

County casts doubt on data center

Agile Design gets a one-day extension

By BRENNA VISSER
The Daily Astorian

County commissioners expressed reservations about a proposed data center at the North Coast Business Park in Warrenton after approving another extension for the project Wednesday night.

In a 3-1 vote, the Board of Commissioners approved a one-day extension to allow Agile Design, the company behind the data center, to present a new proposal on the feasibility of the project.

The \$1.2 million purchase and sale agreement that was awarded in August is set to expire May 7 — the day before the commission’s next meeting. Extending the agreement one day allows the company to stay in a contract with the county until they can present the proposal.

At the May 8 meeting, the commission will hear the proposal and vote to either enter a new agreement with Agile Design or let the contract expire.

Mark Cox, of Agile Design, said “more facts have become known” about how to address wetlands on the 67-acre property.

“The ability to mitigate those wetlands for development is a big issue,” Cox said. “Some of those issues have become more clarified in recent months due to the due diligence process.”

The details of why a new agreement was being requested were discussed in an executive session closed to the public.

See County, Page A7

North Coast Recovery in danger of closing

Financial trouble for treatment provider

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

North Coast Recovery, part of a dwindling number of outpatient drug and alcohol treatment options in Clatsop County, is in danger of closing because of a lack of money.

Wendy Hemsley, who opened the treatment center on 30th Street in Astoria’s Mill Pond neighborhood two years ago, said she met late last week with her staff to let them know she could no longer afford to pay them. Most have agreed to keep coming in as volunteers for at least a couple of weeks while she seeks a path forward.

The treatment center has about 25 patients, Hemsley said, with about half being treated for free on scholarship.

She said her transitional housing, provided in two houses for male and female patients in Astoria, is key to successfully treating patients lacking stability.

“We’re operational because we’re in compliance,” she said. “I just can’t afford to pay anyone.”

See Recovery, Page A7



Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian
Lizette Velazquez, left, and Adan Gaspar-Lucas practice a dance routine at First Baptist Church in Astoria.

MEXICAN FOLK DANCE COMES TO NORTH COAST



Young performers wear colorful garments as they prepare to practice.



Dance instructor Rocio Lizarraga Simmons shows off the nailheads embedded in her shoes that produce the signature sound on the dance floor.

A Liberty Theatre performance for Cinco de Mayo

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

The teenage dancers twisted and twirled across sheets of plywood in the basement of the First Baptist Church of Astoria on Wednesday, waving their skirts and stamping their nailhead-packed Spanish dancing shoes in a Mexican polka.

On May 3 at the Liberty Theatre, the Mi Cultura Folkloric Dance Group will perform several traditional Mexican dances as part of a Cinco de Mayo celebration.

Rocio Lizarraga Simmons, a board member of the Lower Columbia Hispanic Council, created the dance group two years ago to expose locals to Mexican culture.

“It’s very traditional in Mexico for kids to participate in folk dances,” she said. “Most kids are exposed to this through their schools and local cultural centers. Maybe a third of children in some form participate during their childhood.”

Lizarraga Simmons immigrated to America in 1994 from the Mexican state of Sonora, where she danced with folk groups in high school and college. When she arrived on the North Coast, she found the exposure to Hispanic culture lacking.

See Dance, Page A7

Warrenton to repair roof amid budget constraints

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

Warrenton is feeling the pinch of a tight budget, but hopes to address deferred repairs to City Hall.

City Manager Linda Engbretson had hoped to put off the replacement of an aging roof at the municipal complex on Main Avenue that houses city departments and services, including the police and fire departments. But then a substantial leak opened up over the Community and Economic Development Department in recent weeks.

On Tuesday, she asked the City Commission to formally declare that an emergency exists at City Hall to free up funds from this year’s budget to make partial repairs to the roof.

“I am not comfortable putting



The roof at Warrenton City Hall needs repairs.

this off further as a wet spring could create a safety and much more costly issues,” Engbretson wrote in a memo to commissioners.

Warrenton has operated under a \$26.7 million spending plan for the fiscal year that ends in June. The city has had to factor in the rising costs

of the Public Employees Retirement System, as well as growing demands

See Roof, Page A7