

School bond sales lead to savings

A good market for Astoria and Warrenton

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

Taxpayers in Astoria and Warrenton will save money on bonds taken out for school construction after the school districts received healthy ratings and sizable premiums from investors.

Astoria received \$9.4 million more than expected from the \$70 million in bonds approved by voters in November to rebuild a middle school academic wing and modernize and secure other campuses. Warrenton received nearly \$4 million more than the \$38.5 million in bonds voters approved to buy a master campus and build a new middle school.

"We are required to use the premium as part of the bond projects," said Craig Hoppes, the school superintendent in Astoria. "Our plan is all the premium money will go into contingency to make sure we can pay for what we have planned for."

Warrenton had created a priority list of projects to complete with the bond, starting with the purchase of a new campus and construction of a middle school. Projects farther down the priority list include building a new career-technical education center, replacing Warrenton High School's roof, re-siding campuses and installing security vestibules, doors and cameras.

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Rep. Mitchell wants bill to ensure pay for Coast Guard

Lawmaker is chief sponsor

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

State Rep. Tiffany Mitchell is a chief sponsor on a bill to provide unemployment insurance to essential federal employees such as the Coast Guard when they are ordered to work without pay.

About 500 Coast Guard in Sector Columbia River worked without pay during the recent federal government shutdown. Because they were technically still fully employed, they were often ineligible for unemployment. Many took advantage of local food pantries, grants, loans and other assistance from businesses and community organizations until their paychecks arrived.

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Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Development along the Astoria waterfront remains a divisive topic.

GROUP PLANS TO PETITION ASTORIA ON WATERFRONT HOTELS

Residents concerned by development

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

Worried about the development of hotels along the Columbia River in Astoria, a group plans to petition the City Council for zoning changes to protect the waterfront.

The petition, posted online Sunday night by Friends of the Astoria Waterfront, gained 39 signatures by Monday afternoon, with a goal of collecting 50. By this morning, there were 52 signatures and a new goal of collecting 100.

The petition's authors include Sarah Jane Bardy, who serves on the city's Design Review Committee and was outspoken in her criticism of plans to build a four-story Marriott-brand hotel at the base of Second Street. She was scolded by Mayor Bruce Jones for her comments and behavior during an appeal hearing on the hotel in December.

The Fairfield Inn and Suites project has drawn criticism from others in the community, though, and became a campaign issue in local elections.



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Sarah Jane Bardy, seen here at her barbershop, is one of the authors of a petition to protect the waterfront.

John Orr, a former attorney who lost a bid for the state House last year, said he and others in the Friends group want to see new hotels go through a conditional use process that includes an assessment of how the new business might impact existing infrastructure.

Some zones in Astoria, including the lot where the Fairfield Inn will be built, allow hotels outright. The city's Historic Landmarks Commission and Design Review Committee

reviewed the details of the hotel developer's plans only because the lot was near a historic cannery boiler and fell under the Bridge Vista overlay, a portion of the Riverfront Vision Plan that guides development along the river.

A conditional use process gives people more of a voice in how the waterfront is developed and what they want to see protected, Orr said.

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Cannon Beach, Chamber of Commerce ink new contract



The visitor information center in Cannon Beach.

Funding will shift for visitor information center

By BRENNNA VISSER
The Daily Astorian

CANNON BEACH — The city will no longer pay for visitor information center operations under a new contract with the Chamber of Commerce.

For the past 30 years, the city has paid for operations at the center through the general fund. Now, the city is asking the chamber to pay the \$160,000 a year it takes to run the center from

its tourism promotion program fund.

The fund, which is anticipated to have \$385,655 next year, is financed by the lodging tax and is used to promote tourism during the off-season. To lessen the initial financial impact, the city will phase in the change by paying increasingly smaller portions of the visitor information center tab until 2021.

In exchange, the chamber has an ongoing contract — something the organization has sought for years — which allows staff to do long-range planning. Putting the spending under one contract gives the cham-

ber more flexibility on how money should be divided between marketing and visitor center operations.

There is also no cap on how much the chamber can receive from lodging tax revenue — an idea proposed earlier last year.

But the new arrangement comes with a degree of risk. In a good year, the chamber could possibly receive much more money in lodging tax than the city could provide from the general fund to run the visitor center. In a bad year, there will be no general fund money to help.

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