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ONE DOLLAR

## County mental health contracts up for bid

Leaders frustrated with Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare

By **DERRICK DePLEDGE**  
*The Daily Astorian*

Clatsop County will put contracts for mental health and addiction treatment and developmental disabilities up for bid as frustration builds with Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare.

The mental health agency was at risk

of losing the contracts two years ago over management turmoil and doubts about patient care, but there was no interest from other providers. Monica Steele, the interim county manager, indicated Wednesday night that two providers — one from Washington state and the other in Columbia County — might compete to take over.

The announcement comes as Steele and county commissioners are frustrated by a lack of transparency.

In late December, the mental health agency's board placed Amy Baker, the executive director, on administrative leave, a decision that caught county leaders and some agency staff by surprise.

Steele asked the Oregon Health Authority to look into an incident that happened in December at the crisis respite center in War-

renton after the board would not provide the county with information.

"I don't feel like they're being very cooperative," Steele said after a county commission meeting Wednesday night.

Debbie Morrow, the chairwoman of the mental health agency's board, could not be reached for comment.

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Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Gearhart City Administrator Chad Sweet looks up information on Airbnb properties.

## A TAXING SITUATION

### Cities and homeowners are concerned that Airbnb is not collecting lodging taxes

By **BRENNA VISSER**  
*The Daily Astorian*

Before last July, Ky Fullerton, who rents his Gearhart home on Airbnb, knew he needed to collect and pay the city's lodging tax directly to the city himself.

Unlike Seaside, a mile to the south and in the same zip code, Gearhart did not sign a voluntary agreement that allows Airbnb to collect and pay local taxes in a lump sum each quarter.

In July, a new state law aimed to change that. The law clarified that booking platforms like Airbnb and VRBO had to collect and pay state and local lodging taxes on vacation rentals, regardless of these voluntary agreements.

But even after the law took effect, Airbnb listings in Gearhart still appeared not to list the local tax, Fullerton noticed. When he asked why, he received an email from the company saying the responsibility was on the homeowner.

"The issue I had was they are not collecting the local tax at all in Gearhart when similar providers are," Fullerton said. "There's the collection issue and there's the transparency issue: Airbnb isn't doing No. 1."

Gearhart has yet to receive a check from Airbnb for the first quarter of lodging taxes this fiscal year, according to

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City Administrator Chad Sweet.

Six months have passed since the state law took effect, and Gearhart appears to be one of many cities still not receiving taxes directly from Airbnb, said Wendy Johnson, an intergovernmental relations associate with the League of Oregon Cities.

The situation is leaving some cities confused, Johnson said, as the requirement seemed "pretty clear."

On a local level, the lack of clarity around tax reporting is causing bureaucratic issues, as well as putting some well-intentioned homeowners out of compliance without their knowledge, potentially jeopardizing their rental permits.

#### Larger problem

When the bill was introduced in Salem last year, the goal was to make it clear that Airbnb and other companies that promote short-term rentals are responsible for collecting and paying taxes, Johnson said.

But since the law was inked, Johnson

has had many in the lodging industry ask when collection is supposed to start. So far, Airbnb appears to only be paying cities and counties with existing agreements, with one exception, she said.

Shortly after the law passed, Johnson said she provided a list of cities where taxes weren't being collected to Airbnb, but received no answer about when the company intended to start collecting.

"They are literally just ignoring the law," she said.

Laura Rillos, a spokeswoman for Airbnb, said the company is happy to work with communities to work out how to collect and pay taxes, but that there are "affirmative steps local jurisdictions need to take in order for Airbnb to legally collect and remit applicable taxes," such as updating local ordinances to align with the new state law.

"We are eager to work with any jurisdiction throughout Oregon to set up the necessary mechanisms to collect and remit taxes on behalf of our community and ensure we are paying our fair share," Rillos said in a statement.

Corvallis, which did not have a voluntary agreement with Airbnb, contacted Airbnb about collecting and paying taxes after passing a local ordinance that aligned with the state law. Nancy

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## Nebeker tapped as new county commission chairwoman

She invited a parliamentarian

By **JACK HEFFERNAN**  
*The Daily Astorian*

Clatsop County Commissioner Sarah Nebeker was selected Wednesday night as the board's new chairwoman.

Fellow commissioners approved the appointment in a 4-1 vote. Commissioner Lianne Thompson nominated herself and was the sole divergent vote.

Nebeker, who was elected in 2012, is the longest-serving board member. Commissioner Kathleen Sullivan, who was chosen vice chairwoman, made the first motion to nominate Nebeker, who later nominated Sullivan for her new role.

Nebeker previously served as vice chairwoman with former chairman Scott Lee, who did not seek re-election last year.

"I'm looking forward to working with this new group of commissioners, and I think we have a lot of dedicated, intelligent, capable

*See Chair, Page A7*



Sarah Nebeker

## Warrenton child sex abuser sentenced

Hagnas gets six years in prison

By **JACK HEFFERNAN**  
*The Daily Astorian*

A Warrenton handyman was sentenced Wednesday to over six years in prison for sexually abusing three young girls.

Carl Hagnas, 70, pleaded no contest last week to two counts of first-degree sex abuse and one count of second-degree sodomy. He originally faced 13 counts, which could have led to a prison sentence of over 81 years, before reaching a plea deal with the Clatsop County District Attorney's Office.

Hagnas was accused of abusing three girls under 14. Two of the girls were abused in 2015. The other accusations, from a girl under 8 at the time, date back to the 1990s.

Hagnas, known as the "candy man" for the treats he would hand out to children, was a community volunteer. He helped at a local Mormon church and cleaned the Ocean View Cemetery in Warrenton, where the most recent abuse took place. For work, he managed rental properties and would perform handyman jobs at people's homes.

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Carl Axel Hagnas

## Gearhart, Warrenton talk elk

Solutions have been elusive

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

GEARHART — North Coast leaders struggling to address elk-related issues in their communities hope an organization with ties to the governor's office will be able to help.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife often finds itself responding to elk-related questions in Clatsop Plains, an area that includes sections of Gearhart and Warrenton, where interactions between elk and people have become a safety concern.

But public opinion on elk varies widely. Any management of the animals would involve a diverse collection of government agencies, organizations and private property owners with very different goals and objectives.

"It's hard for any one agency to come up with a cohesive game plan that everyone will buy into," said Herman Biederbeck, state wildlife biologist, at a meeting in Gearhart on Wednesday with representatives of Oregon Solutions.

The state owns almost no land in the Clatsop Plains, he said, so the ability of the state to manage that area is "basically nil. ... There's no way that ODFW can do it alone."



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

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A herd of elk rests in a field near Warrenton.

