor Cindy Price and Councilor Zetty Nemlowill remained against the project, maintaining that the hotel does not meet criteria intended to preserve views and the city's historic character. They were the sole "no" votes at a hearing this month when a majority of the council gave tentative approval to Hollander Hospitality to construct the 60-plus room, Marri-

ill said Thursday. "The code has gotten beaten up quite a lot. But if the code were crystal clear, there wouldn't be land use attorneys and there wouldn't be a need for design review committees or appeals to the City Council."

While she, like Price, still does not believe the hotel is compatible in terms of scale and mass, Nemlowill said she was grateful that Hollander changed the look of the hotel following the first round of denials of a design criticized for being generic and boxy.

The new design, presented to the City Council at Hollander's first appeal in October, was intended to evoke historic cannery buildings and other historic structures.

"This was a very complex case," Nemlowill said. "And ultimately, even though there are a lot of disappointed people in the community right now, I think that the design is much better than the first design we saw and I appreciate the developer creating a design that is specific to Astoria and not just Anywhere, USA."

City Councilor Bruce Jones and Councilor Tom Brownson said they did not want to see the waterfront clogged with hotels, but repeated points they made at the hearing earlier this month before voting in favor of Hollander's appeal: That, in this case, the code was not clear.

"I don't want to see a series of four-story buildings going in the Bridge Vista overlay zone any more than anyone else does," Jones said. "But the City Council voted only three years ago in 2015 to allow a 45-foot height in areas in the Bridge Vista that are zoned for hotels."

"The way to control how this city evolves is through a tightly written development code, amended either where the community needs change or we find gaps in the code or maybe some areas that are too subject to interpretation."

If the majority of the community wants to limit building heights, he concluded, they need to amend the code.

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Councilor Zetty Nemlowill

ott-brand Fairfield Inn and Suites.

Hollander wants to build the hotel at the base of Second Street, home to the former Ship Inn restaurant, and an area that falls under the city's Bridge Vista overlay, part of the Riverfront Vision Plan that dictates how development unfolds along the waterfront. Hotels are allowed outright at the site and only the building's proposed design and proximity to historic features were reviewed by city boards.

The Design Review Committee and the Historic Landmarks Commission rejected the project, but developers appealed to the City Council. The Design Review Committee later rejected a second design which was again appealed to City Council.

"This is the first real big project that has ever been tried in the Bridge Vista overlay," Nemlow-

# Deal reached to protect scenic areas

By **JEFF MAPES**  
*Oregon Public Broadcasting*

After months of wrangling, congressional negotiators have reached agreement on a bill that would protect several popular scenic areas in Oregon.

The package — which the U.S. Senate is expected to vote on next month — contains long-sought protections for several rivers and backcountry regions. It covers parts of the Molalla and Chetco rivers, as well as several Rogue River tributaries. And it covers the Devil's Staircase, a largely untouched wildland area in a southern Oregon coastal rainforest.

The measure would also allow forest thinning on a wilderness area near central Oregon's Crooked River Ranch to reduce the danger from wildfires.

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Oregon, said the bill contains "very substantial wins for conservation" that he said were long overdue.

Wyden and U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, the sole Republican in the Oregon congressional delegation, wrangled for weeks over the provisions in the measure.

Walden wanted the Senate to pass his House-approved bill dealing with the Crooked River Ranch, an upscale development north of Redmond, and he objected to some of the wilderness provisions in the original Senate bill.

"The people in Crooked River Ranch are quite frankly terrified they are going to become the next Paradise, California," said Walden spokesman Justin Discigil, referring to the Sierra foothills town recently wiped out by wildfire.

Wyden said he also wanted to act to protect the ranch. But he said the matter needed to be paired with the wilderness protections he had long sought.

The provisions were included in a broader public lands bill that would provide wilderness protections for about 1.3 million acres around the country. The bipartisan bill appeared



Chandra LeGue/Oregon Wild

The Devil's Staircase, a series of cataracts on Wassen Creek in southwest Oregon.

poised for Senate passage on Wednesday, but U.S. Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, took procedural steps to block an immediate vote on the measure.

That deep-sixed the bill for now since time is running out on the congressional session. But Wyden said he was promised a Senate vote next month — and he's also expecting quick action in the House, where Democrats will then be in control.

"I'm feeling quite upbeat about the prospects for January," he said. During the heated negotiations, Wyden said he was forced to drop provisions providing wilderness protection for 100,000 acres in the Rogue River area as well as 30,000 acres in the Molalla River watershed.

Wyden said Molalla River watershed protections had to be put off at least temporarily because of budget issues. But Wyden and Walden clashed over the Rogue provisions.

Discigil said Walden was concerned about allowing additional wilderness pro-

tections in southern Oregon that could interfere with management efforts aimed at reducing wildfire.

"Greg shares the concerns of the community in southern Oregon," Discigil said. "After the wildfire season we had in 2018 and 2017 ... we should be thinking very carefully about moving ahead with new wilderness provisions."

Steve Pedery, conservation director of Oregon Wild, said the Rogue River areas earmarked for wilderness protection don't pose a wildfire threat since they aren't near any communities. He chastised Walden for getting involved in a

wilderness fight outside his district.

According to Wyden's office, provisions in the new package include:

- Protections for about 120 miles of Rogue River tributaries, 21 miles of the Molalla River south of Portland, 18 miles of Jenny Creek through the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, 21 miles of Wassen and Franklin creeks in the Siuslaw National Forest, and several tributaries of the Elk River.
- New protections for the Chetco River to prevent mining activities.
- Wilderness designation for 30,000 acres for the Devil's Staircase.

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