



At left, Rocio Lizarraga Simmons watches the dancers practice their routine. At right, Lizette Velazquez laughs as she adjusts the wardrobe of a fellow performer.



Photos by Colin Murphy/The Daily Astorian

Dance: A Liberty performance for Cinco de Mayo

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“To me, it’s very important that Hispanic children grow up knowing their roots,” she said. She began organizing dances at Cannon Beach Elementary School, where her children attended. Two years ago, with her children grown and moved out, she founded Mi Cultura, including troupes in Astoria and Seaside, under the umbrella of the hispanic council. Sponsored by a grant from

Cannon Beach, they practice for free at local churches and the El Tapatio restaurant in Astoria. Her brother, Nicolas Lizarraga, who studied and teaches folk dance in Sonora, ships her handmade dresses from Mexico, along with Spanish dancing shoes, the heels and toes lined with small nail-heads that crackle on the wood floors. Mi Cultura, supported by mariachi band Alma Sureña, will perform several traditional dances at the Liberty Theatre, from Mexican

polka and “La Danza de los Viejitos” (“The Dance of the Little Old Men”) to a rendition of the folk song “La Llorona” (“The Weeping Woman”) sung in the Disney movie, “Coco.” Mi Cultura’s troupes are a mix of children and teens. Lizette Velazquez, 15, said she travels from Chinook, Washington, to experience her heritage. “In my school ... there’s only like 10 Hispanics over there,” she said. “It’s nice to come over here and do something that actually

involves our culture and not just sports.” Views on masculinity have left Lizarraga Simmons with mostly female dancers. Adan Gaspar-Lucas, 15, from Warrenton, said he was initially coerced by his mother to participate, to the chagrin of his father. “My dad, he was sort of against it,” he said. “He sort of thought guys shouldn’t dance. It’s not their thing. But I guess he just went with it.” Gaspar-Lucas said he initially

didn’t try much, feeling forced, but that dancing has slowly grown on him. He now practices several hours a day and takes ballet at Maddox Dance Studio. Lizarraga Simmons hopes the group can grow, attracting more dancers, teachers and gigs at cultural events around the region. She sees the dances as educational. “All these dances are a mix of indigenous dances, Indian dances, with the European influences we’ve had from Spain and France,” she said.

County: Agile Design gets one-day extension

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“Whether that’s the same proposal, a new proposal, whether it has conditions in it, I can’t say. But (Cox) has that extra day to now bring something to the board when they meet rather than have the current agreement expire,” Monica Steele, the interim county manager, said.

While the extension passed, some on the commission took issue with how proposed development at the North Coast Business Park has been handled. “I have some very serious reservations about the way the North Coast Business Park is now doing its business,” Commissioner Pamela Wev said. Wev, who was the lone “no” vote on the extension, said the county should let the purchase and sale agreement expire and instead focus efforts to develop a master plan and address environmental issues at the site. “The county is already having issues ... with one pending sale and one effective sale, and I think it’s time to put the brakes on the whole thing,” she said. “I’m embarrassed by this whole thing,” she continued. “There have been too many



Agile Design

A new data center proposed by Mark Cox would include artificial ponds to help cool computer servers.

years where the county hasn’t done the right thing for this park.” Wev is also concerned by how a lawsuit filed in March by Agile Design could impact the future of the project. The company claims Zion Fund Inc., which wanted to buy 62 acres at the business park for technology offices, used proprietary information without permission to make its pitch to the board in October. Zion Fund canceled its proposed purchase shortly after the lawsuit was filed. “I wonder if some of the issue for the applicant about not letting any window exist between the present contract and the new contract is that maybe these people who are suing each other for all different agreements and con-

tracts ... that maybe they’re afraid that Zion Development will jump in in the interim and buy this property,” Wev said. While others echoed Wev’s concerns about how the application has progressed, commissioners, in general, still felt the data center would be a positive addition to Clatsop County and that a one-day extension was fair. Many on the commission still support the idea of the data center because of the higher wage, technology-based jobs Agile Design claims it will provide. “I would like to see this project go forward,” Commissioner Sarah Nebeker, the board chairwoman, said. “I don’t know if it will. But I’d prefer that it did.”

Roof: Warrenton to repair amid budget constraints

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for city services with a small staff and aging infrastructure. Money is scant for building maintenance. Instead of putting aside money into a building maintenance fund over the years, “we’ve chosen to purchase police vehicles or fund other general fund services,” Engbretson told commissioners. “So we’ve had to make these hard decisions over the years and this is where we’re at.” It would cost an estimated \$140,000 to fix the entire roof, Engbretson and her staff, concerned about being able to fully fund the repairs because of general fund constraints, suggested repairing only a portion of the roof this year for \$47,000. But Commissioner Mark Baldwin argued the city should take the financial hit and go ahead and repair the entire roof now to save money and resources in the long run. Mayor Henry Balensifer agreed, although he acknowledged it would mean more hard choices when it comes to balancing the budget. “Here’s how I see it,” Balensifer said. “If we don’t

fix the roof now or we fix only half of it and then, if the costs and damage continues to compound, we’ll end up becoming like the Port of Astoria and we’ll be chasing our tails this entire time. It’s just going to be a debt we can’t repay ourselves.” The Port of Astoria faces millions of dollars worth of deferred maintenance. “The building in general, it’s been well-loved,” Balensifer said of City Hall. “And it’s going to continue to be even more well-loved as the needs of the citizens grow and the space and staff don’t.” The City Commission voted in favor of declaring the emergency, but Engbretson and city staff will look into options for the roof. Budget constraints surfaced again Tuesday during a discussion about the possibility of forming a Parks, Recreation and Marina Department. Commissioner Pam Ackley and others said a formal department or district might help in the pursuit of grants and other funding for larger projects like the construction of a fishing pier at the Hammond Marina. It’s a good discussion, Engbretson said, but for

now, city departments and boards will continue to work collaboratively to find funding. “This brings up a good question,” Balensifer said, referencing projects like the City Hall roof, which are hampered by the general fund. “I’ve thought that with hard times and with no relief really in early sight or at least close sight that we should probably consider looking at what services or what departments may not be better ... off in their own districts or consolidation within (Clatsop County),” he said. “The discussion should probably occur at some point,” he added, “because at some point our permanent tax rate just isn’t going to do it. It just won’t. ... We’re going to have to figure out more creative ways than just rate increases to fund these departments going into the future.” “It’s just sad that we are the fastest growing city and we are broke,” Ackley said. “Not broke,” Baldwin rejoined, “we’re just poor.” In some ways, Balensifer said, it feels like “growth is strangling the city.”

Recovery: Financial trouble for treatment provider

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If North Coast Recovery closes, Hemsley said, she could face six months trying to become relicensed with the state. Like other treatment providers, she blames lackluster coverage by insurers and high deductibles faced by patients for making treatment unaffordable. “We are putting barriers for treatment, and it’s not coming from providers, but I cannot have a business that is bleeding money,” she said.

Roanna Sollars, a counselor at North Coast Recovery, is one of Hemsley’s employees who agreed to stay on pro bono and collect unemployment while she seeks more funding. “They are worth staying on for,” Sollars said of the patients. “They are worth fighting for. Most of these individuals, we’re all they have at the moment.” Brandon Denmark, 25, said he moved to the North Coast from Florida to escape an environment riddled with crime and drugs. He’s sought treatment and relapsed multiple times. “Other places wouldn’t allow me back, or wouldn’t treat me without insurance,” he said. “This place is different.” North Coast Recovery took Denmark on for free and put him up in transitional housing. He now has one year sober, a full-time job, studies at Clatsop Community College, recently rented his first apartment and is scheduled to graduate from treatment early next month. Sunspire Health closed Astoria Pointe and Rosebriar last year for undisclosed reasons, leaving Clatsop County with no



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

Wendy Hemsley, right, opened North Coast Recovery two years ago on 30th Street in Astoria.

inpatient treatment centers. North Coast Recovery is part of a dwindling number of outpatient options. Klean Treatment Centers, an outpatient treatment facility that rented sober-living apartments on Alameda Avenue in Astoria, was recently evicted from its offices and housing by landlord Sean Fitzpatrick, who is suing the company for unpaid rent. Klean also shut down its inpatient treatment center in Long Beach, Washington, amid a federal lawsuit brought by creditors who allege they are owed \$8 million. Sunspire and Klean provided no reason for their troubles, although other providers have pointed toward the same financial difficulties faced by Hemsley. “Talk to any treatment center,” Hemsley said. “The commercial payer policies are making it impossible to operate. The overhead is pretty high. These professionals aren’t cheap, and they’re required to operate.” Hemsley has reached out to legislators and Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare, the county’s mental health and substance abuse treat-

ment contractor, about creating an all-in-one center providing drug, alcohol and mental health treatment for patients on private insurance or Medicaid. “If we can show successful outcome measures and save money, we can replicate this in other places,” she said. Hemsley has also reached for more help from Craft3, which provided North Coast Recovery with initial funding. But Walt Postlewait, executive vice president with Craft3, said her business model, although altruistic, can’t be salvaged with more loans. “Without some sort of change — either the community understanding the importance of providing for the residents in need, or a change in both the public and private insurance providers — I have low confidence that Wendy has a resilient business,” he said. Hemsley said she is not kicking people out of the transitional housing and won’t give up on trying to find a sustainable model to help patients. “I’m hoping I don’t have to temporarily close, but if so, I will find a new avenue,” she said.



**The U.S. Navy
INVITES YOU TO PARTICIPATE
in the Northwest Training and Testing
Supplemental EIS/OEIS Public Involvement Process**

This notice announces a 15-day extension of the public comment period.

The U.S. Navy has prepared a Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement (EIS/OEIS) to reassess the potential environmental impacts associated with conducting proposed ongoing and future training and testing activities within the Northwest Training and Testing (NWT) Study Area beyond 2020.

Public Involvement

The Navy welcomes substantive comments on the Draft Supplemental EIS/OEIS. Comments may be submitted at the public meetings, online at www.NWTEIS.com, or by mail to:

Naval Facilities Engineering Command Northwest
Attention: NWT Supplemental EIS/OEIS Project Manager
3730 N. Charles Porter Ave., Building 385
Oak Harbor, WA 98278-3500

Comment Period Extended: Comments must be postmarked or received online by June 12, 2019, for consideration in the Final Supplemental EIS/OEIS.

Individuals requiring reasonable accommodations, please contact Julianne Stanford, Public Affairs Officer, at 360-396-1630 or julianne.stanford@navy.mil.

The draft supplement is available online at www.NWTEIS.com or at the following public libraries in Oregon: Astoria Public Library; Driftwood Public Library; Newport Public Library; Oregon State University; Guin Library; Hatfield Marine Science Center; and Tillamook Main Library. Additional public meetings will be held in Washington, Northern California, and southeastern Alaska.

Open House Public Meetings: 5 to 8 p.m.

Arrive and submit comments anytime during the open house. No presentation or formal oral comment session will be conducted.

Monday, April 29, 2019
Astoria High School Student Commons
1001 W. Marine Drive
Astoria, Ore.

Tuesday, April 30, 2019
Newport Performing Arts Center Lobby
777 W. Olive St.
Newport, Ore.