

2018: YEAR IN REVIEW

Seaside shooting

Cashus Dean Case, 44, was shot and killed by Seaside Police Cpl. David Davidson at the Seaside RV Park in July after a report that he was waving black powder pistols and threatening to kill dogs that had mauled a man.

Video footage showed Davidson fired three rounds from an AR-15 rifle into Case's chest within seconds after ordering Case to drop his weapons.

While noting that the shooting was "fast," the Clatsop County District Attorney's Office determined that it was justified.

Davidson was also involved in a fatal police shooting in 2016 that was ruled justified. The officer killed a felon who had shot and killed Sgt. Jason Gooding.

Astoria Riverwalk Inn

After nearly three years of litigation, the Port of Astoria Commission in October approved the transfer of the Astoria Riverwalk Inn to Param Hotel Corp. The company, led by Ganesh Sonpatki, had been trying to take over the hotel since 2015 from heavily indebted former operator Brad Smithart.

Param sued the Port after the takeover fell apart and the agency chose Astoria Hospitality Ventures, owned by a brother-in-law of a former Port commissioner, to run the lodging.

A Circuit Court judge eventually slapped the Port with a multimillion-dollar judgment and gave Param the choice between taking the money or a promised seven-year lease on the hotel. The Port appealed the judge's ruling, but eventually settled with Param, which replaced Hospitality Ventures as the operator on Halloween.

Param also opened an escrow account of \$580,000 to pay off Smithart's debts to the Port, city and county. Smithart, who has since moved to the East Coast, was set to receive more than \$180,000 in the negotiated settlement. But the city bought his stake of the settlement at a public auction as collateral for his debts, leaving Smithart with nothing.

Seaside Civic and Convention Center

The Seaside Civic and Convention Center kicked off its \$15 million renovation and expansion project with a June groundbreaking.

Meeting space will increase by 21 percent, with the largest increases being an expanded ballroom and improved breakout rooms. The facility will grow from 46,000 square feet to close to 55,000, an increase of nearly 19 percent.

Russ Vandenberg, the general manager, has told the City Council that the project could be completed by August.

Cannon Beach City Hall

Conversations about replacing Cannon Beach City Hall resurfaced this year after concerns about the building's ability to with-



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Robert 'Jake' Jacob helped with the restoration of the Tourist No. 2 ferry.

stand a tsunami or earthquake.

The new building would be a central location for emergency response and communications. City councilors are debating whether to build at the existing location on Gower Street or at a 55-acre site east of U.S. Highway 101 known as South Wind.

Both sites come with significant foundational challenges and high costs, with the estimated bond price varying between \$14.5 million to more than \$27 million, depending on the location. Voters could be asked to approve a bond for the project in November.

Election winners

Warrenton Mayor Henry Balensifer was elected in November to a four-year term at the post he was appointed to after Kujala resigned in 2017.

Balensifer defeated John Washington, a Hammond retiree.

Behind the message of "Let Seaside Keep Its Mayor," Mayor Jay Barber held off a challenge from radio station owner John Chapman. The City Council appointed Barber in 2016 after former Mayor Don Larson stepped down. Larson died shortly after.

In Cannon Beach, Mayor Sam Steidel was unopposed in his bid for a second term.

Real estate agent Robin Risley and City Councilor Mike Benefield prevailed over hotelier Greg Swedenborg for two seats on the City Council.

In the one contested election in Gearhart, City Councilor Kerry Smith won a second term after overcoming challenger Jack Zim-

merman, a former oil and gas executive.

Voters rejected a \$20 million bond for the expansion of the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District's aquatic facility in Seaside.

Water quality

After high bacteria readings this year at Cannon Beach storm outfalls at Gower Street and Chisana Creek, the city revived a water testing program and could be on a path to a solution.

The cause of the bacteria spikes has stumped the city for more than a decade, with staff being unable to identify a pattern.

DNA testing showed bacteria is not from human waste, which the city says indicates the bacteria is from animal waste and fungi building up inside underground pipes.

The city hired an engineering firm to explore ways to redesign and install ultraviolet light filters at the outfalls, which would kill the bacteria before it goes out to the beach.

Oil spill

An oil spill from a 4,200-gallon, 20-foot tank created a sheen that extended 5 miles along the Columbia River in January.

The old tank, located under a pier near the Cannery Pier Hotel in Uniontown, was likely placed roughly 70 years ago. Knowledge of the tank was lost amid several changes in ownership of the pier.

Jacob dies

Robert "Jake" Jacob, the Astoria entrepre-

neur behind the Cannery Pier Hotel, died of natural causes in September.

Jacob, 69, was a colorful character and a force behind the renovation of the Liberty Theatre and the Astoria Armory and ideas like the Astoria Riverfront Trolley and the Astoria Riverwalk.

"A man with a passion for Astoria like never seen before," Jeff Daly, a longtime friend, said after Jacob's death. "You can go anywhere in Astoria and feel the energy of his vision and see what he saved for all of us."

Walmart in Warrenton

Customers lined up in June for the grand opening of a new Walmart in Warrenton.

The retail giant, which first announced plans for a store on the North Coast in 2009, is the latest addition to a collection of big-box stores in Warrenton.

Gearhart centennial

For Gearhart's 100th anniversary, residents came together with a celebration to remember. The centennial — honoring the former town of Clatsop's incorporation as the city of Gearhart in 1918 — brought festive gatherings, parties, memorabilia and a downtown street dance in July.

Butterflies

Threatened Oregon silverspot butterflies made their first appearance in decades at Saddle Mountain this summer after public and private partners placed hundreds of caterpillars on the mountain's slopes.

Habitat loss is the leading reason for the decline of silverspot butterfly populations and the work is part of a larger effort to reintroduce the butterflies across their traditional coastal range. The insects also rely on a threatened plant, the early blue violet. Local groups have been working to re-establish native plants in coastal prairie habitats throughout the North Coast and in southwestern Washington state.

Bunnies gone wild

A burgeoning rabbit population in Cannon Beach made headlines this year after residents in Tolovana complained to the city. Some neighbors say the bunnies have ruined lawns, burrowed holes and created health concerns, while others cherish their furry feral friends. A few bunnies even turned up dead.

While the city has chosen not to get involved at this time, the story grabbed the attention of people across the country, inspiring a "Save the Cannon Beach bunnies" petition on Change.org. For now, the bunnies are still nibbling on the grass near Tolovana Inn.

Katie Frankowicz, Jack Heffernan, Edward Stratton, Brenna Visser and R.J. Marx of The Daily Astorian contributed to this report.

MORE THAN JUST A PRETTY PLACE

IT'S MY COMMUNITY

I had coffee recently with a friend who asked "After a year in Astoria, what's still on your list of things to do here?"

There are local places I have yet to visit that I rattled off. Many more that I have visited and enjoyed so much that I will revisit. There is, after all, much to love about living on the North Coast.

The conversation started me thinking about place and community, and well, what makes a place a community instead of just a collection of attractions.

Of course it's the people who live here. We share a work ethic, pride in history and responsibility in making living here better.

At The Daily Astorian, we think every day about our responsibility to capture that shared history in our pages – print and online. We share family milestones like births, marriages and obituaries. Every day we chronicle local news from weather to elections and state championships. We help people find new jobs, homes and places to shop. We alert readers to problems that need to be solved in our communities, and people who have ideas to solve them.

Our employees are North Coast native-born and newcomers. We are 40 people who live here, own homes here, buy groceries, raise kids and volunteer.

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Kari L. Borgeson

PUBLISHER, THE DAILY ASTORIAN



Happy New Year



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