

FARMHOUSE FLUNKED

County looks for buyer for historic home

By **BRENNA VISSER**
The Daily Astorian

After almost a decade of deliberation, the county will sell a historic home at the Clatsop County Fairgrounds that has sat vacant for nearly 20 years.

The Board of Commissioners voted to auction off the early 20th-century home, which sits next to the county fair office, on Wednesday night after fairgrounds officials could find no use for the building.

“In terms of our priorities for our strategic plan, this farmhouse doesn’t fit,” said Mike Autio, the chairman of the Fair Board.

The goal is to find someone interested in tearing the home down and repurposing the wood to refurbish other historic projects, said John Lewis, the fair manager.

“There is definitely value in the wood,” Lewis said. “And some of the trim in there is classic to that era. (It’s) definitely not something you can run down to Home Depot and get today.”

Built in 1914, the home holds significance as one of the last remaining relics of the John Jacob Astor agricultural experiment station.

The farmhouse was one of five



Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Clatsop County Fair and Expo General Manager John Lewis talks about the condition of the farmhouse that is for sale on the Clatsop County Fairgrounds.

homes originally built for the 150-acre farm, and housed the farm’s string of superintendents. For six decades, Oregon State University ran experiments to help dairy farmers develop new and better pasture crops for their cattle, testing everything from new types of grasses to sawdust.

The station was also the birthplace of Astoria’s bent grass seed industry, which started in the 1920s and supplied seed for lawns and golf course grasses for decades.

The farm closed in 1973 and

became a farm for Clatsop Community College. By the time the county bought the land for the fairgrounds in 1994, only a few buildings were left standing, Autio said. Some are still used, like the fair’s on-site office and barn where small animals are shown.

But other than serving a stint as the home for Denny Holmes, a former fair manager, the farmhouse has remained untouched for two decades, Lewis said.

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City responds to homeless downtown

A reaction to reports of ‘bad behavior’

By **KATIE FRANKOWICZ**
The Daily Astorian

Astoria is taking steps to address “bad behavior” among some of the homeless downtown.

Picnic tables between the American Legion and a public parking lot on Exchange Street that have become a gathering spot for the homeless have been removed. City properties, including the library, will soon join private businesses on the police department’s Property Watch list, giving officers clear direction on how they should supervise the sites after hours.

The measures received the City Council’s blessing at a work session on Thursday afternoon where city leaders discussed how behavior by the homeless impacts the city.

Most homeless people do not cause problems, leaders emphasized. They are willing to listen and comply with requests by city staff, but there is a small number that is more difficult to reach.

Concerns ranged from campfires in areas that are difficult for the fire department to access to human waste outside library entrances.

People camp out in library entrances and some parents say they no longer feel comfortable bringing their children to the library. The Parks Department regularly deals with piles of trash left behind at city parks by people who are camping in their vehicles. At the Astoria Aquatic Center, staff has had to deal with people who locked themselves in restrooms and then passed out or were on drugs.

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Planners approve new subdivision in Warrenton

By **KATIE FRANKOWICZ**
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — A 15-lot subdivision proposed by a former Warrenton mayor landed approval from the Planning Commission on Thursday night amid concerns about an insufficient secondary access road and impacts on wetlands.

Commissioner Christine Bridgens was the sole vote against the project, which is proposed for an 8-acre site owned by Gil Gramson next to Clear Lake.

Gramson’s brother, Rod Gramson, who owns nearby property and donated 47 acres of wetland habitat around Clear Lake to the North Coast Land Conservancy, has said he will appeal the Planning Commission’s decision.

The brothers have battled in court over development decisions in the past.

Rod Gramson believes the Clear Lake subdivision should never have moved so far along. He said significant grading and clearing at Gil Gramson’s property occurred last year without city approval — a fact noted in a report by Community and Economic Development Director Kevin Cronin.

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Oregon lawmakers pitch Astoria for cutters

New ships would replace the Steadfast and Alert

By **EDWARD STRATTON**
The Daily Astorian

Oregon’s congressional delegation is putting its weight behind Astoria’s pursuit of two new Coast Guard offshore patrol cutters.

U.S. Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, along with U.S. Reps. Suzanne Bonamici, Peter DeFazio, Earl Blumenauer, Greg Walden and Kurt Schrader, sent a joint letter to Adm. Karl Schultz, commandant of the Coast Guard, asking that Astoria be a homeport for the cutters.

“Astoria is a strategic site for the (offshore cutters) because of its central coastal location within (Coast

Guard) District 13,” the letter states. “The Columbia River is a global trade gateway for millions of tons of crops and commodities worth billions of dollars. The (Coast Guard) presence in Astoria allows greatest possible access to the mouth of the Columbia River and the North Pacific.”

Congressional staffers have said the Coast Guard is nearing a decision on where to station the 360-foot cutters, under construction since January. They are meant to replace 1960s-era medium endurance cutters such as the Alert and Steadfast,

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Coast Guard

Two new offshore patrol cutters to be stationed in the Northwest are meant to replace 1960s-era medium endurance cutters such as the Alert, right, and Steadfast, both homeported in Astoria.

