



Photos by Luke Whittaker/Chinook Observer

Chariot owner Suzy Olsen said fewer rainy days translated into more sales for her store over the winter.

Merchants: 'The downtown is revitalizing'

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"It was a mean winter," Davis said. "Cookies paid the rent."

It was only the second winter in business for the downtown bakery and bistro, but a memorable one.

"In mid-January it felt like it was at the end then it came roaring back," Davis said. "We had snow in February and March and we don't usually have that there."

As spring temperatures rise, so will business for the bakery.

"Spring break is next week, so it will come on full force," Davis said. "From Easter through the end of summer sales are strong."

Davis estimated that 70 percent of the sales occur in the spring and summer before a precipitous drop in the fall.

"From October to February it's only about 30 percent, mostly around the holidays," he said.

Sales for bread, pastries, croissants and cinnamon rolls will begin to surge in April and May, with the start of the cruise ship season and the Astoria Sunday Market, where he has a booth.

"We get the market crowd and we get a lot of traffic from the cruise ships as well," Davis said.

The bakery will soon adopt new hours to accommodate the increased demand by opening an hour earlier and closing an hour later than normal.



Doe & Arrow owner Chelsea Johnsen plans to begin an interior remodel and unveil a new logo this spring.



Table 360 Bakery and Bistro owner Taz Davis said sales were scant over the winter season. 'It was a mean winter. Cookies paid the rent.'

"This being our second year, it's going to be interesting to see how it ramps up," Davis said. "The downtown is revitalizing. We have a lot of new people coming in and it's good for Astoria."

Slower winter sales are expected, said Suzy Olsen, owner of Chariot, a housewares store and interior design studio on Commercial. But this winter wasn't

as bad as others for Olsen's downtown store.

"We had more sunny days and not the crazy winter storms, so that brought more people out on the weekends," Olsen said, comparing this year to the winter of 2017, when it rained a record 167 days straight.

Mild weather around Christmas equated to more foot traffic and a 30 percent sales boost compared to pre-

vious years, Olsen said.

While the weather is often unpredictable, scheduled events can have a positive impact on sales. The FisherPoets Gathering, held in late February, brought an unexpected boost in business during an otherwise slow weekend. The spring season and warmer weather will undoubtedly bring new opportunities.

"When there's a wedding or two in town, that's the best," Olsen said.

Approaching her fourth year in business, Doe & Arrow owner Chelsea Johnsen said the slow season has been less severe each year for the new and vintage clothing and accessories store.

"Usually before, I would feel it in October and November — they were hard months — but this year we really didn't hit a pause until the new year," Johnsen said. "It didn't get really slow until the end of January into February, then it started picking back up in March."

Located at the corner of 14th and Duane streets, Johnsen said increased familiarity with the store has spawned more local customers and made the business less reliant on random foot traffic, which can vary greatly depending on the day and weather.

"I'm looking forward to warmer weather and having my door open more," Johnsen said. "There's a new energy when the sun is out."

Harbor: 'These fees are not uncommon throughout the US'

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"They are legitimate," he said. "They are legal, and it's an appropriate thing for you to do. The other point I'd make is that a \$300 fee is not going to chase vessels that are coming to this river to load grain or other cargoes from coming to the Columbia River. These fees are not uncommon throughout the U.S. They're a relatively tiny cost to a ship compared to its daily operating costs."

Pier 1 as recently as November played host to the Liberian-flagged bulk carrier Leon Oetker, ordered into port for repairs to its radar and steering. The pier is also the only ideal loca-



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

A cargo ship passes under the Astoria Bridge in December.

tion on the lower Columbia where land-based firefighters can battle a shipboard blaze, Haglund said.

Vancouver, British Columbia, is the only other

Port on the West Coast to charge a harbor maintenance fee, Haglund said. But many ports on the Gulf Coast charge such fees, and Los Angeles enacted one tem-

porarily to help pay for an infrastructure improvement.

The Port has couched its ability to charge the fee in a U.S. Supreme Court ruling that the Alabama State Docks Commission can charge ships a fee for policing.

"I'd be very surprised if there was litigation" over the fee, Haglund said.

Jim Knight, the Port's executive director, said the agency has been conservative in tying the amount of the fee directly to the costs of maintaining Pier 1.

"I've yet to receive a single phone call or text message or email from any other port director or port staff concerned about the imposition of these fees," he said.

Port: Scheduled to host 20 ships this year carrying up to 37,000

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Operators like Sundial Travel will pay a \$100 daily facilities use fee to have buses parked on Pier 1. Other tour operators that advertise online and outside Port property, who have been barred from dropping off passengers directly on Pier 1, can pay the \$100 annual access fee to drop

passengers off next to ships. The Port Commission approved the fees on Tuesday.

"From the Port's perspective, we want all the customers of the cruise ships to have a great experience of coming into Astoria," Knight said. "So our practice of prohibiting vehicles from coming onto Port property at the end of the day to

drop off passengers is counterproductive to creating a good environment."

Bob Vinatieri, owner of Astoria Tours, said Tuesday that the agreement is designed to keep the Port's special relationship with Sundial Travel intact. He urged the Port Commission to vote against Knight's new policy and instead charge tour companies based on

the size of their buses, the amount and their length of stay on Pier 1.

Knight's new policy comes about one month before the tour season starts back up, with the Celebrity Eclipse scheduled to stop in Astoria April 14 and the Island Princess April 29. The Port is scheduled to host 20 ships this year carrying up to 37,000 passengers.

Suit: Claim for \$115,000

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The lawsuit also alleges Natividad was written up for absences that should have been protected as medical leave.

In May, Johnston presented Natividad with a settlement and release agreement, and was told he would be fired if he did not sign it, according to the suit. He did not sign the agreement and was later told by his union rep-

resentative he had been fired.

Natividad, who was a tenant of a home managed by the housing authority, alleges the agency continued to retaliate against him by withholding overpayment of rent he had paid for months. He was eventually evicted.

He is suing for \$115,000 in lost earnings and benefits, as well as for the damage done to his professional reputation.

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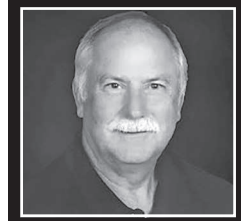
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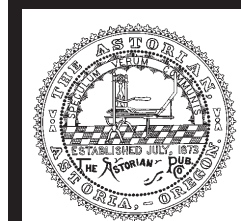
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