



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

The new mayor of Astoria, Bruce Jones, shakes hands with former Mayor Arline LaMear after taking the oath of office.

Hammond fisherman sentenced for sex abuse

Sturgell gets more than 13 years of prison time

By JACK HEFFERNAN
The Daily Astorian

A well-known Hammond fisherman was sentenced Monday to more than 13 years in prison for sex abuse against a young woman in 2015 and later bribing and threatening her.

Dennis Lee Sturgell, 66, was convicted in November of four counts of first-degree sodomy, two counts of first-degree unlawful sexual penetration and one count of second-degree sex abuse after jurors found that the woman did not or was unable to give consent.



Dennis Lee Sturgell

Sturgell and the woman drank together at a Warrenton bar before the crimes took place. Described as “black-out drunk,” the woman left the bar and got into Sturgell’s truck.

Sturgell drove her across the Astoria Bridge to his wooded property in Naselle, Washington, and provided her with cocaine. Sturgell engaged in sex acts with the woman at the property and, later in the night, an Astoria hotel room.

In a statement in Circuit Court on Monday, the woman said Sturgell is a predator and psychopath.

“The term ‘monster’ doesn’t seem to do you justice,” she said.

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NEW CITY COUNCIL TAKES OVER IN ASTORIA

Jones sworn in as mayor; West appointed

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

As newly sworn-in Astoria Mayor Bruce Jones handed former Mayor Arline LaMear the bronze nameplate that used to mark her central seat at City Hall, he paused and set it back in front of his own name.

“It’s not too late,” Jones joked. “Oh yes it is,” LaMear said. “I am now sleeping through the night.”

LaMear administered the oath of office to Jones and two new city councilors on Monday night. Roger Rocka, a former Astoria-Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce director, replaces Zetty Nemlowill in the south side’s Ward 1, while Joan Herman, a radio programmer and former Planning Commissioner, replaces Cindy Price in downtown’s Ward 3.

Several hours later, the new council unanimously appointed Jessamyn Grace West, the executive director of the nonprofit Astoria Arts and Movement Center in the historic Odd Fellows building downtown, to fill Jones’ vacated east side Ward 4 seat.

City councilors had considered four applicants, including Kevin Leahy, the executive director of Clatsop Economic Development Resources.

West, 42, is part of a demographic that rarely gets represented on the City Council, Councilor Tom Brownson said: People in their 30s and 40s, working in the city.

Councilors noted her involvement in the arts community, her relative youth, her work with nonprofits and



Katie Frankowicz/The Daily Astorian
Jessamyn Grace West, left, is sworn in as city councilor by Mayor Bruce Jones.

‘NOT TO PICK ON YOU GUYS, BUT I SEE FOUR GUYS WITH GRAY BEARDS. ... I THINK THERE NEEDS TO BE A WOMAN, ANOTHER WOMAN ON THE COUNCIL.’

Chris Farrar | Ward 4 resident

her connections with the Hispanic and LGBTQ communities.

And, as Ward 4 resident Chris Farrar noted, “Not to pick on you guys, but I see four guys with gray beards. ... I think there needs to be a woman, another woman on the council.”

LaMear, Nemlowill and Price formed the first female majority on the City Council in Astoria’s history. But they opted not to run for re-election last year. Price announced a bid for mayor but withdrew from the race for family reasons.

Jones had favored Leahy for the appointment in Ward 4, saying Leahy was poised to address issues like housing and job growth. But he decided to vote with the majority and welcome West.

Though both Leahy and West received vocal support from people across the city, a handful of Ward 4 residents specifically spoke in favor of West.

“It still seems like a dream right now,” West said. “I’m just excited. I’m ready to get to work. ... I think the people that spoke on my behalf, they know if I do something, I give it 100 percent.”

Clifford Hunter-Gammon, a software support manager, and Pamela Mattson McDonald, a writer and researcher, also applied for the seat.

“I think we have a clear winner tonight,” Planning Commissioner Daryl Moore told city councilors before West’s appointment. “And that’s Ward 4 and the city of Astoria.”

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Tensions flare over hotel project

Committee member confronted by mayor

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

A member of the Design Review Committee who twice voted against a waterfront hotel project in Astoria refuted claims Monday that she acted unprofessionally when she testified against the project at a hearing last month.

Sarah Jane Bardy said she received a closed-door reprimand from new Mayor Bruce Jones for her public comments against the Marriott-brand Fairfield Inn and Suites. The project, a four-story, 60-plus room hotel at the base of Second Street, faced community pushback, but overcame multiple denials by city boards to win a City Council appeal.

Jones replied that he wanted to confront Bardy face to face about behavior he believes was unacceptable for a representative of the city.

Bardy, who had applied for an open position on the Planning Commission, assumed Jones wanted to talk to her

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Port of Astoria approached about air taxi service

Like Uber, but at the airport

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

The Port of Astoria has been approached about an air taxi service at the Astoria Regional Airport.

The Oregon Aviation Industries Cluster Group, an association-based economic development, is applying for a grant to explore air taxi service around the state. The association is trying to part-

ner with airports in Astoria, John Day and Newport to start the service.

The concept would involve planes ready to fly people upon request. The model has been used in other regions, such as Blackbird Air’s on-demand flights throughout Southern California.

Gale Jacobs, director of the association, admits air taxi service is a new concept without much traction or demand. “But if smaller airplanes can be subsidized to fly people like Uber, there may be something workable,” he said.

Rides would be subsidized by a 2 cents per gallon aviation fuel tax approved by the state Legislature in 2015, a quarter of which is targeted for air service in rural Oregon. The association’s grant request to the Oregon Department of Aviation’s Rural Oregon Airport Relief Program can ask for up to \$500,000 at a time, Jacobs said.

Only Portland, Eugene, Redmond and Medford have scheduled air service. Pendleton has a commuter connection to Portland.

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EO Media Group

Passengers board a SeaPort Airlines flight to Portland in 2014 at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport in Pendleton. SeaPort Airlines operated a passenger service at Astoria Regional Airport, but left when state subsidies dried up.

