

## Astoria man detained by ICE eligible for asylum

New details emerge at court hearing

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

TACOMA, Wash. — An immigration judge has found that an Astoria man detained by agents in December near the Clatsop County Courthouse is eligible for asylum over concerns about his safety if he were to return to Mexico.

Ruben Vera Perez, who appeared at a hearing at the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma on Tuesday, is also eligible to have his deportation canceled. He could qualify for a cancellation of removal — a legal procedure that would essentially end the deportation process — because his deportation would cause unusual hardship on his wife and children, who are all U.S. citizens, and because he has lived in the U.S. for more than 10 years.

“There’s hope,” Maria Perez, his wife, said after the hearing.

Ruben Perez was detained after he appeared in Circuit Court to handle a probation matter related to a drunken-driving case. While driving to the county jail to check in with a pretrial release officer, Maria Perez said she was stopped by authorities in two unmarked vehicles who subsequently took her husband into custody.

Since then, local activists have been raising money to help support the family while he’s away. A vigil was held in January to bring attention to the nature of his detention. More than \$1,000 has been raised on a GoFundMe page set up and circulated by Indivisible North Coast Oregon to help the family pay bills.

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## Knight, Hunsinger spar over state grant

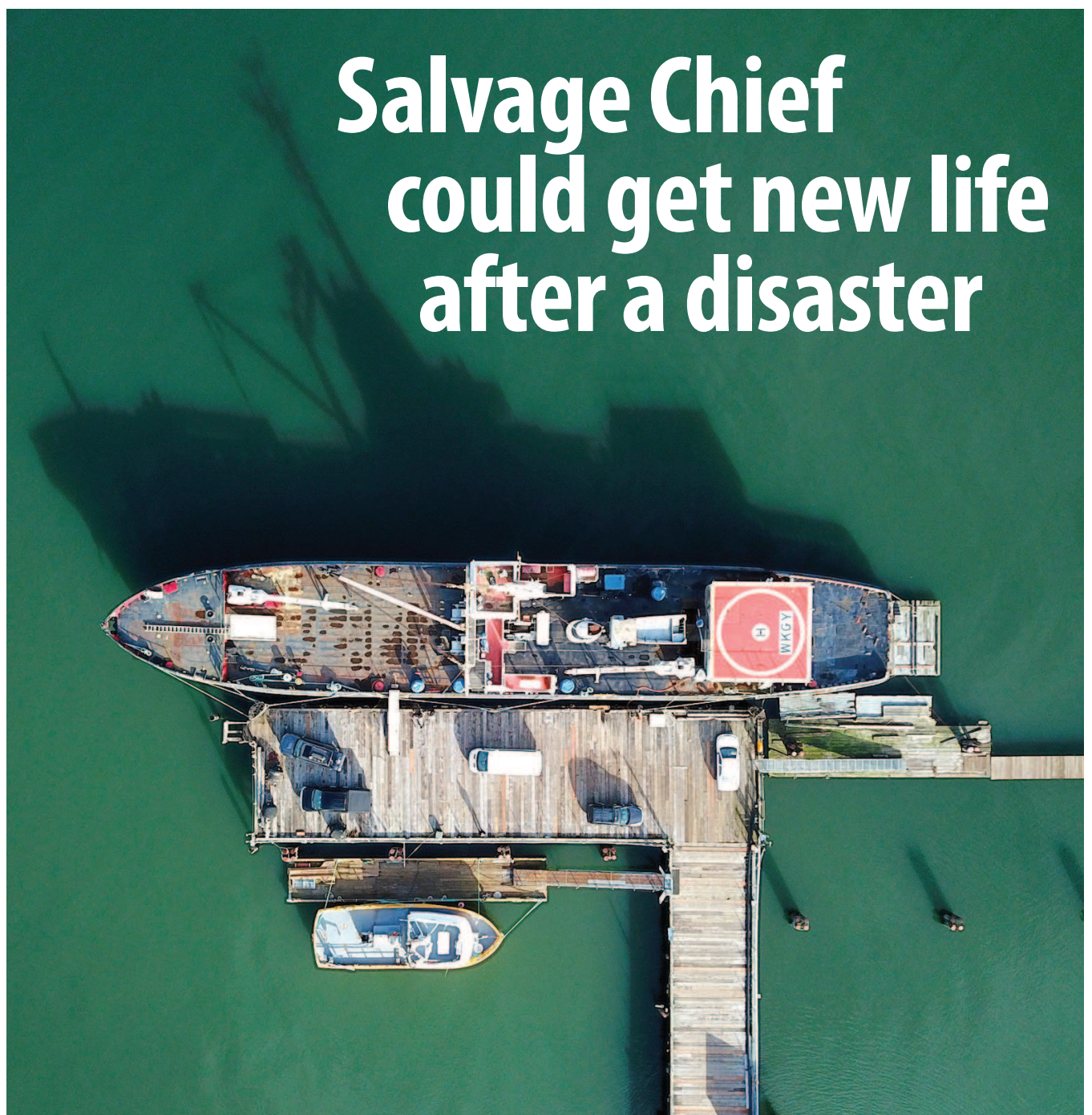
Port gave up \$1.5 million

By **EDWARD STRATTON**  
*The Daily Astorian*

Port of Astoria Commissioner Bill Hunsinger and Jim Knight, the agency’s executive director, sparred Tuesday over why the agency turned back a \$1.5 million state grant.

The Port had been awarded the money in 2016 from the state Department of Transportation’s Connect Oregon infrastructure grant program. The grant was based on a proposal to repair about 30,000 square feet of dock on the west side of Pier 2, where seafood is landed and brought into processors renting space in the agency’s warehouse.

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The Salvage Chief docked at Tongue Point.

Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian



**ABOVE:** The Salvage Chief has a long history of successful recovery and emergency assistance operations.

**RIGHT:** Don Floyd points out photos in the galley of the Salvage Chief depicting the history of the vessel.



## The World War II-era craft could become an asset

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

After a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake and tsunami, major debris will need to be cleared from the Columbia River, and believers in the Salvage Chief think their vessel could be the one to help.

In its prime, the World War II-era landing craft provided assistance to nearly 300 stranded vessels — including the Exxon Valdez, an oil tanker it refloated after a spill in Alaska’s Prince William Sound in 1989.

The vessel worked as a salvage ship for 60 years until it was mothballed at Swan Island in Portland in the late 2000s. The vessel was purchased in 2015 by Salvage Chief LLC, an asset-holding company managed by Pier 39 owner Floyd Holcom.

It was brought back to Astoria with the vision of turning it into a training vessel for local mariners. It sits docked at the Marine and Environmental Research and Training Station at Tongue Point.

Today, the ship is used to educate, with MERTS students working on the ship’s machinery every Monday and Wednesday and the U.S. Department of Defense using it for training exercises.

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## Ocean Park man behind KKK flyer says, ‘I was radicalized’

Schaefer acknowledges he was wrong

By **ALYSSA EVANS and NATALIE ST. JOHN**  
*Chinook Observer*

OCEAN PARK, Wash. — Will Schaefer doesn’t wear a white hood. He doesn’t go to cross burnings. Instead, like a growing number of isolated young white men, he cultivated his racist beliefs in the safety and anonymity of online forums.

Then he decided to test them in real life.

In late January, Schae-

fer, 20, who has no affiliation with the Ku Klux Klan, made flyers with a hooded klansman pointing at the viewer like Uncle Sam. They read, “The KKK wants you!” There were little pull tabs with a link that went to an anonymous, private Discord forum run by Schaefer.

The flyers went up around downtown Astoria, where a KKK chapter terrorized Catholics and immigrants in the 1920s. They quickly were pulled down.

Amid a public uproar, Schaefer told the Astoria Police Department he was responsible. But Deputy Police Chief Eric Halverson,

**‘SOCIAL MEDIA IS NOW A CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE ELEMENT FOR ENGAGING EVEN UNAFFILIATED EXTREMISTS INTO THE FOLD.’**

**Brian Levin** | director for the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism

Police Chief Geoff Spalding and City Attorney Blair Henningsgaard declined the Chinook Observer’s requests to confirm Schaefer’s identity, citing concerns that identification would threaten his and his family’s safety.

The slender, soft-spoken Ocean Park resident hardly

looked dangerous when he opened his front door in pink pants and a green Kool-Aid T-shirt for an interview last week. He wore a hang-dog expression as he tried to explain himself.

Schaefer grew up on the internet. He appears to have made his first social media

profiles around age 11. He posted a cartoon crocodile he drew, professed his love of Pokemon. As a young adult, he got interested in the alt-right — a counterculture of mostly young, almost exclusively white conservatives who espouse racist, nationalist and isolationist beliefs. He joined at least one group with explicitly racist beliefs. Participating in those groups became a central focus of his life.

“I got addicted,” he said.

**‘I was radicalized’**  
The alt-right forums were

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