



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Bruce Jones took the oath of office Monday as mayor of Astoria from former Mayor Arline LaMear.

Astoria mayor apologizes to city councilors

Jones tells his colleagues he made 'a rookie mistake'

By **KATIE FRANKOWICZ**
The Daily Astorian

Astoria Mayor Bruce Jones has apologized to his fellow city councilors for a tense exchange that happened between him and a city board member during a meeting Monday.

"I made a rookie mistake," Jones said at a work session on Thursday. "I allowed myself to get a little provoked and give a response on the spur of the moment that in hindsight I would have just said, 'Thank you for your comment and if we want to discuss it further, we probably should set up a meeting with the (human resources) manager, the city manager and the city attorney.'"

Sarah Jane Bardy, who serves on the Design Review Committee, had twice voted against a proposal to build a four-story hotel on the waterfront. On Monday, she said she received a closed-door reprimand from Jones for her comments and conduct at an appeal hearing of the Fairfield Inn and Suites project in front of the City Council in December.

At that hearing, Bardy spoke against the project. She also suggested that the names of the city councilors who voted to move the project forward be put on a bench in front of the future hotel so everyone would know who helped approve

the hotel. Jones, City Councilor Tom Brownson and former Mayor Arline La Mear had voted to uphold the hotel developer's appeal.

"I was scolded for attending, speaking and clapping after public testimony at the Marriott hotel City Council appeal hearing, all of which I believe I have the right to do," Bardy told the City Council during a public comment period.

It is unusual for city councilors to respond to public comments, but Jones replied at length, defending the discussion he had with Bardy and noting that other city board members and councilors advised him to remove Bardy from the Design Review Committee over concerns that she could not be impartial.

Jones said today that he believes it is the responsibility of a mayor and anyone on the City Council to listen calmly to public testimony and address criticism, like Bardy's, in a thoughtful way.

"It was a long day, a long night and I let my guard down and allowed myself to be provoked," Jones said. "The wiser choice would have been simply to address the issue later, not in the heat of having just been attacked with some comments that, in my view, grossly mischaracterized our conversation. ... It was not the right time for me to address it."

Bardy remains on the Design Review Committee. Jones said he has not spoken to her since the Monday meeting.

Decades later, Courtney again takes aim at DUII threshold

State senator wants limit at 0.05 percent

By **AUBREY WIEBER**
Oregon Capital Bureau

As a state representative in 1983, Peter Courtney introduced legislation to lower the drunken-driving threshold from 0.10 blood alcohol content to 0.08.

It was a radical move from a new lawmaker who was expected to bide his time. Courtney had little support outside of a budding advocacy group called Mothers Against Drunk Driving, but he introduced the bill anyway.

It passed and Oregon and Utah became the first states to move to a 0.08 threshold for drunken driving. Courtney proved to be ahead of the times, as it wasn't until 1998 that President Bill Clinton called on all states to enact the 0.08 standard.

Now Courtney wants Oregon to be a leader again. He is taking the political point to push Oregon to an even lower limit — 0.05.

"You're not as good after you drink as you are before you drink," the Senate president said.

Today, Courtney said, drivers are confronted in their cars with more lights and screens than ever. Add in bike lanes and homeless people walking around at night, and there is too much distraction while driving something that can be used as a deadly weapon, he said.

The Salem Democrat knows his proposal will be unpopular.

"Sooner or later, you're going to have to fight that battle," Courtney said. "You don't wait until the timing's perfect. You don't wait until everything lines up."

Courtney said he's always been keenly aware of the downsides of alcohol, which has killed several chronic drinkers in his family. But this isn't about drinking, it's about safety, he said.

"I'm not trying to stop you from drinking," Courtney said. "I'm not trying to stop this explosion of brew pubs. Go, all of you. Go tonight, go every night. I'm



AP Photo/Don Ryan

Oregon Senate President Peter Courtney wants to lower the threshold for drunken driving.

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Oregon Senate President Peter Courtney

not trying to make a statement about drinking."

Utah is the only state with such a standard, which went into effect in December after nearly two years of hot debate and push-back from the restaurant industry, citizens and some lawmakers.

That was in teetotaling Utah, where the religious beliefs of two-thirds of the state mandate they abstain from alcohol. It was even fought before a Mormon-dominated Legislature, prompting former state Sen. Jim Dabakis to famously drink two mimosas before a floor speech to show he wasn't impaired.

So far, Courtney is missing crucial allies.

Mothers Against Drunk Driving so far isn't endorsing the Courtney move and the Oregon State Police are neutral on the idea. Capt. Tim Fox said there is no research on the difference of impairment at 0.05 and 0.08. Superintendent Travis Hampton said if the new limit were to pass, state police wouldn't have enough troopers to enforce the new law.

Courtney is undeterred. "I'll be talking with him," Courtney said of Hampton.

And that's the law enforcement and anti-drunken driving community. Oregon also has robust wine, craft beer, spirits and restaurant industries with powerful lobbies.

Greg Astley, the government affairs director for the Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association, said the proposal misses the mark, saying a 120-pound woman could get arrested for having one glass of wine after work.

Courtney's office says it would take a 160-pound man three drinks in an hour to get to 0.05. He also points to the National Transportation Safety Board, which has been promoting 0.05 since 2013, which says someone between 0.05 and 0.079 blood alcohol content is seven times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash than a sober driver.

A University of Chicago study based on data from international countries with a 0.05 limit estimated 1,790 lives would be saved each year if all states adopted the limit. In 2016, there were 2,636 crashes involving drinking, causing 154 deaths.

Drivers can be cited for being under the influence of

less than 0.08 but the penalties are less severe. In 2017, of the 4,671 DUII arrests, 184 drivers registered less than 0.08, according to state police data.

The penalties that apply to the current limit would also be linked to the lower limit under Courtney's proposed legislation. That means drivers involved in fatal accidents who are found to be impaired at the 0.05 level could face negligent homicide charges.

Astley said reducing the limit could make people fearful of going to happy hour or ordering a drink with dinner. Meanwhile, he said, there are more and more people under the influence of marijuana getting behind the wheel.

"It seems like this bill is trying to zero in on a very narrow subset of people that under current law wouldn't be impaired," he said.

But Courtney said this increased regulation is part of the progression of society. With ride-sharing apps like Uber and Lyft, it's easier than ever to not drive after drinking. It's a practice he's started himself.

In recent years, New York, Delaware, Hawaii and Washington state considered but rejected moves to the lower limit.

Courtney acknowledged that may be the fate his idea endures in Oregon.

"Well alright then, I'll lose, but I'm still not pulling the bill," he said.

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Herrera Beutler joins Democrats in vote to reopen government

By **MOLLY SOLOMON**
Oregon Public Broadcasting

U.S. Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler bucked her party this week, joining the increasing number of Republicans who want to reopen parts of the federal government.

Herrera Beutler, who represents southwest Washington state, has voted in favor of three funding packages to reopen federal agencies.

On Wednesday, she was among eight Republican lawmakers who voted to reopen the Treasury Department and the IRS. And during multiple votes Thurs-

day, she joined Democrats in voting to fund the Department of Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and the Department of Agriculture.

It's a reversal from her stance a week ago, when she voted against Democratic funding packages that

did not include funding for a border wall.

"Ultimately, I want to see those government responsibilities fulfilled and I want to make sure people are getting paid," said Herrera Beutler, R-Battle Ground. "It just seemed like the right step."

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